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Successful Informal Partnerships Between Nonprofit Organizations and Local Governments in a Metropolitan Area

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Abstract

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Scott David Pozil

MPA, American University, 1996

BS, Lake Forest College, 1993

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Informal or non-contractual partnerships between nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and government entities are becoming more common in America, opening up new possibilities for NPOs to function as equal partners in the decision-making process and implementation of community services. The problem concerns the challenges that NPOs face in achieving equal partner status with their local government counterpart, a problem which has received limited attention in research. The purpose of this study was to explore the dynamics behind successful informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments, translating into effective and efficient service delivery. The theoretical framework was based on Davis's stewardship theory and Schelling's game theory. The research questions examined the dynamics that enable the NPO and government partnerships to be successful, specifically the development and sustainment of trust, power balance, open and transparent communication, and level and frequency of interactions. This qualitative case study included interviews with nonprofit executives ($n = 5$), recruited through a pre-interview questionnaire, and review of NPO published documents describing the informal partnerships. The data were coded and analyzed by creating mind maps. Findings revealed that the actions and decisions of the NPOs and local governments reflected a shared mission and desire to achieve positive social change. The results indicate that NPOs and local governments may function as equal partners if certain dynamics are present such as trust, transparent communication, influence, and goal alignment. The implications for social change include establishing successful models of informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments that impact the social and economic well-being of communities.

Exploration of Successful Informal Partnerships Between Nonprofit Organizations and

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to my paternal grandmother, Helen Pozil Michels, who was the first person to believe in my ability to achieve success in life. She taught and showed me that positive social change is personally gratifying and can propel anyone to make a difference in the lives of family, friends, and the wider community.

Acknowledgments

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My wife Rim and my son Ryan have strongly supported me through this process and encouraged me to achieve my dream of achieving a PhD. I am grateful to them.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Informal partnerships between nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and government agencies at the local level are becoming more common and resulting in positive social change for communities (Gazley, 2008; Tsui et al., 2012; Xu & Morgan, 2012), specifically benefitting citizens by providing them with health and social services, educational opportunities, career and job counseling, and other social and economic opportunities. These partnerships represent a new paradigm in relations between nonprofits and governments and could become the norm in the future, outpacing more formal contractual partnerships that have defined the interaction between the nonprofit and public sectors (Gazley, 2008). NPOs represent a community's safety net and consistently deliver critical social services in the areas of health, education, employment, disaster relief, environmental sustainability, and much more (Berman, 2010; Brown & Caughlin, 2009; Lecy & Van Slyke, 2013; Portney & Cutler, 2010). It follows that NPOs have also become the voice of communities, and to a large extent their involvement has changed the landscape to bring about lasting positive social and economic change that has directly benefitted citizens through providing opportunities for employment, health services, counseling, and other critical services that help communities and its peoples (Berman, 2010; Brown & Caughlin, 2009; Lecy & Van Slyke, 2013; Portney & Cutler, 2010). This is why partnerships between NPOs and governments are essential and beneficial in the face of the many socioeconomic problems

that communities everywhere are grappling with each day (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006).

Informal partnerships between NPOs and government entities have not been substantially researched (Gazley, 2008), although the impact of these partnerships has proven to be significant as measured by positive social and economic change (Mendel & Brudney, 2012; Tsui et al., 2012). Researchers have not fully explored the dynamics that enable these partnerships to be successful, at least not to the extent of what constitutes a workable model that defines these partnerships (Gazley, 2008). Such a model, which is both clear and flexible, could prove useful to NPOs and local government agencies that are exploring similar partnerships. My principal objective was to explore this underlying model through this research study.

The social implications of both individual and community growth may be visible through the lens of successful informal partnerships between NPOs and governments as a reflection of their shared mission, vision, and goals to provide effective and efficient services to communities that lead to positive social change. It is important to note that positive social change can result in unintended consequences in that not all people in a community may view the change as positive or believe that the services provided by the NPO and government entity are beneficial. Mill and Gray (1998) provided perspective through utilitarianism, in which positive social change is the result of everyone aiming toward the same goal, achieving maximum positive results in an environment where everyone is equal. However, Mill and Gray also implied that these individuals most overcome indifference and rely on their inner strengths to strive for these goals,

representing a scenario that is challenging to realize. Mill and Gray described a utopian situation in which the results will be mutually beneficial for all involved, the epitome of utilitarianism. The reality is that such a utopia does not exist because in any society humans, especially powerful and wealthy individuals, do not view or treat everyone as equals and not everyone is working toward the same goals, an important concept to consider in the context of partnerships between NPOs and governments.

Experts asserted that it is essential for NPOs and their government partners to clearly communicate what they are attempting to accomplish and manage expectations with respect to the results. The results that could occur may be more job and career opportunities, improved health care, community education and development (e.g., food health education), and counseling services that help communities and its peoples cope with and respond to challenges.

There is no perfect relationship or one model to follow. Each informal partnership between an NPO and government is different, but the dynamics that drive them may be similar. An understanding of these dynamics and possible paths to follow to achieve successful partnerships could prove to be useful to other NPOs and their local government partners that are attempting to deliver public services with the mission of achieving positive social change as measured by augmenting the social and economic status of individuals in communities. The principal goal of this study was to uncover a flexible blueprint that illustrates the dynamics that define successful information partnerships between nonprofits and governments.

This chapter will provide a brief background on the nonprofit sector, specifically NPOs that engage in partnerships both contractual (formal) and noncontractual (informal) with governments to deliver public social services to communities. The chapter includes a definition of the problem, purpose and significance for this study, which will focus on NPOs that engage in informal partnerships with local governments with the aim to deliver public social services. The research questions will be presented along with limitations involved in the research.

Background

Berman (2010) and Shea (2011) referenced that partnerships between NPOs and government entities have become increasingly popular because NPOs are connected to communities and possess networks and linkages to reach individuals through providing critical social services. Isett and Provan (2005) claimed organizations that engage in interorganizational partnerships develop an authentic and workable structure that addresses challenges to public service delivery through fulfilling critical resource gaps that may enable seamless and more efficient delivery. Gazley (2008) and Van Slyke (2006) mentioned that these partnerships were established through contracts in which the government agency engaged the NPO to provide a public service and stipulated specific rules and regulations to be followed when delivering these services. Gazley (2008) and Suárez (2010) stated that NPOs viewed these contracts as an opportunity to raise funds so that their organization could survive and undertake their core activities. Saxton and Benson (2005) explained the statistics, which demonstrated that the growth of the nonprofit sector was positively correlated with federal government spending targeted for

this sector, indicating substantial federal government contracting and partnerships with NPOs. On its face, these partnerships appeared to represent win-win situations for both the NPOs and government agencies. However, research and commentaries by experts described mixed results.

While formal contractual partnerships between NPOs and government agencies have produced successful results, there have been drawbacks. Researchers and professional organizations, such Brown and Coughlin (2009), Mosley (2012), Nonprofit Business Advisor (2012), Smith (2010), and Witseman and Fernandez (2013), stated that with respect to NPOs, government funds come with stipulations attached that have forced them to alter the way in which they operate, most probably throwing them off course from their mission, goals, and objectives. The situation represents a paradox in that NPOs need government funds to survive yet may have to change their ways, which often results in less than desirable results and reflects *mission drift*, illustrating that chasing funds causes NPOs to alter or even abandon their core mission. NPOs may not be able to serve the community in the manner that they feel is most productive and in tune with their values due to stipulations imposed by their government partner. Such a scenario has altered both the target populations and mechanisms through which citizens receive public services.

The advent of contractual partnerships between NPOs and federal government agencies has been primarily tied to defined rules and regulations that recipients must adhere to when accepting government funds. Most of the research has focused on these types of partnerships (Cho & Gillespie, 2006; Gazley, 2008). However, partnerships

between NPOs and government agencies at the local level have been growing, and they represent a new paradigm in relations between NPOs and governments. Local governments are generally much closer to the communities in which they serve, do not impose rigid rules and regulations on recipients of their funds, and are less bureaucratic due to their structure. In fact, this new paradigm has developed into loosely linked or informal "noncontractual" partnerships between NPOs and local government entities (Gazley, 2010). The scenarios are much more flexible yet usually involve the government entity providing some sort of funding for the public service to be delivered by the NPO, but the mechanism in which they provide the funding and their relationship with the NPO may be different (Gazley, 2010). In essence, there is a significant gap in the literature concerning these types of partnerships.

Moreover, it appears that there has been limited research on informal partnerships involving NPOs and governments at the local level. Exploring the dynamics that factor into these relationships provided a relevant basis for what represents a successful informal partnership between NPOs and governments. Such partnerships are flexible and how they are formed and sustained must also be flexible, meaning there is no one specific recipe defining a desirable partnership. Therefore, a clear knowledge and understanding of the characteristics and the dynamics that surround these partnerships is important as a guide to NPOs and local government agencies that are either considering or already engaged in an informal partnership.

Researchers stated that there is a lack of research on issues of trust and possibly other factors when nonprofits and government entities enter into informal collaborative

partnerships, particularly as nonprofits seek a balance of power in their relationship with government agencies (Cho & Gillespie, 2006; Gazley, 2008; Gazley & Brudney, 2007). Moreover, such a study could provide valuable information that links trust and potentially other factors to outcomes, meaning successful service delivery. If nonprofits and government agencies operate from a position of trust rather than as a principal and agent as defined in the formal (contractual relationship), then such partnerships could represent the future. An important factor is to clearly define the parameters that govern these partnerships, providing a definition of what an informal collaborative partnership actually represents, which could involve trust and/or other factors.

Problem Statement

Successful informal partnerships between NPOs and local government entities to deliver public services may showcase models that will increasingly contribute to positive social change in communities, which is an area that denotes a gap in research. Partnerships between NPOs and government agencies represent a growing trend as government agencies have relied increasingly on nonprofit agencies to engage in public service delivery (Cho & Gillespie, 2006; Gazley 2008; Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Xu & Morgan, 2012). Research has focused primarily on formal or contractual partnerships between nonprofit agencies and government entities, but there are examples of informal and collaborative partnerships between nonprofits and government authorities as well (Gazley, 2008; Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Mendel & Brudney, 2012; Tsui et al., 2012). Issues of trust may be factors to the success of these partnerships as defined by meeting or exceeding performance goals, especially in the context of an informal partnership in

which the nonprofit entity seeks a balance of power in its relationship with the government agency (Cho & Gillespie, 2006; Gazley, 2008; Xu & Morgan, 2012). Contractual relationships enable a government entity to impose its will to ensure that a nonprofit delivers a public service as specified by a contract (Cho & Gillespie, 2006; Gazley, 2008; Gazley & Brudney, 2007). However, under the rubric of an informal partnership, such an imposition may not be present, which might enable both the nonprofit entity and government agency to develop a partnership based on trust in a collaborative environment. Such a notion supports this study of informal partnerships between NPOs and governments as a model of how these entities can work together for positive social change.

Xu and Morgan (2012) described the ideal partnership as consisting of shared goals and objectives, a mutual understanding of what each entity brings to the partnership and their responsibilities, respect, equality in the decision making process, accountability, and transparency. Mendel and Brudney (2012) added that through the framework of an informal partnership, the NPO fulfills a critical need that is necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of the project(s) that necessitate such partnerships. While there are many different types of partnerships that could involve actors, such as private sector entities or other NPOs, the relationship between the NPO and the government agency is vital to the success of the partnership. Research that focuses on the dynamics that surrounds the relationships of NPOs and government entities engaged in an informal partnership had been lacking, which constituted the focus of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the role of trust and possibly other factors, such as transparent communication, frequent interactions, past collaborations, and the level of commitment to the partnership, in helping to ensure the effectiveness of key work processes in these informal partnerships between nonprofits and government agencies. In this study, I considered the perspectives of nonprofit executives that had entered into informal partnerships with the City of Seattle or surrounding municipalities. Informal partnerships involving collaboration between a NPO and government entity not defined by a contract or formal agreement is an issue that will be explored in Chapter 2.

Experts have commented on the lack of research on issues of trust when nonprofits and government entities engage in informal collaborative partnerships, particularly as nonprofits seek a balance of power in their relationship with government agencies (Cho & Gillespie, 2006; Gazley, 2008; Gazley & Brudney, 2007). Moreover, such a study would provide valuable information that linked trust to outcomes, meaning successful service delivery. If nonprofits and government agencies operate from a position of trust rather than as a principal and agent as defined in the formal (contractual) relationship, then such partnerships could represent the future. An important factor is to clearly define the parameters that govern these partnerships, providing a definition of what an informal collaborative partnership actually represents, which could paint a picture of a successful partnership as measured through the delivery of a service that results in positive social change.

Case study research provided critical data to understand the nature of informal partnerships between NPOs and government agencies, about which there has been limited research (Cho & Gillespie, 2006; Gazley, 2008). Brown (2010) stated that case study research aids understanding and perceptions, progressions and implications, and for discovering the how and why with respect to practical, real-life cases. The in-depth information obtained from a select number of nonprofit executives and frontline managers revealed why trust is critical to successful partnership outcomes in which performance goals are either met or exceeded. Another factor to explore was the power imbalance that may have existed between nonprofit and government partners, especially if the nonprofit received funding from the government agency. Inherent is the relationship between trust and control and why they may be inverse (Woolthuis, Hillebrand, & Nooteboom, 2005) or a symptom of self-interest or opportunism (Chaserant, 2003), specifically within the realm of an informal partnership.

<div align="center">**Research Questions**</div>

This study addresses the following research question and subquestions:

Question

- What factors, as perceived by NPO executives, are critical in establishing a successful voluntary partnership between NPOs and local governments?

Subquestions

- What role does trust play between NPOs and government agencies that form an informal collaborative partnership to deliver a public service?

- What is the linkage between trust and the balance of power when NPOs and government agencies form informal collaborative partnerships?

- What strategies do NPOs employ to foster trust with their government partner?

- What other factors are thought to be critical to successful informal partnerships between nonprofits and government agencies?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework for this study was stewardship theory (Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 1997; Schillemans, 2012; Van Slyke, 2006) and game theory (Baniak & Dubina, 2012; Schelling, 2010; Zagare, 1984). Stewardship theory defines situations in which managers are not motivated by individual goals, but rather are stewards whose motives are aligned with the objectives of their principals (Davis et al., 1997; Van Slyke, 2006). Stewardship theory is applied in the context of partnerships in which there is a principal or government agency and a steward or NPO (Van Slyke, 2006). Issues concerning intrinsic motivators are critical to the existence of the stewardship theory, which may explain if and why trust is developed between governments and nonprofits (Davis et al., 1997; Deci, 1972; Van Slyke, 2007). Kahnweiler (2011) added that the stewards, those individuals who are engaged by NPOs, are more intrinsically motivated, which reinforces the notion that stewardship theory has become prevalent to understanding how NPOs operate, the values they espouse, and their approach to external relationships, such as with government entities.

Game theory also formed part of the theoretical framework for this research study. Schelling (2010) stated that game theory also provides a complimentary perspective by analyzing the choices that each entity (i.e., governments and nonprofits) make in the course of their partnership and if such choices are consistent with the principle-steward model (Schelling, 2010). Baniak and Dubina (2012) asserted that game theory involves a process that includes prognostications and pathways to solutions for those empowered to make decisions and undertake actions. McAdams (2014) added that game theory facilitates the development of trust when partners collaborate to implement joint actions. Stewardship and game theories and their relationship to informal partnerships between NPOs and governments will be further explored in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The nature of the study was qualitative with case study methodology. The epistemological context for conducting qualitative research, including case study research, defines the essence of original research. The researcher comes in contact with subjects in their environment, and he or she aims to gain a perspective and place into context those subjects' verbal and nonverbal communication (Creswell, 2013). Nelsen and Seamen (2011) advised that the researcher should incorporate the context in the environment where his or her research is unfolding. The relationships, operations, and interactions of the study's subjects is therefore a vital component, especially those who are engaged in the pursuit of social justice and equality (Nelsen & Seamen, 2011), such as NPOs and government partners. The researcher observes this environment through the interaction with those subjects during the interview process. MacNealy (1997) stated that

the case study approach usually enables the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a particular issue from the viewpoint of the subject(s). Gerring (2007) claimed that real-life situations and the necessity to acquire data from multiple sources for each case study also facilitates a more in-depth understanding from the subjects that participate in the research. The qualitative method and specifically the case study approach are consistent with exploring if and why trust and possibly other factors were paramount to successful informal partnerships between nonprofit entities and government agencies. In the current research, these informal partnerships were viewed from the vantage point of nonprofit executives.

Case study was the most useful qualitative approach to examine and analyze informal partnerships between NPOs and government agencies based on the stewardship and game theories. Case study research facilitates an in-depth review of about four to five informal partnerships between NPOs and government agencies through a series of interviews, recorded observations, and documentary reviews (Creswell, 2013; Gerring, 2007). I conducted a collective case study that facilitated multiple views on the operations of these partnerships, specifically referencing the issue of trust, which appears to be a critical component of the stewardship theory (Pastoriza & Ariño, 2008; Vallejo, 2009). In addition, I presented comparisons among the cases to understand which elements enable the partnership to thrive that could include trust.

Definitions

Collaboration: Collaboration in the partnership context could be defined as a strategic alliance in which the partners come together with varying levels of confidence to achieve common goals and objectives (Das & Teng, 1998).

Cross-sector collaboration: Cross-sector collaborations foster the communication of information and the allocation of resources under the close cooperation of two or more entities with an aim to achieve desirable results that would not otherwise be possible (Bryson et al., 2006).

Formal contracts: Formal contracts include duties and responsibilities to implement particular acts (Poppo & Zenger, 2002).

Formal partnership: A partnership between two or more entities that is bound by a formal or contractual agreement (Gazley, 2008).

Game theory: McAdams (2014) defined game theory as a mathematical theory in which scenarios reflecting possible strategies to augment advances and diminish losses are founded on the actions of those engaged in the game. Game theory is the epitome of interdependence in which the decisions of each person directly impacts the outcome.

Informal partnership: A partnership between two or more entities that is not bound by a formal or contractual agreement (Gazley, 2008).

Nonprofit organization (NPO): A nonprofit is designated as a 501 (c) organization under the U.S. internal revenue code. Such a status enables the nonprofit to function without having to pay federal, state, or local taxes (Portney & Cuttler, 2010). A

NPO does not seek to generate a profit and does not distribute revenue to its stakeholders, including those who are associated with the NPO (Cornell University Law School, n.d.).

Public service: Public service to include governments and nonprofits is defined by the characteristics and personal values of dedication, motivation, righteousness, resourcefulness, and selflessness to better the lives of citizens (Staats, 1998).

Stewardship: Stewardship is defined through one's mindset that reflects selflessness in upholding and sustaining the goals and values of the whole rather than of the individual (Hernandez, 2007).

Trust: Trust in the partnership context involves commitment, cooperation, accountability, and transparency (Abramov, 2010). Harrison and Furlong (2012) added that "trust is the level of positive expectation we have of another person, when in a situation of risk" (Harrison & Furlong, 2012, para. 6).

Assumptions

Assumptions are critical for setting the stage for research, and they help guide the research process. Assumptions involve justifications on beliefs that could be true, but they are not within the control of the researcher as the study unfolds (Simon, 2011). One of the assumptions of this study was that trust plays a role in successful informal NPO and government partnerships, specifically linked to the balance of power between the two partners. The development of trust between those at the forefront of the partnership takes time to develop and is achieved through many interactions, and thus another assumption was that the NPO employed strategies to foster trust with its government partner. Trust is maintained through a strong commitment to the partnership and the shared goals and

objectives of the NPO and government partners. Any deviations, particularly those involving self-interest, could derail the partnership and demonstrate that trust can easily be lost. Another assumption is factors other than trust could be critical to successful informal NPO and government partnerships.

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations define the parameters of the research, specifically what will be examined as the research process unfolds (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). The scope explains what is covered in the research (Creswell, 2013). This research addressed the dynamics that form the informal partnerships between NPOs and government entities. The central dynamic is trust, which may be critical to the success of the informal partnership between the nonprofit and government entity as measured by the efficient and effective delivery of a public service. There are other dynamics that are more, equally, or less important than trust that were explored during the research process, which became apparent during the interview process with the nonprofit executives whose organizations were engaged in these informal partnerships with local governments. The other dynamics that could guide the informal partnerships between NPOs and governments include open and transparent communication, frequency of interactions of between the NPO and its government partner, past experience in working with their government partner, and the level of commitment from both the NPO and the government entity to the partnership.

A factor inherent in this research concerned the results, specifically the efficient and effective delivery of a public service that affects positive social change in a community. While the dynamics of the informal partnerships were of a more intangible

nature, the results as denoted by achieving defined shared goals and objectives were tangible. Therefore, through evaluating both the intangibles and tangibles of successful informal partnerships between NPOs and governments, the research presented a more comprehensive picture of these partnerships.

Successful informal partnerships between NPOs and governments bring together both the intangible and tangible attributes mentioned above. The link that binds these attributes are the stewardship and game theories, because they delineate the values, characteristics, and beliefs that form these partnerships as well as the decision making process. These successful partnerships provide a framework for the other NPOs and government partners to follow.

Limitations

Case study research involving four to five successful informal partnerships between NPOs and governments is limited in scope and cannot be generalized to the population of those who are engaged in these partnerships. Therefore, through focusing on informal partnerships between NPOs and governments in one geographical area such as the Northwest United States, the dynamics that surround these informal partnerships could be different than similar partnerships in another geographic region. Moreover, the people that are involved in these partnerships and their values, assumptions, and beliefs could be different as well.

Bias is another limitation, both from my personal standpoint and those NPO executives interviewed for this research project. With respect to my personal bias, I am a government employee, and my perceptions and beliefs emanate from a government

culture. Interview preparation was critical, especially preparing the questions and follow-up questions that were unbiased. Moreover, the tone of my discourse was important, particularly demonstrating an open-minded attitude to learn and record the information as stated. In Chapter 3, I will discuss how this bias was controlled.

For the NPO executives, their personal experiences impact their perceptions of working with government entities. If their previous experience with government entities was negative, it would naturally skew their present perception and the dynamics of their partnerships would be altered. Therefore, understanding these experiences and pinpointing any personal bias that could creep into the interviews was critical and helped present a more balanced and transparent case study of these informal partnerships between NPOs and governments.

Significance

Through this study, I hoped to enhance the understanding of what constitutes successful informal partnerships between NPOs and government agencies, specifically at the local level. The dynamics that define a partnership that results in the effective and efficient delivery of services to communities are flexible yet provide guidance to nonprofits and government agencies that have or will form informal partnerships. The central component of these partnerships concerns the development and sustainment of trust, which incorporates open and honest communication, information sharing, joint decision making, and reflects shared values, goals, and objectives for affecting positive social change. The pursuit and understanding of such a dynamic is critical to further research of informal partnerships between NPOs and governments.

This research was conducted in an environment where informal partnerships between NPOs and government agencies at the local level are becoming more prominent as they jointly seek to improve the social and economic environment in their respective communities. While this research study analyzes the relationship between NPOs and governments engaged in these informal partnerships, such partnerships may not be exclusive to just two organizations. They could involve other NPOs, government agencies, and private sector interests, but for the purposes of this study, the case studies involving informal partnerships between a NPO and a government agency were limited to examining their relationship as deemed critical to the successful functioning of the informal partnership.

Summary

This chapter presented the topic of informal partnerships between NPOs and government agencies, and the dynamics, including trust, that guide these partnerships. The theoretical framework incorporating stewardship and game theories offered insights on the root of these dynamics, specifically the values, beliefs, and thought processes of the actors involved in these partnerships, that is, the nonprofit executives. The chapter concluded with the relevance for this research study and why it is important for NPOs and government agencies engaged in these partnerships and ultimately for maximizing positive social change in communities everywhere. In Chapter 2, I analyze the literature with respect to the partnerships between nonprofits and governments and the dynamics that could detail the recipe for successful partnerships, specifically informal partnerships

between NPOs and governments. The chapter will also explain the gap in the literature on the topic of informal NPO and government partnerships.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Extensive research and analysis on formal partnerships between nonprofits and government entities has been conducted, but there is a lack of research on informal partnerships. There is a connection between formal and informal partnerships in that formal partnerships afford a basis for considering the dynamics that may be present within the realm of an informal partnership. The purpose of this chapter is to review literature focused specifically on NPOs and their role in society, formal and informal partnerships involving NPOs and government entities, relevant theories (i.e., stewardship and game theories) germane to informal partnerships between nonprofits and governments, and possible dynamics, such as trust, that were essential for this research process.

The discussion begins by presenting the theoretical foundation for this research study, specifically the stewardship and game theories. Then, the focus will shift to the rationale for the existence of the nonprofit sector and its contributions to the economic and social development of society, followed by the three critical elements that help define the role and impact of NPOs: social capital, ethics, and values. Then the mechanics that surround NPO and government partnerships are considered, followed by the dynamics that could explain successful informal NPO and government partnerships, specifically power and trust.

The nonprofit sector has become a significant player in the delivery of social services to communities across the United States and an important contributor to

economic development and prosperity. Berman (2010) explained the significance of NPOs as an advocate for the needs and desires of communities, which trust them with the delivery of critical social and education services and ultimately their welfare. NPOs are able to enhance the social and economic status of individuals and communities, which reflects their mission of being a voice and proponent for positive social change (Berman, 2010).

Literature Search Strategy

This research involved using several online databases, including Academic Search Complete and ProQuest Central, to locate relevant articles from journals. Additionally, searches were conducting using the Walden University EBook databases. Moreover, additional articles were identified through scanning the sources used in already identified journal articles. The key search word terms included the following: *nonprofit and government partnerships, nonprofit partnerships, government partnerships, trust partnerships, stewardship, government contracting, community partnerships,* and *social service delivery*. I often conducted title searches using the key words and sometimes included all text searches in order to filter the results. For example, *government and nonprofit profit partnerships* as a title search that included *trust* as an all text field. My strategy resulted in a wide range of articles that enabled me to develop a relevant literature review and shape this research study.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this research study relied on both the stewardship and game theories, both of which provided perspective on how and why informal

partnerships between NPOs and governments can be successful. Both the stewardship and game theories make possible successful informal partnerships between NPOs and governments, because they reveal the good intentions of those involved to collaborate on and implement decisions and actions that create win-win situations and reflect common goals and objectives.

Stewardship Theory

Stewardship theory reflects the good intentions of NPOs and government actors to collaborate and aim for win-win situations that are mutually beneficial. Stewardship theory has been presented as counter to agency theory in which the interests of the principal and agent (steward) are aligned (Schillemans, 2012; Van Slyke, 2006). Stewards are motivated by collective successes and intrinsic rewards, including trust, which they view as the basis for engaging in partnerships with government agencies (Van Slyke, 2006). It would appear that stewards are the opposite of agents and represent an alternative framework for NPO and government partnerships. Such a notion could be explained by Greenleaf's (1977) servant-leadership theory, where leaders and followers, both servants, are primarily concerned with the well-being of communities and striving to make the world in which we live a better place. Therefore, Greenleaf's theory could be presented as a foundation to explain the stark differences between agency and stewardship theories. Before exploring how stewardship theory factors into partnerships between nonprofits and governments, a brief analysis of agency theory is necessary.

Agency theory is an established theory and one that has been extensively covered in the literature. Davis et al. (1997), Schillemans (2012), and Van Puyvelde et al. (2012)

agreed that agency theory is centered on conflicts between a principal and an agent whose actions are self-serving. Each party attempts to maximize their benefit and minimize any drawbacks. Bhandari (2010) explained that agency theory poses three problems: self-interested behavior creates conflicts in the principle-agent relationship; costs associated with the principal ensuring that the agent is undertaking their responsibilities properly as result of irregularities in knowledge and information sharing; and risk sharing. The nonprofit structure itself does not have the principal-agent dynamic, as there are no principals or shareholders (Bhandari, 2010). Nonprofits may be more predisposed to unethical behavior in the absence of principals and possibly donors monitoring and checking their behavior.

The agent, meaning the nonprofit, is supposed to perform a function that would normally be undertaken by the principal (government), but they may attempt to act in a manner that is most beneficial to them personally (Davis et al., 1997). The partnership between the nonprofit (agent) and the government (principal) has traditionally been formal, in which there is a contract that binds the partnership (Van Slyke, 2006). The agent is contracted to deliver a service to the public. These contractual partnerships have been fraught with problems primarily due to the self-interested behavior of those involved (Van Slyke, 2006). Such behavior has diverted NPOs from their core mission to serve communities.

The motivations behind behavior grounded in self-interest is complex, yet could be explained through one's knowledge and interests. The agent is the holder of information and know-how when it comes to aiming for the effective and efficient

delivery of a public service (Schillemans, 2012; Van Slyke, 2006). The agent uses knowledge to their advantage even misleading or deceiving the principal to maximize personal benefits (Van Slyke 2006). When principals lack information and understanding of the situation, they may counter by imposing their will (Schillemans, 2012). The principal will dictate how the service will be delivered and will enforce accountability measures to ensure that the agent is compliant per the terms of their contract Schillemans, 2012).

The focus now shifts to the stewardship theory, which could be considered as a counterweight to the agency theory. According to researchers, stewardship theory differs from agency theory in that the agent referred to as the steward and the principal collaborate to achieve collective goals (Davis et al., 1997; Schillemans, 2012; Van Slyke, 2006). The steward is intrinsically motivated to work on behalf of the principal toward a common objective, and the relationship between the steward and principle is based on trust and respect (Davis et al., 1997; Van Slyke, 2006). Stewardship theory should not be confused with a perfect situation, but it does present an environment in which the steward and principle are unified in their approach and desire to achieve the same goals (Davis et al., 1997; Schillemans, 2012). Davis et al. (1997) stated that stewardship theory is relatively new and its bona fides as a theory have not yet been confirmed. Therefore, in their view, research is essential to confirm stewardship theory's place as an established theory not as merely the antithesis of agency theory (Davis et al., 1997). The hope is that this project contributes to research in this regard through the lens of successful partnerships between nonprofits and governments.

Stewardship theory introduces new dynamics that could confirm its place as a relevant theoretical backbone when analyzing the dynamics that define successful informal partnerships between nonprofits and governments. For example, Davis et al. (1997) framed stewardship theory as involving mutual accountability, representing a clear distinction from agency theory. Mutual accountability is about equal responsibility in which both the principal and steward are responsible for their actions and are held to the same standard, even though their contributions are qualitatively and quantitatively different and not always possible to measure (Davis et al., 1997). There are challenges and obstacles to overcome in order to establish a principal-steward partnership. These factors are relevant for partnerships between nonprofits and governments, but may be more prevalent when the partnership is informal.

Such factors will now form the basis for this discussion as an aim to showcase why stewardship theory is relevant for these informal partnerships. Some experts asserted that stewardship theory is a response to agency theory in which the principals and agents undermine their partnership through selfish actions that negatively impact the goals and objectives that bind their partnerships (Van Slyke, 2006). However, others believed that stewardship theory is a complement to agency theory and should be viewed as such (Caers et al., 2006; Van Puyvelde et al., 2012). The principal and agent are frequently at odds and are forced to devote their energy to resolving differences rather than focusing on achieving set goals and objectives. Stewardship theory attempts to address these challenges and provide a model of how to achieve a successful partnership. Davis et al. (1997) described stewardship theory as state of mind in which the stewards are selfless

and their actions aim to benefit the whole rather than the part. Stewards derive their

motivation intrinsically in which their values reflect those of the community and are

based on a genuine desire to realize positive social change.

Stewardship theory is about identifying those qualities that will create an

environment where the relationship between the steward and principal is one based on

mutual respect and trust. These qualities emanate from the steward's will to essentially do

a good job with an aim to achieving common goals and objectives that they share with

the principal. In particular, it is those intrinsic qualities that shape the dynamics of the

informal partnership and should be identified and embraced.

Experts asserted that the most important factor in analyzing partnerships between

NPOs and governments could be the individuals, the steward and the principal, who are

central to developing and sustaining the informal partnerships. A central component of

stewardship theory is intrinsic motivation, particularly as it pertains to the steward (Davis

et al., 1997). Deci (1972) explained that money and verbal reinforcements have an

opposing impact on intrinsic motivation, money negatively impacts it while verbal

reinforcement tends to enhance intrinsic motivation. Deci (1972) emphasized that an

individual who is intrinsically motivated will perform a function without the expectation

of some personal reward. It is the success of the activity that is important. Deci (1972)

suggested that when someone performs a function, such as delivering a service, their

intrinsic motivation could be measured through the lens of money. If money were

involved, it would be difficult for an individual to assert that they are intrinsically

motivated to perform the activity. Feiock and Jang (2009) reinforced Deci's position by

stating that "altruistic values and caring attitudes" are "intrinsic to nonprofit organizations" (p. 669), and Berman and West (1995) explained that NPOs are not motivated by money but rather providing the best possible social services. Such an assertion creates a clear distinction between the agency and stewardship theories.

It could be possible to infer from Berman and West (1995), and Feiock and Jang (2009) that there are distinct differences between formal and informal partnerships involving nonprofits and governments, an indication that such partnerships could be placed on a continuum in which there are a number of hybrid forms. Whether the partnership is formal or informal, the NPO could receive funds from a government source, but a NPO engaged in an informal partnership may enjoy more autonomy to implement the service in a manner that is most comfortable for them. A principal/steward relationship could be a reality in which the NPO is on an equal footing with the government partner and not bound by accountability measures that forces them into a uncomfortable position. The existence of such relationships represented another area for exploration when analyzing informal partnerships between NPOs and government agencies.

While mutual accountability could distinguish stewardship theory as a unique concept, the elements that define stewardship theory are much more vast and provide perspective as to why mutual accountability is practical. The engines of stewardship theory involve self-regulation, autonomy, and responsibility to create an environment where the steward feels empowered (Van Puyvelde et al., 2012). The steward is able to track their progress, including any reporting functions without any perceived external

pressures. The steward is intrinsically motivated to produce results and views accountability as a natural part of the process that is necessary to achieving a successful result (Van Puyvelde et al., 2012). There is a strong linkage between mutual accountability and intrinsic motivation, particularly as its represents a defining quality of the stewardship theory.

A more in-depth understanding of intrinsic motivation is necessary to reinforce this linkage. Stewards are not motivated by financial rewards, but there are incentives that can help fuel intrinsic motivation. As previously stated, verbal praise from the principal is important and provides positive reinforcement to the steward. Other incentives includes acknowledgement and reputation, meaning that the steward and his or her organization will be viewed in a positive light for their efforts to contribute to positive social change through the successful delivery of a community service. The key component that removes any notion of individual benefit is a realization that the steward believes that their work is contributing to a greater good and they can view and experience the results of their efforts first-hand. For example, an NPO that provides employment-counseling services to youth in impoverished communities can view the results of their actions when the recipients secure gainful employment.

Stewardship theory in practice has not yet achieved the same level of application in the public sector realm as agency theory. One could postulate that culture is an important factor impeding the advent of stewardship theory. The agency theory offers a partial explanation where government managers and their nonprofit partners are

extrinsically motivated by self-interest and financial rewards. The other side of the equation could be found through the lens of the game theory.

Game Theory

Game theory is the study of how one or more entities, including governments and NPOs, reach decisions considering many possible alternatives in conditions when the results are contingent upon the choices all concerned make considering their personal predispositions with respect to all conceivable results (Schelling, 2010). Inherent in the process is the consideration of the process of how they may reasonably and realistically arrive at their inter-reliant decisions (Schelling, 2010). Game theory involves exploring conflict and cooperation between those who usually make decisions based on rational motives.

Morgenstern (1978) explained that game theory inherently involves one actor trying to enhance their position in an environment where the variables are either "dead" or "live". It is those live variables that could either augment or diminish one's goals and objectives (Morgenstern, 1978). The inception of game theory was primarily a mathematical concept, and Dixit (2005) asserted that it has now become strategic. The knowledge of game theory should be a foundation for rationale decisions, especially ones that involve economics (Dixit, 2005). The players are engaged in a match relying on quantitative information to render decisions that could result in personally beneficial outcomes.

Game theory affords practical applications that solidify it as pertinent for informal partnerships between nonprofits and governments. Game theory offers a mechanism to

make predictions, devise remedies, and develop solutions for decision makers (Baniak &

Dubina, 2012). Subsequently, a pathway to effective and efficient implementation

becomes possible (Baniak & Dubina, 2012). One could then infer that such a process is

undertaken where both sides believe that there will be a predictable outcome (Schelling,

2010), because they have taken a rational approach to make it happen. Moreover, it

could be possible to determine that both sides have developed a level of trust based upon

their ability to effectively work with one another and devise a process to ensure a

successful result. However, as game theory has developed over time, some experts have

developed new definitions of game theory in which rationality is not essential.

Evolutionary game theory may offer a more relevant perspective on the decisions

making processes of principals and stewards. Evolutionary game theory considers the

decisions that result in potential positive outcomes that are personally beneficial and

could include the achievement of social goals that reflect the values of fairness and

equality (Vasile, Costea, & Viciu, 2012). Principals and stewards could possess a clear

vision which connects their decisions to outcomes that promote positive social change

through the effective delivery of a program or service. The good news is that if such a

process unfolds others will want to replicate it as well.

An important element that comes to the fore when describing game theory

involves the rational decision making processes and whether it is essential. A decision

could be made using predefined criteria that are consistent with policy or regulations, but

there is a human element that comes into play in the form of uncertainty and human

interactions (Schelling, 2010; Vasile et al., 2012). Schelling (2010) made the linkage

between influence and rationality in that influence could somehow shape the rationale arrived at when making a decision. Vasile et al. (2012) couched the issue in terms of perspectives that individuals utilize as a foundation for rationalizing their decisions. Inherent in both of Schelling (2010), and Vasile et al. (2012) contentions is uncertainty, which involves the lack of a clear picture of the resulting outcomes that will force the principal and steward to rely on their knowledge, experience, best practices or even 'wishful' thinking to make a decision. However, perhaps an even more important aspect is the interactions between the steward and principal, which could influence the decisions. Such interactions provide the connection between stewardship and game theories.

The behaviors of one partner could be transmitted to the other partner, which is particularly desirable if such behaviors foster the dynamics that reflect successful informal partnerships between nonprofits and governments. Vasile et al. (2012) believed that imitation is relevant in that people will copy behavior that leads to successful outcomes and attempt to replicate it within their own environment. The hope is that the domino affect will unfold as individuals will be able to discern a linkage between specific behaviors and beneficial outcomes (Vasile et al., 2012). It could be possible to advance that trust is a critical factor that is innate in such behaviors which leads to beneficial results including positive social change. The behaviors that are characteristic of game theory could be both connected to the stewardship theory and help to define the dynamics that support effective informal partnership models involving nonprofits and governments.

In this regard, concerning the study on successful informal partnerships between NPOs and government agencies, the nonzero sum component of game theory appears to be most relevant. Nonzero sum games focus on interactions between two players and stipulates that the players could share the same vision and goals with respect to optimal outcomes (Zagare, 1984). McAdams (2014) couched game theory in terms of rationality which could run counter to nonzero sum games. Rationality embodies a full picture understanding of the issue, but it also stipulates that individuals can identify their wishes and will strive to pursue them (McAdams, 2014). There is a conundrum pitting communal interests versus self-interest.

Therefore, an analysis of nonzero sum games element of game theory could showcase their germaneness to informal partnerships between nonprofits and governments. One the one hand, the complexity of nonzero sum games is what makes them practical and relevant in today's world (Zagare, 1984). The process involves analyzing exactly what are the optimal outcome(s), whether the players involved are aiming for those outcomes, and how the players strategize when making decisions in relation to an optimal result or perhaps demonstrating a desire to change course and develop a new optimal outcome(s) (Zagare, 1984). Rationality, on the other hand, is possessing a clear vision and working toward that vision even it if means placing personal interests first (McAdams, 2014). McAdams (2014) stipulated that game theory is not necessarily predicated upon rationality, meaning that the game theory can help individuals reach decisions in the absence of a rational process. It is my contention that stewardship theory, consistent with the nonzero sum game approach, can replace or

make-up for the absence of rationality to enable players to make decisions that will optimize beneficial outcomes. This reality was manifested through this case study research.

Such a notion explains why the complexities inherent in nonzero sum games could be resolved through the lens of the stewardship theory. The stewardship theory assumes that both players are unified in their mission, vision, and pathway to achieving a desirable outcome(s) that will be mutually beneficial for them and their intended recipients of the social service. The players can chart a pathway to reach desired outcomes in which they agree. The possible complexity concerns that pathway and the strategies involved that define such a process. It is probable that the decisions will be made with the interest of both players in mind and will be mutually agreed upon each step of the way. The reality may paint a different picture, meaning that decisions taken may not be reflective of rationality.

There are other considerations to take into account with respect to game theory and nonzero sum games. Game theory, specifically nonzero sum games, considers nonmyopic rationality which goes directly to the issue of trust that is apparently a central component of stewardship theory (Zagare, 1984). Nonmyopic rationality stipulates that while the two players start off with same vision for a desired outcome(s), each of them has the ability to change course that could create a domino effect (Zagare, 1984). Vasile et al. (2012) explained that with the Nash Equilibrium no player may change course on their own and personally gain from such a change. A possible scenario that could unfold would involve one player changing course by charting a new pathway, then the other

player could respond by changing to a different course as well, meaning that each player is no longer charting the same pathway, which could impact the desired outcome(s). It is only when the two players come back to the same pathway that the game will no longer be an issue (Zagare, 1984). Both players should then agree to change course in tandem.

Therefore, trust is the critical link in that the two players enter into the partnership charting with same pathway to a shared optimal outcome(s). The players apparently possess a high level of confidence and assurance that either one will not change course without consulting and mutually agreeing to a new course. Nonmyopic rationality would be replaced by symbiotic exercise rather than a tit for tat display that could damage the partnership. Decisions to change strategies will be jointly taken and reflect a normal game in which complete information, at least in the eye of the two players, is available for them to take joint decisions (Zagare, 1984). The point to consider is the possibility of nonmyopic rationality seeping into the informal partnership between NPOs and governments, even successful ones, and how the players involved overcome the challenges and complexities it represents.

The connection between game theory and trust is the next point to consider within the rubric of informal partnerships between nonprofits and governments. Game theory allows for trust to manifest itself when two players come together for a specific purpose (McAdams, 2014). The key ingredient is that both players must allow themselves to trust as well as seek to earn the trust of the other player (McAdams, 2014). Inherent in this process is integrity in which both players are concerned about how they are perceived and are genuinely concerned with maintaining and building on their stature as people who are

trustworthy (McAdams, 2014). The benefit of building and sustaining trust are win-win situations in which both players mutually benefit (McAdams, 2014), which means that rationale motives may not be required when making decisions. The discussion will now shift to the concepts and themes in the literature that are relevant for this research study.

<p align="center">**Literature Review: Related Concepts and Variables**</p>

The economic and social case for the nonprofit sector is the first step to understanding why these organizations are important to communities around the world. The elements that define NPOs, specifically social capital, ethics, and values form the next phase of the discussion. Then, the mechanics of partnerships between NPOs and governments are presented through the lens of formal and informal partnerships, followed by the dynamics that could define these partnerships, specifically power imbalance and trust.

NPOs

In 2012, about 1.6 million NPOs were in operation as defined by their registration status with the IRS, making it the fastest growing sector compared to private businesses and government organizations (IRS Data Book, 2012; Urban Institute, 2013). According to the IRS, 1.36 million tax-exempt organizations, including NPOs, filed tax returns in 2012 (IRS Data Book, 2012). Nonprofits contributed about $780 billion to the U.S. economy in 2010 accounting for approximately 5.4% of gross domestic product (Urban Institute, 2013). The growth rate of the nonprofit sector was the strongest compared to the business and government sectors (Urban Institute, 2013). The 2009 figures illustrate that nonprofits are major job creators employing over 10% of the entire workforce and

accounting for about 9% of total wages and salaries in the United States (Urban Institute, 2013). Berman (2010) explained that the majority of NPOs are small organizations that pull far above their weight in terms of their economic impact on society. NPOs are most commonly known for delivering health and education services, but there are different types of NPOs providing services and affecting positive social change from many different sectors (Berman, 2010).

In the United States, an increasing number of government-funded public services are delivered by NPOs through joint efforts and cooperation (Suárez, 2010). When governments are able to clearly enunciate what they require and expect from NPOs, it becomes easier to define the parameters of how they interact with them (Whitaker, Altman-Sauer, & Henderson, 2004). In most instances, these public services are implemented by nonprofits through engaging in partnerships with government organizations or what some experts would refer to as collaborations between the nonprofit and government sectors.

Nonprofits have transformed how public services are delivered around the United States (Smith, 2008). Moreover, NPOs have enabled citizens as volunteers and board members to actively engage in the governance and implementation of public service delivery (Smith, 2008), and their voices have contributed to a more effective and efficient delivery of services that have produced social benefits for communities. Feiock and Jang (2009) contended that NPOs are a reflection of the values that are important to communities which is linked to their mission of serving communities. Berman and West (1995) explained that nonprofits are motivated to assist individuals and communities by

delivering public services that could result in positive social change with minimal financial gain for their organization. Feiock and Jang (2009) believed that NPOs embody "altruistic values and caring attitudes" with the goal to aide vulnerable populations that stand to derive significant social benefits (p. 669).

There are drawbacks that arise within partnerships between NPOs and governments that ultimately inhibit some NPOs and governments from continuing or even forming partnerships. Gazley (2010) revealed that when NPOs and governments collaborate there are significant transaction costs and the goal is to minimize them, though these costs in the form of resources and time are challenging to control. From the perspective of the NPO, a partnership with a government entity can infringe on their independence especially if they must follow government directives and instructions (Gazley, 2010). It is important to note that internal and external pressures can negatively influence these partnerships creating tensions, especially when the motivations and desires of those involved change and threaten the collaborative foundation through which the partnership was established (Gazley, 2010).

The rationale for the growth of partnerships between NPOs and government agencies could be described as follows: "Thrust into or voluntarily stepping up to fill in the gaps in available services because of local, state, and federal administrative failures, nonprofits oftentimes respond to the crisis by forming or engaging in collaborative activities" (Simo & Bies, 2007, p. 125). These collaborations through NPO and government partnerships take many forms and are often formed with varying degrees of formality (Simo & Bies, 2007). For example, Eschenfelder (2010) asserted that

collaborations are essential in the growth, implementation, and effectiveness of health and human services that enhance the social well being of communities. A significant statement given that NPOs operating in the health and human services account for approximately 46% of all NPOs in the United States (Urban Institute, 2012).

Most of the literature has focused on formal or contractual partnerships between NPOs and government agencies, because they are the prominent paradigm from which to conduct analyses. However, informal or noncontractual partnerships are becoming more popular, a sign that the face of partnerships NPOs and government agencies is changing. Eschenfelder (2010) painted a picture of an environment where informal partnerships between nonprofits and government agencies would seem to be an optimal solution to the challenges that NPOs are facing to effectively and efficiently serve their communities and promote positive social change. NPOs face two critical challenges that have defined this sector in recent years. The first challenge is securing adequate funding to operate as an entity (Eschenfelder, 2010), an impetus for many of them to seek funding from government sources (Gazley, 2008). The other challenge concerns environmental issues such as the changing landscape of community needs which places NPOs in the position of being reactive rather than proactive (Eschenfelder, 2010). Berman (2010) advised and encouraged NPOs to find a balance between 'fund' and 'friend' raising, which in itself is a proactive move where the NPOs demonstrates their value. Such a strategy is a viable solution to enable NPOs to become more proactive.

While the dynamics that define informal partnerships between NPOs and governments may be different, the primary goal and purpose should be similar. Coston

(1998) described partnerships between nonprofits and governments as diverse running the gamut depending on their purposes and communities served as the organizations, specifically nonprofits and governments that are involved. In the United States and even around the world, governments partner with nonprofits as a mechanism to reach and serve communities (Alexander & Nank, 2009). Feiock & Jang (2009) expressed that NPOs partner with governments as a mechanism to fulfill the socioeconomic necessities of communities. Leroux & Sneed (2006) stated that NPOs, due to contracting with governments, are now undertaking more varied functions in serving communities. Raymond, Gallagher & Hanson, 2012, referenced that governments, specifically at the local level, have help build this capacity. For example, Raymond et al. (2012) mentioned accountability and performance standards of NPOs to undertake contracts to deliver public services. Shea (2011) summed up partnerships between NPOs and governments as a mechanism to access, energize, and build capacity within communities. Partnerships between NPOs and governments while diverse in practice are vital in the quest to achieve positive social change.

Social Capital

Social capital should be a central dynamic that helps define informal partnerships between NPOs and governments. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defined social capital as groups and associations with common beliefs, principles and standards that foster collaboration both internally and externally (Passey & Lyons, 2006). The World Bank (2011) added that social capital involves the organizations, interactions, and standards that qualitatively and quantitatively define and

measure the social connections within the global community. Saxton and Benson (2005)

explained that social capital is the barometer to measure the economic and social vitality

of communities through the lens of community service networks that reflect and promote

trust and mutual benefit. Social capital is integral as informal NPO and government

partners seek to achieve positive social change and may define why the nonprofit sector

has become increasingly prominent as proponents for community development.

Social capital is part of the equation that both defines the existence of NPOs and

why they are such critical partners for governments. Experts linked the growth of the

nonprofit sector to social capital, which forms the basis for the existence of NPOs (King,

2004; Passey & Lyons, 2006; Saxton & Benson, 2005). King stipulated that NPOs must

sustain the social capital that form the core of their existence and develop strategies to

expand it. Passey and Lyons (2006) explained that NPOs are at the forefront of

reproducing social capital, and they do so in an environment in which relationships based

on trust are prevalent. Saxton and Benson (2005) linked social capital and trust to the

social and economic benefits derived by communities. Saxton and Benson (2005) also

stated that social capital is about collaboration in the face of the social and economic

challenges that are prevalent in society. Clearly there is a strong linkage between social

capital and partnerships that reflect strong collaboration and are based on trust from

which mutual benefits may then be derived.

Such benefits both define successful informal partnerships between NPOs and

governments and why they are successful in their joint pursuit of positive social change.

Fredette and Bradshaw (2012) described the benefits of social capital to involve open and

honest relationships that reflect the free-flow of information between partners, and shared goals and values that are a reflection of trust. Through continued interactions and relationship building, trust can be developed which minimizes opportunistic behavior and reduces transaction costs (Fredette & Bradshaw, 2012). Social capital then becomes the focus through which its benefits can be accrued by joint action that fosters positive social change in communities, which leads to the role of NPOs and social capital.

If NPOs reflect the mission of social capital, then it would seem that they have become the voice of communities which could explain why they are desirable partners for governments. Passey and Lyons (2006) asserted that NPOs are well positioned to support the development and growth of social capital in communities. NPOs are the cornerstone through which social capital comes to the fore and manifests itself through economic and social benefits for communities everywhere (Passey & Lyons, 2006; Saxton & Benson, 2005). King (2004) stated that NPOs must focus on social capital development as a precursor to initiating strategic partnerships, such as with government entities. In this regard, King (2004) stipulated that social capital involves a relational focus in which relationships involve dedication, conviction, confidence, knowledge sharing, and stability. Fredette and Bradshaw (2012) added that the relational focus of social capital provides a vital context for partners to make decisions that reflect shared goals and values. It is evident that social capital is a critical element as NPOs and governments seek to form successful partnerships.

The linkage between social capital and trust could be the necessary foundation on the pathway to productive partnerships. Social capital can be developed and expanded

through partnerships between NPOs and government entities (Saxton & Benson, 2005).

A central theme of social capital as related to these and other types of collaborations is

trust. The positive association between social capital and trust as related to partnerships

between NPOs and governments involves the day-to-day communication and facilitation

that reflects the shared goals and mutual benefits that are pursued and actualized (Passey

& Lyons, 2006; Saxton & Benson, 2005). King (2004) stipulated that if trust is

developed between the individuals involved in initiating and sustaining these

relationships, then they will more inclined to collaborate to achieve shared goals and

objectives. I n summary, social capital requires a sustained investment directly linked to

partnerships between NPOs and governments that can grow and prosper over time yet

diminish in the absence of a strong commitment and investment of time and resources

(King, 2004). NPOs and governments must be committed to the tenants of social capital

and then to building a partnership that is defined by strong collaboration and trust.

Ethics

It appears the literature substantiates in general that ethics is about right and

wrong in the nonprofit world, and NPOs are perceived as trustworthy because they make

decisions that are more ethically sound (Strickland & Vaughan, 2008). The foundation

for actions that pass the ethical litmus test is the organizational culture. Strickland and

Vaughan (2008) stressed that organizational culture is the determinant directly impacting

ethical behavior, particularly through the lens of integrity. Strickland and Vaughan

(2008) likened one's integrity to their motivation to act based on Maslow's hierarchy of

needs. When an individual achieves "self-fulfillment", the highest level on Maslow's

scale, they will be motivated to undertake actions that are reflective of integrity and ethically sound (Strickland & Vaughan, 2008). Alternatively, Grobman (2007) introduced a code of ethics that also incorporates integrity and the NPOs ability to become trustworthy. Svara (2007) framed ethics by referring to "well-based standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of duties, principles, specific virtues, or benefits to society" (p. 10). Therefore, ethics is defined by what is right and wrong, but the actions and motivations of those who make decisions may not always be clearly defined as right or wrong.

The issue essentially revolves around what constitutes an ethical NPO in which integrity has come to the fore and is reflective in every decision and action undertaken by the organization. Strickland and Vaughan (2008) explained that an organization which represents an ethical culture has achieved financial competence, accountability (transparency), reciprocity, respect, and ultimately integrity. These five components represent Strickland and Vaughan's version of Maslow's hierarchy as it relates to fostering an ethical culture within a NPO. It is important to note that each element involves trust and when scaling the hierarchy to integrity, the NPOs may be viewed as a steward that is a trustworthy source to interact with and provide for communities (Strickland & Vaughan, 2008). Grobman (2007) included seven elements in his code of ethics that include integrity, equality, economic efficiency, equivalence, distributive, contributive and environmental. Svara's (2007) four components are taken from the definition above in which he stipulated that honesty, competency and integrity are

essential when carrying out one's duties, in this case serving communities. Ethics and integrity are seemingly intertwined and could help to define trust.

If NPO and government partners value integrity, it would seem that they are committed to building a relationship built on trust. Consider Strickland and Vaughan's (2008) hierarchy, where each component builds upon the other, which means that integrity is not possible without achieving all four components below it. These five components are critical with respect to NPO partnerships with government organizations, particularly as they seek to build trust., If a NPO has not built an internal structure that champions financial competence, accountability, reciprocity, respect and integrity, it will be extraordinarily difficult for them to be perceived as trustworthy by external partners, specifically the government entities with which they partner. With respect to Grobman's (2007) code, integrity provisions appear to be most important, because it encompasses principles, standards, authenticity, transparency, frankness, accountability, and trust. Such provisions will make possible the other six elements that both create an ethical culture and enable the organization to effectively and successfully partner and serve their communities. Referencing the components of ethics introduced by Svara (2007), the author focused on duty and summed up how these elements may be achieved through linking duty – the essence of the public service ethic – with integrity, goodness, values and the pursuit of positive social change. In sum, integrity represents the epitome of an organization that is perceived as trustworthy, a perquisite for building partnerships based on trust.

The discussion now turns to the practical realities that uncover whether NPOs are committed to integrity and their ability to be perceived as trustworthy partners. In view of partnerships between NPOs and governments, reciprocity is arguably the most critical component and could derail a NPO from scaling the hierarchy to integrity (Strickland & Vaughan, 2008). Strickland and Vaughan (2008) stated that reciprocity epitomizes NPOs which deliver public services that reflect well upon them and in the process develop and sustain trust from their donors and those whom they serve. The challenge for the nonprofit is to raise funds to enable them to pursue their mission, but such funds may come with restrictions that force the NPOs to diverge from their mission to appease the donor (Strickland & Vaughan, 2008). On a related note, Grobman (2007) recounted that any decision or action undertaken by NPOs could be explained through multiple motivations rendering any ethical issue as challenging. A NPO may be perceived as acting with self-interest and bring to the fore questions of whether it is acting in the best interest of its intended beneficiaries (Grobman, 2007). In the case of NPOs, they must continually strive to match any external funds raised that match their interests with that of the donor (Strickland & Vaughan, 2008). Such a notion supports the development of informal partnerships in which the NPO is not bound by a contractual obligation where they must act in accordance with rules and regulations imposed by the government donor.

Therefore, such rules and regulations may prevent NPOs from moving beyond reciprocity. Strickland and Vaughan (2008) referred to these rules and regulations as external controls, and reciprocity represents the transition. It may be possible to postulate that most NPOs are stuck in the reciprocity stage because they must conform to these

external controls and cannot move beyond to create an ethical culture that incorporates respect and integrity. Moreover, their government partner and the public whom they serve may not perceive them as trustworthy. In fact, Grobman (2007) informed that the nonprofit sector is the subject of many confirmed and suspected lapses in ethical behavior that tarnished its reputation as a trustworthy source for community services. Svara (2007) explained that public administrators, to include NPO executives, are challenged either by the system within which they work or the situation that can lead to unethical behavior. Svara (2007) added that there are some individuals that act from self-interest because the system allows it. Svara (2007) claimed that these ethical challenges might be overcome by remembering one's public service duty and ethic while remaining true to their mission to serve communities.

As NPOs become more prominent questions of ethics are likely to arise, especially when they are scrutinized for the services they provide to communities. Kyarimpa (2008) explained that Svara's inclusion of NPOs in his book as timely due to the increasing role they are taking in public service delivery. Kyarimpa (2008) added that real life practical examples shed light on the importance of ethics, which can be a useful guide particularly for NPOs that may not have as much experience in dealing with these issues as they relate to public service delivery. This is especially true in instances where the NPOs are not contractually but morally obligated to implement service delivery with the highest ethical standards.

Values

Values define an organization and for NPOs, values are the symbol of their

existence. Macy (2006) stated that "nonprofit organizations are values expressive" (p.

165), and Cheverton (2007) added that NPOs' values are communicated through their

"purpose, vision or mission" (p. 429). Lukeš and Stephan (2012) provided a definition of

NPOs that clearly enunciates their values in a practical sense, "NPOs help to integrate

disadvantaged groups, enrich the life of local communities, allow people to enjoy their

hobbies, and satisfy other societal needs" (p. 42). NPOs understand and respond to the

community in which they serve by fulfilling unmet needs that forms a reflection of their

values (Macy, 2006). NPOs are value driven organizations that strive to promote them to

the recipients of their services.

Nonprofit values could be defined as altruistic, although the practical application

and corresponding impact of their values could be the true measurement of whether they

are meaningful. NPOs espouse the values of organizational integrity, positive social

change for the communities in which they serve, and concern for the welfare of

individuals (Macy, 2006). Cheverton (2007) agreed and stipulated that the NPO's

devotion to principles as the foundation for the effective and efficient delivery of

community services. Macy (2006) argued that values are connected to the whole and

should be assimilated as a part of a NPO's strategies and programs that affect positive

social change. Cheverton (2007) added that the success of the nonprofit sector is directly

linked to developing and sustaining its own values and eliminating external influences,

such as from the private sector, whose values differ. However, Lukeš and Stephan

(2012) warned that NPOs are increasingly placed in a position of having to act in an

"entrepreneurial" manner. NPOs must balance their values with the need to survive by

securing the necessary funds to operate, which presents a complex challenge.

The seemingly complex web of financial stability and adhering to organizational

values is a difficult balance to sustain, though such a balance is possible for NPOs that

place their values on a pedestal. Macy (2006) made the linkage between the shared

vision of implementation and the probability of achieving successful results. NPO values

should reflect those of the communities in which they serve, and such values will change

over time (Macy, 2006). Moreover, values must be aligned with practical actions when

NPOs make decisions and undertake service delivery (Macy, 2006). Such a notion could

be interpreted as a drawback for NPOs, because their commitment to values can also

limit innovation and enhancements in service delivery (Cheverton, 2007). Cheverton

(2007) explained that a strong commitment to values can lead to internal agreement and

alignment with an organization's priorities and methods, thus limiting the expression of

diverse or dissenting views that could produce new and improved mechanisms for service

delivery (Cheverton, 2007). However, Cheverton (2007) also believed that a

commitment to values is more important and that NPOs can still innovate. It is a

question of finding a workable balance, which could be dependent on NPO leaders and

their staffs.

A central issue surrounding the people who work for NPOs is their motivations.

Cheverton (2007) connected a NPO's steadfastness to its principles and beliefs to its staff

retention rate and attractiveness to potential employees. Letts, Ryan, and Grossman (as

cited in Cheverton, 2007) viewed this commitment as a manifestation of a "just do it"

attitude in which the NPO and its employees are principally concerned with service

delivery and fostering positive social change. Those who work in the nonprofit sector are

usually paid at a significantly lower wage than the private sector, which is an indication

of their commitment to the goals and objectives of their organization (Cheverton, 2007).

Theuvsen (2004) stated that NPOs are more appealing for dedicated employees who are

aligned with the mission and objectives of the organization, which is their inspiration.

These individuals are motivated by serving their communities and the positive social

outcomes that result, which in turn provides them with a sense of accomplishment and

individual gratification (Cheverton, 2007). They are motivated by intrinsic factors due to

their commitment for social good.

Another challenge lies in recruiting and retaining effective nonprofit leaders who

are able to achieve the balance of being values-expressive and sustaining those values

that enable them to effectively and efficiently serve their communities with the need to

act in an entrepreneurial manner through raising funds from various public and private

sources (Kahnweiler, 2013). Lukeš and Stephan (2012) framed NPO leaders as social

entrepreneurs who in effect are able to successfully achieve this balance due to their

motivation for positive social change and their personal characteristics to act as

entrepreneurs. Hailey and James (2004) described NPO leadership and the social versus

entrepreneurial balance in terms of their ability and skill to achieve balance between

competing demands and challenges and the NPO's mission to serve their community that

clearly reflects strongly held values of honesty, integrity and a commitment to positive

social change. The nonprofit executive's ability to reach this balance and transmit it to their staff could be a defining measure of whether their organization is perceived as trustworthy, particularly by the community in which they serve and any entity with which they partner, including government agencies. The discussion now considers the mechanics of NPO and government partnerships.

Overview of Informal Partnerships Between NPOs and Governments

Partnerships between nonprofits and governments have evolved over time, but whether the dynamics that shape these partnerships have followed suite remains unclear. Researchers explained that the advent of partnerships between nonprofits and governments was primarily one that involved a formal agreement where the nonprofit is contracted to deliver a public service (Leroux & Sneed, 2006; Malloy & Agarwal, 2010; Van Slyke, 2003; Whitaker, Altman-Sauer & Henderson, 2004). The balance of power rests with the government agency which imposes specific procedures and accountability measures that the nonprofit must follow as outlined in the contractual agreement (Gazley, 2008). \Therefore, such partnerships could be described as a power imbalance in which the government agency is able to exert its will because it is providing the funds (Gazley, 2008). From the standpoint of NPOs, many enter these partnerships as a mode of survival in which they have to sometimes set aside their values and methods to deliver services in accordance with the will of their government partner. From the viewpoint of government organizations, nonprofits are well connected within their communities and are thus more apt to deliver a service that will reach the intended targets (Greeley, 2006).

It would seem that nonprofits and governments formed partnerships out of necessity in which each side would clearly benefit.

Partnerships between NPOs and government organizations have brought the nonprofit sector into prominence. While the revolutionary process of outsourcing government services to NPOs has been met with challenges, the process has solidified the importance of the nonprofit sector in public and social service delivery to communities and ultimately their ability to affect positive social change (Greeley, 2006). Contractual partnerships are commonplace between federal government agencies and NPOs due to specific rules and regulations that federal government agencies must follow. Mulroy (2003) explained the challenge involved in which the NPO's mission of serving the community is replaced with adhering to the bureaucratic requirements that come with accepting funds from their government partner that in effect has altered their behavior. However, municipal level governments are not necessarily in the same position leaving open the ability to engage in informal partnerships where contractual obligations are absent and the rules and regulations that come with them.

Informal partnerships between nonprofits and governments are a rather new phenomenon that presents opportunities and challenges from the vantage point of nonprofits. Such partnerships are technically defined as ones that are not governed by a contract or formal agreement rather they are formed through an informal collaboration where the NPO and government agency agreed to cooperate for a specific reason, such as the delivery of a public service (Gazley, 2008). These nonprofit and government partnerships have primarily come to the fore at the local level demonstrating municipal

governments interest to reach communities through partnering with nonprofits (Gazley, 2008; Gazley, 2010; Smith, 2008). An important issue that has been explored is whether the evolution of partnerships between nonprofits and governments to an 'informal' relation has changed the dynamics of these partnerships. Collaboration was a good place to start.

What is Collaboration?

Collaboration is an important element that defines informal partnerships between nonprofit and governments. Collaboration is possible under almost any circumstance if the parties involved are willing to embrace it, which includes social and economic initiatives that lead to positive social change in communities. How collaboration is achieved and sustained is an important indicator when measuring the success of informal partnerships between NPOs and governments. Researchers have attempted to address collaboration in these terms, which will now be addressed.

Gray (1989) stated that, "Collaboration is a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible" (p. 5). Eschenfelder (2010) described the benefits of collaboration as merging resources to maximize actions and productivity, planning and strategizing that optimize beneficial outcomes, and augmenting their joint footprint as measured by goals and objectives. Xu and Morgan (2012) applied collaboration to partnerships between governments and nongovernmental organizations, including nonprofits, in which the partners are on equal footing in terms of decision-making, accountability, and operate from a standpoint of

mutual respect and shared goals. The partners form a relationship based on trust, a vital

element that binds them together toward a common vision and goals, an area to be

explored later in this analysis.

Collaboration usually carries positive connotations in terms of the benefits and

positive outcomes that could result. Gazley and Brudney (2007) and Gazley (2010)

explained the potential benefits that arise when NPOs and government agencies

collaborate, which include: beneficial economies of scale; improved delivery of public

services measured both in quality and quantity; knowledge and information sharing;

calculated risks for both sides; positive public image through improved accountability;

essential resources to face and overcome external challenges and obstacles; and stronger

relationships that foster convergence rather than divergence. Gazley (2010) and Mulroy

(2003) stated that NPOs collaborate with the aim to effectively and efficiently respond to

the needs of communities. Collaboration is essential for NPO and government partners,

and how it works in practice sheds light on why it is important.

Through the lens of collaboration it is possible to uncover and analyze the

dynamics that shape informal partnerships between nonprofits and governments.

Collaboration comes in many different forms that includes the sharing of information and

joint delivery of programs (Guo & Acar, 2005), both of which are motivators for NPOs to

engage in partnerships with government agencies. Within these partnerships issues of

resource commitments and autonomy are critical factors on how they are structured (Guo

& Acar, 2005), issues that were examined in this research piece. Guo and Acar (2005)

noted that informal collaborations represent independent decision-making power for the

organizations involved and a loose commitment to the partnership. Guo and Acar (2005) also considered to what extent these factors play into the partnerships, particularly from the viewpoint of the NPO. The degree to which the NPO accepts resources, including financial ones, could be inversely related to their autonomy to make decisions, particularly with respect to how a service is delivered. Maintaining a balance between resources and independence is an important factor in how NPOs choose to collaborate, specifically if they are accepting financial resources and if the partnership is bound by a contract.

An essential element of partnerships between nonprofits and governments is collaborative governance. Collaborative governance describes how government entities partner with nongovernmental organizations, such as NPOs, to undertake collective actions that could lead to positive social change (Morse & Stephens, 2012). Ansell and Gash (2008) stipulated that collaborative governance is founded on shared values, face-to-face communication, trust, and the will and motivation to succeed. Samuels (2010) also believed that collaboration is a necessity but stipulated that the burden rests on the shoulders of the NPO to adhere to the principles of collaborative governance, especially when implementing the service or project that is the foundation for the partnership. Such principles require a more in-depth analysis that are presented through my research on successful informal partnerships between NPOs and government entities at the local level.

Another important factor under the rubric of collaboration is the values espoused by the NPO and government partner. Leroux and Sneed (2006) believed that NPOs and

government entities operate from a position of shared values, because both entities serve

the public. Brinckerhoff (2002) stated that shared values are inherent in these

partnerships by making a linkage to mutuality. Researchers explained that the nonprofit

entity and government agency each provide a critical contribution, such as resources and

know-how to the partnership drawing on their mission and experience of serving the

public (Brinckerhoff, 2002; Leroux & Sneed, 2006; Samuels, 2010). Both the NPO and

government agency operate from a position of strength and clearly understand their role

that will foster a successful partnership.

By contrast, Van Slyke (2003) stated that challenges concerning organizational

capacity, communication, and developing a clear process for implementation are

symptoms of unsuccessful partnerships. Such an assertion is counter to the argument that

there are shared values between nonprofit and government agencies, though such a

revelation may be based more on a lack of motivation and will of the principals involved.

Research revealed these notions to be true and if and how those directly engaged in these

partnerships overcame them and whether they factored into the development of a

successful informal partnership.

Collaboration between nonprofit and government partners may only be possible if

they are able develop a relationship that is based on trust. Gazley (2010), and Ansell and

Gash (2008) explained that trust between the nonprofit and government entity is a core

element of their partnership. Gazley (2010) defined trust as incorporating the willingness

of both parties to collaborate to make the partnership work. Sullivan (2012) asserted that

a successful partnership mandates that "partners must trust each other" (p. 49).   It is

apparent that both collaboration and trust are linked yet both are difficult to achieve for a variety of reasons. Van Slyke (2006) cited that self-interest and power prevents the establishment of trust directly impacting collaboration. Gazley and Brudney (2007) stated that nonprofits and government agencies are challenged to develop relationships that are based on trust referencing their inhibition to collaborate due to a lack motivation and commitment. It should be noted that most experts spoke of formal or contractual partnerships where the focus on following strict government rules and regulations and the attainment of trust may not be as important (Gazley, 2008; Trudeau, 2008). In fact, Gazley (2008) suggested that partnerships based on trust could emerge as a replacement for formal contractual relationships, which is an indication that informal partnerships may become the standard in the future, at least at the state and local level. Collaboration is a key element that enables informal partnerships between NPOs and governments to be successful, which is an area that was explored as a part of this research project. The discussion now shifts to uncovering the differences between formal and informal partnerships.

Formal Versus Informal Partnerships

The evolution of partnerships between nonprofits and governments involves the movement from formal to informal relationships, but whether the dynamics that surround these partnerships have changed is an important question. Gazley (2008), Sullivan (2012), and Trudeau (2008) agreed that the goal of NPOs is to serve their communities and enable people to live better lives. An important issue is whether there is a dichotomy when it comes to contractual and informal partnerships. With respect to informal

partnerships between nonprofits and governments, Gazley (2008) and Trudeau (2008) would still have stipulated that the government entity holds the balance of power and imposes its will as the provider of financial resources. Sullivan (2012) postulated that collaborative governance could result in nonprofit and government organizations becoming equal partners sharing the respective benefits and burdens. Such a notion opens the possibility that informal partnerships have changed the dynamics between nonprofit and government partners.

The reasons that explain the advent of informal partnerships could be a symptom of practical realities or the gaining prominence of NPOs. The emergence of formal contractual relationships were the starting point where government agencies viewed nonprofits as best positioned to deliver services to the community that are tailored to the needs of the community (Trudeau, 2008). At present, informal partnerships are beginning to come to the fore where nonprofits and government entities are coordinating efforts to address community issues, such as the delivery of healthcare and social services (Gazley, 2008; Sullivan, 2012). The parameters of how partnerships are formed may be different, but the dynamics that govern their existence appear to be similar to contractual partnerships (Gazley, 2008). On the one hand, government agencies are still providing the financial resources and may believe they can impose their will (Gazley, 2008). On the other hand, case studies demonstrate that it is possible for government agencies to transform themselves to become advisors while the nonprofits assume control of implementing service delivery (Sullivan, 2012). However, current realities may paint a picture where only a limited number of nonprofits have achieved informal partnerships

with government entities that could be depicted as "partnerships between equals" that are based on trust (Gazley, 2008). Such a revelation needs to be explored through additional research, especially since limited research currently exists.

Informal NPO/Local Government Partnerships

How can the impact of informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments be defined? There are some successful examples of these partnerships that reflect the effort of the partners involved to collaborate with an aim for positive social change. The question revolves around the factors that are essential to these successful collaborations, which define the principal purpose of this study.

The nature of the informal partnerships between NPOs and governments at the local level is important to understand, specifically how these partnerships evolve. Researchers have provided different examples of these partnerships in terms of their structure. Gazley (2008) and Gazley (2010) stipulated that informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments have become common involving many areas of service provision. Mendel and Brudney (2012) described how NPOs are filling a critical gap within the framework of public-private partnerships involving a local government entity and a private sector company. Within this scenario, the government identifies the service that needs to be fulfilled, the private sector company brings the financial resources, and the NPO the know-how to implement the service. Bryson et al. (2006) suggested that such partnership structures have become increasingly common and have proven to be successful models. Xu and Morgan (2012) added that an increasing number of NPOs and governments are directly engaging in public-private partnerships to develop and deliver

public services in which they effectively and efficiently collaborate. Tsui et al. (2012) described a situation in which the local government entity and a university partner relied on NPOs to use their connections and understanding of what communities needed to improve food and health standards, specifically involving youth. These partnerships structures could be an indication that the dynamics that define partnerships between NPOs and governments are evolving along with the advent of informal structure.

The differing partnerships structures opened the possibilities to explore successful informal partnerships between NPOs and governments that either involved just the NPO and government actors or additional organizations and entities. However, the essential point was to focus on the interactions between the NPO and its government partner even if other actors were involved in the partnerships. Based on the research of experts and the resulting examples they provided, it is my contention that the relationship between the NPO and government entity, even if other actors are involved, is the determinant of whether the partnership will be successful as measured against the delivery of the public service. Two dynamics that could be critical to successful informal NPO and government partnerships will be presented, power imbalance and trust.

Power Imbalance

An important factor to explore was the power imbalance that exists between nonprofits and their government partners. In many instances, governments are providing financial resources, which usually comes with power. Governments are coming from a position of entitlement in which they can exert their influence in the decision making process and compel their nonprofit partner to take specific actions (Feiock & Jang, 2009;

Gazley, 2008; Smith, 2008). Such a situation is reminiscent of contractual partnerships, though an informal partnership presents another scenario. When a nonprofit and government form an informal partnership, the dynamics of that partnership should be examined.

First was the financial arrangement. As stated by multiple researchers, governments represent a funding source for nonprofit agencies (Feoick & Jang, 2009; Gazley, 2008; Gazley, 2010; Smith 2008), and this financial arrangement could be applied to cases when the partnership is not bound by a contractual agreement (Gazley, 2008). For example, the informal partnership concerns a municipal government working with a healthcare NPO to deliver flu shots in the community. The government agency provides financial resources to purchase the flu shots and decides to tap into the network of the NPO to ensure that the flu shots are delivered within the community. In such a scenario, the government may feel it can dictate how and when the flu shots are delivered since they are providing the funding.

The next dynamic was the past history that exists between the NPO and their government partner meaning how often have they partnered and how well did they work together (Gazley 2008; Gazley 2010). Returning to the above example, it is necessary to consider if the NPO and municipal government partnered previously to deliver flu shots to the community. If so, then a consideration of how well they worked together is relevant, meaning has their relationship evolved to the point where they feel comfortable working with each other. If so, then they will want to work together again.

The final dynamic to consider was the results, particularly in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. If the right optics is in place, then successful delivery will be more likely. Therefore, a consideration of these dynamics was essential, the most central being the theoretical frameworks that drive these underlying forces, most specifically the stewardship and game theories.

The discussion now considers the underlying forces that could create a situation where a balance of power is possible between the NPO and their government partner. Power and influence are important elements when analyzing informal partnerships between NPOs and government agencies. In order to understand the nature of how power and influence play into these relationships, particularly from the viewpoint of a NPO which seeks a balance of power within their partnership, it is first important to look at their own organization.

In particular, the power and influence that the NPO executives are directly engaged in the partnership are able to exert within their organization and how they are perceived internally serves as an important barometer. Pfeffer (2013) presented a compelling issue pitting traditional organizational theories with the more innovative and modern organization in which the traditional is being challenged. Pfeffer (2013) argued that the traditional more hierarchal structures are necessary to an organization's survival yet new and innovative methods can be embraced and fit within these structures. Such a notion opens the possibility for individuals who may not necessarily occupy senior leadership positions to exert power and influence based on what they contribute to an organization. The next step is to apply this notion externally, specifically to informal

NPO and government partnerships. The government organization is traditionally viewed as the senior leader and the NPO as their so-called subordinate. First, we begin with the NPO organization then consider the context of the informal partnership.

The mission and goals of the NPO measured against the role of the NPO executive and what they bring to the table in terms of their knowledge and competence is the most important barometer of their influence to move and align their organization toward a vision and goals that are in tow with the NPO's informal partnership (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977). If the NPO executive possesses this power and influence, as judged by the stakeholders, other leadership and employees within their organization, to engage their organization in this informal partnership and commit resources to the success of the partnerships, then they will be operating from a position of strength in terms of their power and influence.

Such power and influence could then transfer over to the partnership in the NPO executive's attempt for equality to overcome any power imbalance. Another factor worth mentioning that could help the NPO overcome a power imbalance concerns knowledge and know-how. If the government partner believes that the NPO possess certain talents and abilities that are critical to the success of the partnership, they may be willing to consider them an equal partner. Such an assertion is based on what happens within organizations but could be applied to interorganizational partnerships. The interorganizational context has consistently demonstrated that those individuals who perform critical functions that directly enable an organizational to achieve its goals are perceived and widely regarded as important and will be treated with a high level of

respect (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977). McDonald, Jayasuriya, and Harris (2012) confirmed this notion and made the linkage between power and trust as essential regarding the willingness of partners to collaborate. If power and trust are somehow aligned within this context, it is possible for nonprofits to exert power in their attempt to influence decisions. Therefore, it appears that these individuals who may be predominantly engaged in the informal partnerships are in the best position to wield power and influence to set the partnerships on equal footing. Related to this issue is understanding how trust factors into informal partnerships, which is pertinent especially as I sought to uncover how NPOs and governments are triumphant in their joint efforts.

Trust

The foundation of any partnership is the establishment of trust between those who are at the forefront of maintaining it, but the experts expressed differing opinions on this issue. On the one hand, Cook, Russell and Levi (2005) took the view that partnerships can exist without trust. The caveats are that the partners may begin to trust one another as their partnership develops, and functional partnerships that exist without trust generally involves organizations that are secure and able to deliver on the obligations that make the partnership functional and possibly successful (Cook, Russell, & Levi, 2005). Raymond (2006) added that trust does not necessarily translate into action, which means that partnership could flourish without the existence of trust. On the other hand, most of the literature on trust in relation to partnerships between nonprofits and governments discussed the importance of trust in these partnerships but offered little on how to develop and sustain trust, specifically from the viewpoint of those who are directly

engaged in these partnerships. The literature provided empirical evidence that successful partnerships between NPOs and government agencies are positively correlated with trust and the associated factors that foster trust, which I will now explore.

The definition of trust is complex, particularly as it applies to informal partnerships between NPOs and governments. Lamothe and Lamothe (2011) stated that, "Trust is a multilayered concept that comprises a range of attributes such as dependability, credibility, faithfulness, and information sharing, as well as the expectation of cooperation between exchange partners" (p. 868). Researchers explained that nonprofits provide a conduit through which governments can connect with local communities and begin the process of building trust with the people (Alexander & Nank, 2009; Berman & West, 1995; Feoick & Jang, 2009; Gazley, 2010; Smith, 2008). From the perspective of NPOs, trust is a critical element of how they operate. Trust is an integral part of their vision to serve the community as well as their relationships with those organizations with which they partner or collaborate. The onus shifts to the government organization to develop a partnership based on trust if they wish to achieve their goal of connecting with the communities in which they serve.

Trust with respect to partnerships between nonprofits and governments has been considered in the literature. Researchers agreed that trust applied in a practical sense to partnerships between nonprofits and governments is multifaceted with each component important to building trust between those engaged in the partnership (Alexander & Nank, 2009; Lamothe & Lamothe, 2011; Vangen & Huxham, 2003). Alexander and Nank (2009) stipulated that trust is the single most important component in partnerships that

involve nonprofits and governments. Lamothe and Lamothe (2011) linked trust and cooperation as a central component of these partnerships. Vangen and Huxham (2003) added that trust will be sustained and grow if both sides are committed to a successful collaboration. Trust should then be considered through the willingness of each partner to embrace it.

The issue turns to how trust and commitment are interrelated and how they are manifested through the actions of the NPO and government partners. This commitment involves fostering independence, particularly for the nonprofit, which possesses the authority to undertake initiatives to enable successful outcomes (Alexander & Nank, 2009). Trust is also about reducing intangible costs that are associated with maintaining a partnership, which may be accomplished through transparent communication between the nonprofit and government agency, sharing information, and fostering an environment where conflicts may be easily resolved (Alexander & Nank, 2009). Other components involve setting up a process for resolving challenges and ultimately establishing a partnership of an informal nature where a formal contract may not be necessary.

Given that trust is based on the aspirations of both partners to build and sustain it, the behaviors associated with trust will become evident as the nonprofit and government partners jointly strive for positive results. Alexander and Nank (2009) and Vangen and Huxham (2003) stated that the behaviors associated with trust are the desire to build a relationship that is based on constant and consistent dialogue, joint decision-making, and predictability. Poppo, Zhou and Ryu (2008) explained that the anticipation of an ongoing relationship is a conduit for building trust and not necessarily based on past interactions.

Moreover, trust involves fairness and equity, the willingness to compromise and/or collaborate (Alexander & Nank, 2009). Trust fosters honesty and constructive feedback that propels the partnership forward (Alexander & Nank, 2009). Alexander and Nank (2009) stipulated that with respect to interorganizational partnerships, including those between NPOs and governments, building trust is a gradual process that may be quickly lost. Van Slyke (2006) believed that trust involves the acceptance and exposure of those engaged in the partnership to the possibility that one side might take advantage of the other. Relationships that are defined by trust can be elusive and both sides must be willing to be patient.

Trust is earned which means that both the NPO and government partners should behave in a manner that is consistent with developing trust. The development of trust is a risky proposition (Alexander & Nank, 2009; Vangem & Huxham, 2003), but one that delivers enormous benefits including positive social change. An important element is the willingness of the 'powerful' partners or the principal to engage in a partnership with the NPO that provides autonomy, reflects a shared vision, and fosters joint decision-making (Alexander & Nank, 2009). The steward operates in an independent manner and is edging towards being on equal footing with the principal enabling them to be more effective and efficient and achieve the shared goals with their government partner. Such a scenario describes a desirable model of an informal partnership between the NPO (steward) and government agency (principal).

Trust is seemingly operationalized in every interaction and decision taken by the NPO and government partner. Lamothe and Lamothe (2011) defined trust as

incorporating strong communication and cooperation, honesty, and a commitment to the goals of the partnership. Lamothe and Lamothe (2011) added that trust can be an integral part of partnerships especially through reducing transaction costs that will lead to successful results. Willem and Lucidarme (2013) asserted that there is an element of flexibility built into the partnership if trust can be established that enables the partners to overcome challenges and obstacles. Flexibility is the hallmark of any relationship, especially when both sides employ collaboration as a tool to achieving beneficial results, such as the delivery of a public service.

The motivations of nonprofit and government partners is part of the equation in determining whether or not developing trust is possible. Lamothe and Lamothe (2011) stipulated that, "'Trust' in interorganizational relations focus on perceptions about the partner's behavior in economic exchanges rather than absolute beliefs or convictions regarding its evil or benevolent nature" (p. 869). Seppänen et al. (2007) stated that trust is the counterweight to the perception that partners will act in an opportunistic manner thus enabling collaboration to manifest itself through open communication and honesty. Vengem and Huxham (2003) asserted that collaboration is the enabler to assess opportunistic behavior regardless of the existence of trust. Such a view may be consistent with Raymond's (2006) later assertion that successful partnerships could exist without trust. However, Vangen and Huxham (2012) considered that collaboration is the mechanism for continued interaction and that trust is developed through this process. Moreover, the intrinsic motivation of those involved to develop and sustain trust is a prerequisite.

Another layer in the trust dynamic is the comfort level of the NPO and government partner, especially measured by their familiarity with each other. Researchers agreed that trust is about the history and the ongoing interactions between the partners, and it is about rational choices weighing the costs and benefits, meaning that it is critical to understand opportunistic behavior (Alexander & Nank, 2009; Hardin, 2002; Lamothe & Lamothe, 2011; Van Slyke, 2006). A looming question is how trust can be developed between partners who do not have a history of interaction. One response is that trust is developed in anticipation of a long and stable relationship that will grow with each interaction (Hardin, 2002; Van Slyke, 2006). Trust is about getting to know each other, but there has to be willingness to enable this process to unfold (Alexander & Nank, 2009). Such a notion indicates that the speed with which trust is developed is clearly dependent on those involved and while their past history, if any, of interaction may be relevant, it is not a determinant.

When the situation goes array between NPO and government partners, the process of mending the relationship must involve forgiveness. Therefore, how trust factors into the process of forgiveness with respect to their relationship is noteworthy. Molden and Finkel (2010) stated that trust between partners is positively linked to their wiliness to forgive each other. Moreover, if trust has been established between partners, then they are more likely to view the problem or challenge as less serious. (Desmet, De Cremer & van Dijk, 2011; Molden & Finkel, 2010). Forgiveness is connected to trust, but past interactions and the commitment to the partnership are also important elements.

As mentioned earlier, the relationship history between the NPO and government partner may not be the foundation for building trust, but it could guide and speed up the process of developing trust depending on the motivations of those involved. Poppo et al. (2008) explained that past interactions combined with the prospect of continued interactions contribute to developing and sustaining trust within the context of an interorganizational partnership. Willem and Lucidarme (2013) and Seppänen et al. (2007) applied the golden rule to trust through communication, cooperation, and performance, which through continued interactions each side will feed of the other that will enable them to establish and maintain trust. Hardin (2002) previously offered a similar explanation through reciprocity in which an individual that is willing to risk trusting another individual will benefit by being trusted in return. Hardin (2002) framed trusting (or trustworthy) relationships as "mutual and ongoing" (p. 17). The ensuing benefits of these relationships will manifest themselves through motivation, dedication, information sharing, learning and innovation while eliminating opportunistic behavior and damaging transaction costs that inhibit successful outcomes (Seppänen et al., 2007). Trust is only possible if the participants are intrinsically motivated to achieve it.

The path for developing trust starts and ends with the individuals involved and their motivations. Lamothe and Lamothe (2011) asserted that it is difficult for partnering organizations to establish trust if they do not willingly enter the partnership, particularly when they have not worked with one another previously. It is clear that one critical condition must be present to set NPOs and governments on a path to developing trust, which is they come together willingly with a desire to work with each other toward a

common goal. The pathway to trust can be accomplished through continued interactions; therefore, previous experience may be helpful but is not requisite for establishing trust. It may take the organizations longer to develop trust, but the optics are there for it to happen.

Whether a dichotomy exists between trust and flexibility is another important issue to examine. Willem and Lucidarme (2013) postulated that flexibility within a partnership involving a nonprofit entity and government agency is a double-edge sword, while important to developing trust, it can actually inhibit it. Flexibility can lead to uncertainty resulting in challenges and obstacles that hamper progress because the partners are unable to agree on a path forward (Willem & Lucidarme, 2013). Stability and certainty are important elements within the partnership between the NPO and government entity and flexibility can be complementary if there is a mechanism in place to minimize uncertainty and maintain stability. Therefore, regular communication must involve anticipating challenges and obstacles through devising strategies and measures to counteract them. Flexibility is possible when there is consistent and open communication where each side understands the necessity to change course and how to achieve it. Such a scenario is representative of a relationship based on trust. The good news is that the steward can be trusted, which is critical (Davis et al., 1997). Communication could be the engine that makes trust possible in that the motivations of those involved are clearly conveyed and hopefully addressed.

Summary

Chapter two presented the literature review pinpointing the key themes that will form foundation for this research study. These issues include the dynamics that enable NPO and government partners to form relationships based on trust, which include the willingness of partners to collaborate, their past experience in working together, and any power imbalances that exist between them. These dynamics are significant when analyzing differences between formal and informal partnerships between NPOs and governments. Ultimately the success of the partnerships circles back to trust, an issue that is relevant from the literature but represents a gap in research when analyzing informal partnerships. As a precursor to conducing research, the methodology and procedures to be followed will form the discussion in chapter three.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

This chapter will address the rationale for choosing the qualitative case study

methodology and will incorporate explanations on the interpretive framework, data

collection process, data analysis including the coding framework, and limitations. I will

also detail other methodologies that were considered for my research as an illustration of

why the chosen methodology represented the most prudent path forward.

This chapter presents the research design concerning the study of successful

informal partnerships between NPOs and government entities at the municipal level. The

discussion commences with the philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks

that form the backbone of qualitative research, which are then matched with a qualitative

methodology and case study research. The data acquisition process is then outlined to

include two forms of qualitative instruments: face-to-face interviews and documentary

review. Data analysis and interpretation are then presented to move the raw data through

the process of coding, analysis, interpretation, and conclusions.

Research Design and Rationale

This study addressed the following research question and subquestions:

Question

- What factors, as perceived by NPO executives, are critical in establishing a

  successful voluntary partnership between NPOs and local governments?

Subquestions

- What role does trust play between NPOs and government agencies that form an informal collaborative partnership to deliver a public service?

- What is the linkage between trust and the balance of power when NPOs and government agencies form informal collaborative partnerships?

- What strategies do NPOs employ to foster trust with their government partner?

- What other factors are thought to be critical to successful informal partnerships between nonprofits and government agencies?

This research study explored successful informal partnerships between NPOs and governments and attempted to answer the research questions listed above. The research was conducted through the lens of the stewardship and game theories (Davis et al., 1997; Dixit, 2005; McAdams, 2014; Schelling, 2010; Schillemans, 2012; Van Slyke, 2006), and considered the dynamics that could explain why the informal NPO and government partnerships are successful, primarily trust, balance of power, frequency of interactions, and level of commitment to the partnership.

The research tradition utilized was qualitative case study. Smythe and Giddings (2007) stated that qualitative research attempts to uncover and synthesize the meaning that individuals assign to certain phenomena through their lived experiences via the data collection methods of interviews, observations, and documents. Elliott (1999) believed that qualitative research relies on verbal expression and involves analysis and interpretation based on the meanings behind phenomena in which the researcher seeks to

discover and explain them. Ryan, Coughlan, and Cronin (2009) described qualitative

research as being "concerned with the nature, explanation, and understanding of

phenomena" (p. 309). Qualitative data are evaluated and analyzed for their significance

as it relates to the research problem (Ryan et al., 2009). Patton (2002) stated that the

researcher conducting a qualitative study converses with his or her subjects to learn and

understand their points of view based on what is familiar to them. The essence of

qualitative research concerns the 'what,' denoting the exploration and interpretation of

what people say and do through verbal and nonverbal communication, observations, and

documents.

Case study research was the most relevant qualitative approach to support the

conceptual framework of informal partnerships between NPOs and government agencies

based on the stewardship and game theories. Case study research enabled an in-depth

study of five informal partnerships between NPOs and government agencies through a

series of interviews and documentary reviews (Creswell, 2013). A collective case study

facilitated multiple views on the dynamics and day-to-day workings of these informal

partnerships between nonprofits and governments. Specific attention was paid to the issue

of trust, which some authors have contended is a critical component of the stewardship

theory (Pastoriza & Ariño, 2008; Vallejo, 2009). However, other dynamics emerged as a

part of the data collection process to include past interactions between the NPO and

government partners, open and transparent communication, the level of commitment to

the partnership, and the frequency of interactions between the partners. Comparisons and

contrasts involving these dynamics were possible when the data were analyzed, coded,

and interpreted from the five cases as the mechanism to understand which elements enabled the informal partnership to thrive and be successful.

Philosophical Assumptions

Selecting the most appropriate philosophical assumption was an important step and reinforced the research framework and strategy chosen for this study. Creswell (2013) described four philosophical assumptions of qualitative research, which include ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology; each was considered in the development of this research project. Gerring (2007) stated that ontology concerns practical assumptions based on reality of what is happening around the world. Stanley (2012) added that ontology is simply a depiction of personifying the world in actual terms that match reality, but notes that such a definition is problematic. Creswell (2013) stated that multiple realities become possible that are examined through various sources in which the views, beliefs, and perspectives of individuals are brought to the fore. Patton (2002) framed ontology as an attempt to answer the following question: "What do we believe about the nature of reality?" (p. 134). This set up the comparison between a single verifiable reality and socially constructed multiple realities (Patton, 2002). Such a procedure may be accomplished through multiple interviews and/or observations because it involves acquiring an in-depth understanding of the participants' values, opinions, and positions that comprise these realities.

The next philosophical assumption concerns epistemology. Joniak (2003) referenced epistemological assumptions as an attempt to uncover the link between an individual's knowledge and the issue that is being researched. Creswell (2013) stipulated

that epistemological assumptions are formed through observations of participants in which the researcher attempts to learn and understand those being studied through these first-hand observations and interactions. Research is usually conducted in the environment of the participants in order to provide context of what they are communicating (Creswell, 2013). Patton (2002) stated that epistemological assumptions attempt to answer the question "How do we know what we know?" (p. 134), which includes the views and opinions of the participants in terms of subjectivity, objectivity, casualty, validity, and generalizability. An in-depth examination and analysis is necessary for the epistemological approach.

Another philosophical assumption concerns axiology, which offers yet another approach. Bock (1973) defined axiology as "the study of value" (p. 88). Brightman and Beck (as cited in Bock, 1973) stipulated that value is designated as "the realm of what is esteemed to be intrinsically worthy as an end of human action or enjoyment" (p. 88). Creswell (2013) believed that axiological assumptions enable the values of the researcher to be identified and considered along with those of the participants. This includes the researcher's biases and perspectives in terms of values and beliefs connected to the information acquired during the research process (Creswell, 2013).

The final philosophical assumption is methodology. Creswell (2013) stated that methodology is connected to what the researcher employs during the research, which could involve inductive or emerging methods or could be formed by the experience of the researcher during the data collection and analysis process. The data analysis process enables a richer, more in-depth of understanding of the research topic under review

(Creswell, 2013). With respect to methodology, Patton (2002) posed the question of "How should we study the world?" (p. 134) in consideration of the types of data and research design to follow with an eye to purpose and consequences.

This research study was based on qualitative methodology, relying on case study because I intended to identify and evaluate the dynamics of partnerships between NPOs and governments from the perspective of nonprofit executives. The research process principally involved interviews with nonprofit executives whereby the researcher was the instrument. As the researcher, I interpreted the data collected from the interviews and then enhanced the analysis with perspectives and observations that emanate from the interviews process itself. I combined what the participants said along with what I observed during the interviews when analyzing the data and drawing conclusions. Such a process reflected the notion of how the world is studied. In sum, qualitative research relied on the researcher, in this instance my experiences, with respect to the research process, which manifested itself in the conclusions drawn founded on the interpretation of the data collected.

Data for this qualitative case study research project was primarily drawn from interviews and was supplemented through other forms of data collection, such as documentary review. Data collection through various means enabled verification, convergence and defense again bias, an area to be explored later in this chapter through the lens of triangulation. Examples of documents that could be have been used included meeting agendas and minutes involving the NPO and their government partner, reports and summaries detailing the public service or project that is the subject of the informal

partnership, and letters, emails or other forms of correspondence between the nonprofit and their government partner (see Appendix A for a preliminary list of documents). Some of these documents were available through public sources while others were requested from the NPO executives during the interviews. Moreover, circling back to the interviews, the transcripts prepared following the encounters were sent to the subjects for their review and verification to reinforce triangulation.

Interpretive Frameworks

It is noteworthy that philosophical assumptions are connected with interpretive frameworks that both form the basis of qualitative research, and therefore both need to be considered as a part of the research design. There are several interpretative frameworks that were considered for this research study, including postpositivism, social constructivism, postmodern perspectives, and pragmatism. Each framework would have likely resulted in different findings for this study which may or may not have been consistent with the possible dynamics that define informal NPO and government partnerships. I decided on pragmatism as the interpretive network.

Creswell (2013) defined pragmatism as involving the practical realities of research, specifically the results of the research process. Patton (2002) stated that "pragmatism means judging the quality of a study by its intended purposes, available resources, procedures followed, and results obtained, all within in a particular context and for a specific audience" (p. 71-72). This means an attempt to understand the meaning of the results and how they can be practically applied in today's world (Creswell, 2013). Pragmatism enables the researcher to design a research study that is appropriate for the

issue they wish to examine (Patton, 2002). Such a process incorporates a presentation of the issue, the process of inquiry, and a defined outcome. The research process itself is more comprehensive as appropriate means, involving multiple methods and sources of data collection, are employed to reach outcomes that are relevant for the research problem (Creswell, 2013).

Pragmatism was chosen as the interpretive framework for this research study, because it was also germane to the exploration of the dynamics that define informal partnerships between NPOs and governments. Cutchin (1999) stated that pragmatism emphasizes certain situations as the preamble for investigation and knowledge acquisition. It is the situations that provide the context through the experiences conveyed by the participants (Cutchin, 1999). There is a linkage between interaction, inquiry and problem solving in an environment where those interacting are on somewhat of an equal footing (Cutchin, 1999). Such a situation is the essence of this research project, the informal partnerships between nonprofits and governments.

Qualitative Methodology

With the philosophical approach and interpretive framework in place, the qualitative methodology was the next area of consideration for the research design. I decided on qualitative case study research, because such an approach afforded the most logical mechanism to answer my research questions. Creswell (2013) asserted that qualitative case study research affords the opportunity for in-depth exploration of an NPO through the mechanism of acquiring detailed information utilizing various data collection procedures. Gerring (2007) believed that we gain more in-depth knowledge by focusing

on the part through case study, which may help us to understand the whole. Creswell (2013) and Gerring (2007) stated that case study research is a methodology in which the researcher may explore multiple cases through rigorous and comprehensive data acquisition procedures that rely on many sources including observations, interviews, documents, audio-visual material, and reports. Such procedures were closely considered for this research study and will be detailed later in this chapter.

A vital step in conducting case study research was to identify relevant cases that formed the research to be conducted. Creswell (2013) postulated that the foundation of case study research is the cases that must be identified by employing specific criteria that demonstrates that they are real, practical, and relevant. Kohlbacher (2006) stated that case studies enable the researcher to explore individual and collective experiences that are practical and reflect reality. Instrumental cases, which are relevant for this research project, enable the researcher to analyze the specific problem through the lens of multiple cases (Creswell, 2013; Kohlbacher, 2006). Multiple cases also provide a wide range of perspectives that led to a more fruitful and comprehensive analysis of the data collected for this research study.

The cornerstone of a useful case study is that the case itself contributes to addressing the problem, which I explored through conducting interviews. Kvale (2007) stated that interviews are a mechanism through which subjects can convey their own "lived" experience on their terms. Diefenbach (2008) cautioned that the researcher must strive to go beyond just recounting a story. Such a process could be accomplished through exploring all of the methodological intricacies of qualitative research, the

drawbacks inherent with collecting qualitative data as well as painting a comprehensive

social, historical, and conceptual picture of the information acquired (Diefenbach, 2008).

Therefore, it is incumbent upon the researcher to acquire data from multiple sources, such

as interviews and documents, to illustrate a more comprehensive picture of each case

(Creswell, 2013). Kvale (2007) explained that interviews represent a relevant method for

achieving that result. T he intent is for the researcher to discern and describe themes,

issues, and situations to analyze from each case (Creswell, 2013), which form the basis of

comparison between all of the cases under review. The conclusions drawn from each

case are described by Creswell as "lessons learned" in which the themes and issues can

be linked to the research problem.

Gerring (2007) added that case studies could enable a researcher to identify

dynamics that link cause and effect. This is a noteworthy development particularly as the

case study facilitates an analysis of "decision behavior" specifically of the participants

that are involved in the study (Gerring, 2007). Kohlbacher (2006) stated that the

knowledge and perspectives conveyed by the subjects in case study research may

enlighten our understanding of the theoretical concepts of the research study. Through

the method of in-depth interviews it may be possible to identify those dynamics that

shape the decision making process of the participants via the standpoint of the reasons

and rationales they employ (Gerring, 2007). How the participants arrive at the decisions

they make by identifying the dynamics that are involved relate back to the theoretical

framework.

Bias was a critical aspect of the research process and one that was necessary to address from any early stage. Gerring (2007) advised that bias is inherent in the decision-making processes, which the researcher must seek to identify and explain. Some of these biases come to the fore as result of a dominant value or belief that could squelch others or exacerbate perceptions about others that may be guided by preconceived notions or misinformation (Gerring, 2007). Therefore, as Jacob and Furgerson (2012) stated, it is vital for the researcher to clearly listen to their subjects who are recounting experiences and possibly revealing their biases, which the research will need to pinpoint and address. Janesick (2011) recommended keeping a reflective journal of the interview in which the researcher comments on what they are observing during the interview including the subject's nonverbal language, any anomalies in their responses, and any other supplemental details that would not otherwise be apparent in the interview transcript.

The relevance of the collective instrumental case study is now presented to demonstrate its usefulness with respect to this research study. Creswell (2013) and Kohlbacher (2005) described a collective instrumental case study as an outlet through which the problem may be examined relying on data collected from multiple cases. Ghesquière, Maes, and Vandenberghe (2004) stipulated that the study of multiple cases is an opportunity to discern and analyze the commonalities of the shared experiences of the subjects involved, in this instance the NPOs. Creswell (2013) advised that the cases may be selected by purposeful sampling with the aim to ensure that the cases are relevant to the problem yet provide differing perspectives that concern the problem.

Case study research could involve a holistic (in-depth analysis) or an embedded (specific aspect) of a case. Creswell (2013) mentioned that the researcher is able to consider specific elements of a case in order to address its complex nature but not make generalizations that extend beyond a specific case. Diefenbach (2008) took the view that researchers conducting case study research must strive to explore and understand an issue from as many sides as possible and to challenge their own preconceived notions. For a collective case study, the procedure is to conduct a within-case analysis which includes a case description along with the relevant themes followed by a cross-case analysis that involves a thematic analysis and interpreting the relevance of all the cases under review (Creswell, 2013). The conclusion involves those lessons learned from the cases (Creswell, 2013), and an illustration that the research questions are a strong match for the topic being researched (Diefenbach, 2008). Research questions must always remain at the forefront and the concepts and ideas therein transmitted through the interview questions that seek to answer them.

When conducting a qualitative case study, the researcher must decide what cases to study and determine their relevance and value to the problem (Creswell, 2013). The more cases that form the basis of the study the less in-depth review of each case, which brings the question how many cases to select (Creswell, 2013). Typically, a researcher selects a maximum of four to five cases which all should reflect a sound purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell, 2013). Kohlbacher (2005) advised that it is incumbent upon the researcher to set the boundaries of what will be studied in each case which could be determined through the data to be collected for each case. Therefore, a qualitative case

study was the most useful mechanism to consider as the method of interpreting the dynamics that are prevalent within the rubric of informal partnerships between NPOs and governments relying on the conceptual framework that incorporates the stewardship and game theories.

My case study research involved in-depth interviews with five NPOs that were engaged in informal partnerships with local government agencies. In addition, a review of documents relevant to the partnerships enhanced and complemented the information acquired during the interviews. In more specific terms, a collective case study was meant to reveal the dynamics that describe the working relationships between the NPO executives and their government counterparts, specifically if trust was a critical element. Trust is a critical element inherent in stewardship theory (Pastoriza & Ariño, 2008; Vallejo, 2009), and employing a collective study was an opportunity to make the linkage between trust, and possibly other dynamics, and the stewardship and games theories. Contrasts and comparisons among the five cases of successful informal partnerships between NPOs and governments connected the elements of success with the behind-the-scene dynamics such as trust. As the researcher, my intent was to collect data with aim to make these contrasts and comparisons to draw conclusions to contribute to research in this field.

Role of the Researcher

In this regard, my role as the researcher was to conduct the interviews with the executives from the NPOs that inform the case studies. I posed the questions guided by the interview protocol and asked any clarification questions as necessary. I recorded each

interview, so that I could take notes that described any nonverbal communication and observations from the surroundings. I also collected documents from the interviewees and through on-line sources to supplement the interviews.

While I did not have any professional relationships with the interviewees for this research project, I was still cognizant of bias. As a Federal Government employee, I have had some experience with contracting and working with NGOs, therefore my perspective has been formed from the point of view of a government employee. While I do not hold any strong views on NPOs and their work, I was aware of any potential bias that could have emanated from my experience as a government employee. I set aside such perspectives aside during the interviews and concentrated on listening to and learning from the NPO executives.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

I identified NPOs that are engaged in an informal partnership(s) with a local government entity(s) in the greater Seattle area. I contacted the NPO to identify the executive within the organization and sent them the pre-interview questionnaire (see Appendix B). There were two factors that determined if the NPO was selected as one of the five case studies for this research study. First, the NPO, according to the pre-interview questionnaire answers, was engaged in a successful informal partnership with a local government entity. Second, the NPO executive was agreeable to be interviewed in person per the conditions setout in the agreement (see Appendix C). The interviews were conducted face-to-face lasting about one-hour for the first and only encounter since

follow-up interviews were not necessary. If subsequent interviews had been necessary, they would have been conducted using electronic means, such as Adobe Contact, Skype or another program. I conducted interviews with executives from five NPOs, which corresponded to my plan of interviewing executives from four to six NPOs.

With respect to the collections of documents, there were two principal methods. First, I conducted research on the Internet to identify documents that were publicly available and relevant. The second method was to request and collect documents from the NPO executives either before, during, or after the interviews. These documents may have been sensitive; therefore, any information used in the research analysis was reviewed and approved by the NPO executive.

Instrumentation

The discussion shifts to the qualitative data collection processes and which forms were most relevant for my research study. Qualitative research facilitates many forms of data collection, and Creswell (2013) and Kohlbacher (2005) referenced six of them, including documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts. This research study primarily relied on two principal forms of data collection to include face-to-face interviews and documentary review. These two forms of data collection will now be explained as they relate to my research study.

Interviews. The first and principal form of data collection was the face-to-face interviews with NPO executives. Patton (2002) defined and explained the purpose of qualitative interviews is to solicit the interviewee's views and perceptions on a particular

topic. Therefore, it is important that the subject is relevant, clear, and communicated during the interview (Patton, 2002). However, Diefenbach (2008) cautioned that interviews are social interactions and that bias and negative influences can call into question the validity of the data collected during the interview. Patton (2002) asserted that the interview itself is purposeful because it affords an opportunity for the researcher to acquire the subject's perspective as they recount their thoughts and experiences. Diefenbach (2008) and Patton (2002) would agree that the quality of the data acquired when interviewing is "largely dependent" on the researcher who is conducting the interview, specifically their interaction with the interviewee. Ryan et al. (2009) stated that interviews are the most common qualitative data collection tool. Interviews facilitated the opportunity to acquire first-hand data through which other data was possible to collect, such as documents, based on information provided and revealed by the subjects.

Interviews were useful for identifying and understanding lived experiences of subjects. Kvale (2007) explained the benefits of conducting qualitative interviews as acquiring data and seeking to understand its meaning. Kvale (2007) and Ryan et al. (2009) stipulated that interviews are about obtaining the perspectives, views and opinions of the participants and attempting to discern their meaning. On the one hand, it is critical that the data obtained be descriptive and specific to paint a comprehensive picture of the issue (Kvale, 2007). On the other hand, the interviewer must be flexible and open to collecting unexpected data that may not necessarily follow their own presupposition or objectives of the type of information they wish to collect during the interview (Kvale,

2007). While is vital to stay focused on the topic of the research, the researcher should understand and embrace that the data collected may reflect inconsistencies and/or reveal the unexpected which is essentially part of the research process (Kvale, 2007). The interviewer must be sensitive to the situation and the subject, which demonstrates that the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee is critical (Kvale, 2007; Patton, 2002). The researcher must be cognizant of these issues and be responsible for ensuring that the interview is a positive and comfortable experience for the subject. The essential elements are an interview protocol, standardized agreement outlining the purpose and relevance of the interview for the participant, and a commitment on the part of the researcher to be transparent and objective. The discussion now turns to the interview process and logistics noting the most relevant pathway taken for this research project involving the interviews of nonprofit executives.

The first issue is choosing the type of interview, which involves structured, semi-structured, and unstructured mechanisms. Standardized (i.e., structured) open-ended interviews are conducted for several reasons, most principally to ask the same questions in the same order for each subject that is interviewed (Patton, 2002). The interview is more focused and orderly yet restricted in that unexpected topics or issues that are revealed during the interview process cannot be explored (Patton, 2002). Another benefit of structured interviews is that data analysis should be easier in that the researcher can locate the answers from all of the participants to the same question (Patton, 2002).

The semi-structured interview allows for open-ended questions and to consider unanticipated responses (Ryan et al., 2009). Any unexpected responses and information

provided by the subject may be explored (Ryan et al., 2009). Semi-structured interviews

facilitate an environment where the subject can recount their story that should provide

rich and meaningful data for the researcher to analyze (Ryan et al., 2009). Irvine, Drew

and Sainsbury (2013) explained that semi-structured interviews could be face-to-face, on

the telephone, by email, or through a messenger service (e.g., MSN messenger).

However, Irvine et al. (2013) also reminded that face-to-face interviews are the most

beneficial form, because they enable the researcher to incorporate the nonverbal

communication with the spoken words of their subjects.

Patton (2002) advised that elements of the structured and semi-structured

interview approach could be combined. Patton (2002) recommended the possibility of

utilizing the structured format for the first part of the interview followed by a less

structured phase where those unexpected issues that arise during the first part of the

interview may be explored. This way the standardized carefully worded questions may

be used and any issues that arise as a result of these questions may be explored later in

the interview. In essence, the researcher is conducting a semi-structured interview.

Informal conversational interviews (i.e., unstructured interviews) were not considered for

this research project since they are not practical for qualitative case study research as it

relates to informal NPO and government partnerships. The principal reason is the amount

of time and resources required for possibly multiple interviews with each subject were

not feasible.

There is a process to follow in consideration of the subjects to be interviewed

from the point of identification through to data collection then to analysis, interpretation

and conclusions that are drawn. The identification process of subjects, in this case

nonprofit executives, was tricky since their knowledge and how they would convey it

were unknowns. The realization of these unknowns proved beneficial as the interview

unfolded, because I was sensitized to them and watched for clues both in terms of what

the participant stated and how they stated it. It then became possible to request

clarifications to ensure that the information conveyed was accurate from their point of

view yet noted the nonverbal clues as well (Ryan et al., 2009). It was possible to judge

participant responses as highly subjective, bias, and/or inconsistent in comparison to

other participants interviewed and their relevance to the research problem.

Creswell (2013) explained the interview plan to incorporate developing the

questions, purposeful sampling of the subjects who can best answer them, the type of

interview to be conducted, recording procedures to be employed, the interview protocol,

the location of the interview, the consent form, and the interview procedures. In

consideration of the interviews with nonprofit executives from five qualitative case

studies of NPOs engaged in informal partnerships with government agencies, the

following details the pre-interview process.

Creswell (2013) noted that the first step was to review the research questions and

derive questions to pose to the interviewees. The interviews questions were open-ended

and relevant to the research problem that formed the basis of the study. Agee (2009)

reminded that research questions should involve a quest to uncover the objectives and

viewpoints of those who are involved in "social interactions". The interview questions

should and did follow suit. Price (2002) stipulated that when and the types (e.g., action,

knowledge, philosophical) of interview questions posed are critical, specifically in

consideration of the comfort level of the interviewee. Patton (2002) added that neutrality

is important, and therefore the questions must be worded in an objective tone so that the

interviewee will be free to convey information in a transparent environment.

The next step conveyed by Creswell (2013) was to identify the subjects to be

interviewed, which translated to the five NPOs engaged in informal partnerships with

government entities that comprised the case studies. Purposeful sampling procedures

involved identifying and securing participants (i.e., nonprofit executives) who could

contribute information relevant to the research problem (Patton, 2002). Coyne (1997)

explained that purposeful sampling is conducted out of necessity in consideration of time

and resources as well as an understanding and desire on the part of the researcher to

select cases that are information rich and relevant to their research objectives.

The purposeful sampling strategy for the research study on the informal

partnerships between NPOs and government agencies relied on criterion sampling

(Patton, 2002), which entailed identifying nonprofits that were engaged in a successful

informal partnership with a local government entity that involved the provision or

delivery of a community service. Criterion sampling afforded the opportunity to focus on

effective informal partnerships, the criterion, and to understand the benefits and

challenges that define such partnerships through the mechanism of interviews. The

sample size involved five NPOs engaged in informal partnerships with local government

agencies.

The identification process commenced with developing a list of NPOs in the Seattle area that were engaged in partnerships with the City of Seattle, King County, or the surrounding municipalities. Then, NPOs were chosen whose partnerships have achieved successful results as measured by delivering a public social service to the community or at least a segment of the population. The objective was to identify approximately 10-12 NPOs and contact them to gauge their interest to be interviewed and to verify by posing pre-interview questions that their partnership with the local government entity was informal and involved regular interaction with them. The final step was to select six NPOs to interview and to send them the consent form, with the expectation that one or two may drop out. If more than two NPOs had dropout, I was planning to return to my original list of 10-12 NPOs to identify possible replacements.

Creswell (2013) stipulated that the next decision is the type of interview, which could involve one-on-one face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews, telephone interviews, and interviews via email. This research study principally relied on one-on-one in-person interviews with a focus on depth from a smaller sample size through purposeful sampling procedures (Patton, 2002). Ryan et al. (2009) advised that one-on-one interviews are predominantly in person so that the interviewer has the benefit of observing the nonverbal language employed by the interviewee. Such a process provided an enhanced and more comprehensive perspective of what the subject was conveying, and it offered an opportunity to react and request additional data based upon what I as interviewer was observing from the interviewee (Ryan et al., 2009).

During the interview, Creswell (2013), Jacob and Furgerson (2012), and Patton (2002) advised to employ a recording procedure in which the sound of the interviewer and interviewee's voices are clear. A lapel microphone is a possibility or some type of microphone that was appropriate for the acoustics in the room (Creswell, 2013). A recording device, similar to the ones used by journalists recording their subjects, was utilized for the interviews with the nonprofit executives to capture all of their words. The audio recording was then be transcribed following the interview (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). These transcripts were accompanied by field notes, which described the nonverbal language and highlighted major points expressed by the subjects during the interviews.

Jacobs and Furgerson (2012) recommended preparing an interview script so that the researcher will remember to convey all of the necessary information as to the interviewee as well as guide the researcher through the entire interview process. As a part of the script, Creswell (2013) advised an interview protocol or interview guide that contains approximately seven to twelve written open-ended questions to be asked to each participant. For my research study, the questions conformed to the research problem and were phrased in such a way that all participants could easily understand and were able to respond without any interpretation on my part (Creswell, 2013). These questions were presented in order for each interview with the possibility of asking clarification questions depending on the responses of the participants.

Jacob and Furgerson (2012) advised posing the easy to answer questions first and then tackling the more challenging and sensitive questions later in the interview, which

was the procedure followed. The concluding portion of the interview allowed for open-ended discussion so that the participants could elaborate on specific points raised when answering the open-ended questions or discuss any other issue they believed was relevant. Such a process was indicative of a semi-structured interview. Price (2002) counseled that the objective of the researcher is to ensure that the their subjects are as comfortable as possible during the interview, which means sustaining the flow of the interview, posing questions that the subject answers honestly, and fostering an environment where the subject feels they are on par with the interviewer. I believe that my interviews achieved this result.

Another step before the interview involved finding a quiet place where distractions were kept to a minimum yet also lended itself to audio recording. In addition, requesting the participant to sign a consent form that outlined the research purpose, how the data and information from the interview was to be incorporated into the dissertation write-up, and the anticipated amount of time for the interview was also essential (Creswell, 2013). In fact, the participants received a copy of the consent form before the start of the interview so that they could review and pose any questions before the formal interview process began (Creswell, 2013). These procedures were followed for the interviews with the five NPOs. I conducted the face-to-face interviews, about one hour in duration, and on one occasion with each of the NPO executives. The rationale was recognition that NPO executives were busy and their time was limited. I had planned to follow-up with questions through electronic means or by telephone following the interviews, if such follow-up has been deemed necessary.

Documents. The second form of qualitative data collection was through documents either collected from the NPOs or through public sources. Patton (2002) advised that reviewing and analyzing documents reveals information that can shape the research process, specifically when the researcher engages in interviewing. Miller and Alvarado (2005) added that, "by using documents, a researcher is placed at some distance from real people, so that human action and thought are interpreted through representations or reality" (p. 348). Bowen (2009) explained that document review, evaluation and interpretation provide knowledge, relevance and practical information that may be divided into categories and themes relevant to the research problem. Miller and Alvarado (2005) detailed that documents serve three primary purposes to include: Documents convey information in a consistent manner and have a shelf-life beyond those produce them; Documents are interdependent in that they depend upon and reference other documents and they reflect the expertise of those who produce them; and Documents reflect the ideas and thoughts of individuals and contribute to our understanding of interactions between people.

Bowen (2009) revealed that many different types of documents could be utilized in qualitative research, including newspaper articles, transcripts from radio and television programs, organizational reports, survey data, and other records in the public domain. It may also be possible to obtain documents that depict interactions such as through meetings and memos. Miller and Alvarado (2005) recalled that documents are historical and depict specific circumstances that are germane to and vital for research. Such

documents were identified through public record searches and by requesting internal documents from interview participants, as appropriate.

The use of multiple forms of qualitative data enabled triangulation, which was critical for demonstrating that the research was both relevant and useful. Patton (2002) mentioned that document analysis in combination with another qualitative data collection method (i.e., face-to-face interviews) provides a means for triangulation. Creswell (2013) and Patton (2002) both explained that the triangulation of data facilitates a confirmation, collaboration, and defense of the data against potential bias. Bowen (2009) added that document analysis is relevant for qualitative case studies, specifically those documents that track interactions such as reports, memos, and other internal correspondence. Merriam (as cited in Bowen, 2009) stipulated that, "Documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem" (p. 29). Bowen (2009) postulated that this data provide context that is useful for the interview process, specifically when framing the questions. Triangulation facilitated an opportunity to counter possible allegations of bias seeping into the data analysis and conclusions drawn from the data acquired through at least two mechanisms, interviews and documents.

In sum, the qualitative collective case study approach involved in-depth interviews with nonprofit executives who are directly engaged in informal partnerships with government entities supplemented by documentary review and analysis. Since the stewardship and game theories appear to explain successful partnerships in action, it was necessary to identify partnerships that were effective and efficient. The elements that

define the principal-steward relationship are ones that provide a foundation to achieve desirable outcomes, which usually includes a relationship built on trust. The focus now shifts to how the raw data collected was analyzed to enable interpretation and conclusions.

Researcher Developed Instrument

The pre-interview questions were the basis for choosing the participants for this qualitative case study. The pre-interview questions were meant to determine if the NPOs are engaged in successful partnerships with local government entities. The interview questions were focused on answering the research questions and were posed to address the major themes of this research study (see Appendix D). The basis for the interview questions was drawn from both the theoretical framework and relevant literature.

The interview questions were designed to connect back to the research questions through the lens of the stewardship and game theories as well prevailing positions presented in the literature review. The interview questions focused on themes that aimed to address the problem statement, produce answers to the research questions, and identify possible areas for further exploration. The primary theme was trust and how NPOs and their governments develop it and sustain as informal partners. The stewardship theory assumes that those engaged in the partnerships are operating from a position of trust, and the game theory stipulates that they will undertake decisions based on rational motives that are consistent with trust.

Content validity was established through triangulation which involved using different types of qualitative data, specifically interviews and documents. Content

validity and specific mechanisms to establish it through triangulation is discussed in the limitations section later in this chapter. In tandem, sufficiency of data collected founded on interviews with the five NPOs and documents acquired from the NPOs and through on-line sources are also referenced in the limitations section. I would note that developing an interview protocol that specifically addresses the research problem, research questions and ties them to the theoretical framework and relevant literature was sufficient so long as the data collection plan was strictly followed.

Procedures – Recruitment and Data Collection

The recruitment of participants is detailed in the instrumentation section. The primary data was collected when conducting face-to-face interviews with the NPO executives. The plan was for one initial in person interview for about one hour followed by additional interviews using technology, such as Adobe Connect, Skype or another program, if necessary. I personally conducted all of the interviews, recorded and transcribed them. I also took journal notes during the interviews to note any relevant nonverbal communication or major themes and points made by the subjects.

I recruited up to10 NPOs with the intention to interview executives from at least five NPOs recognizing that one or more of them would dropout and/or not be available for an in-person interview or not agreeable to the terms. Once the interviews were completed, I informed the participants that follow-up, in the form of on-line or telephone interviews, would not be necessary. I also requested that they review the full interview transcripts to ensure accuracy.

Data Analysis Plan

For the data analysis portion, I followed Maxwell's model that involved two principal elements (Maxwell, 2013). The first element involved categorization of which coding was a component. I created a matrix to include organizational categories followed by substantive categories. For example, a category included how NPOs view their partnerships with government agencies. This is an organizational category in which I could then classify what the participants said in response. Then, I noted substantive categories, and indicated what each participant stated relative to the substantive category. The substantive categories include descriptive information, and they are based on what the participants said in which I could discern similarities and differences (Maxwell, 2013).

The data analysis was based on those elements of stewardship and games theories to see if they manifested themselves through the partnerships that comprise the case studies. These elements were included in the various interview questions and drawn from the documentary data sources.

Coding. The foundation of the data analysis relied on coding the data acquired through the one-on-one interviews and document reviews that described the informal partnerships between the NPOs and governments. Creswell (2009) illustrated a data analysis plan that moves the raw data (e.g., interview transcripts) through to interpretation. Patton (2002) advised creating a coding strategy (i.e., coding framework) to aide the data analysis process to include encoding the data followed by decoding. Miles and Huberman (1994) explained that codes are the enabler for massing data to

conduct analysis. The subsequent steps are to encode the data and then decoding to complete the analysis (interpretation) process.

A coding system was employed for this research project that involved creating descriptive codes that were divided into major categories. The major categories were then interconnected to be followed by interpretation with respect to the research problem under review (Creswell, 2009). A coding map offered a clear illustration and starting point for the analysis of the data and interpretation, specifically for the purposes of convergence to see how the descriptive codes were related (Patton, 2002). What follows is a more detailed account of the codebook, which is first visually illustrated followed by descriptions.

Figure 1. Codebook: Codes illustration.

Theory-Driven Codes

The first set of codes is related to the two predominant theories that form the conceptual framework of this dissertation – stewardship theory and game theory. The theory-driven codes are derived from the dynamics (characteristics and variables) that define the partnerships between the NPOs and local government entities. Therefore, my plan involved coding the participants' responses, with respect to these variables and relate them back to my research questions. These characteristics and variables draw on the NPO executives' views, opinions and perceptions as related to their relationship with their local government partner. I started with trust, which was apparently the most critical variable to the success of these partnerships and then moved to code and thus incorporate other variables and characteristics that were expressed by the NPO executives.

Actions refer to the stewardship theory and decisions to the game theory. The dynamics are trust, communication, interaction and past experience.

Trust. *Code: Actions based references for trust.* Description: Stewards are prone to develop trusting relationships as a sign of their intrinsic motivation to work in collaboration with principals toward shared goals and objectives.

Example: NPO (steward) and their local government counterpart (principal) are prone to develop a partnership based on trust as result of strong communication and shared goals and objectives.

Code: Decision based references for trust. Description: Rational decision makers strive to take actions that effectively balance their interests to those of their partners and the intended recipients who stand to benefit from those decisions.

Example: NPOs and their local government partners create win-win-win situations that benefit the community they service and reflect well upon their organizations as proponents for positive social change.

Communication. ***Code: Actions based references for communication.*** Description: Stewards are committed to fostering open and transparent communication with their partners as a sign of their strong commitment to the goals and objectives of the partnership.

Example: NPOs and their local government partners' optimize their opportunity to realize their goals and objectives as result of open and transparent communication that quickly addresses challenges and obstacles.

Code: Decision based references for communication. Description: Rational decision makers are proponents of open and transparent communication, since such a process enables rational minds to prevail and make decisions that are well conceived and in everyone's best interest.

Example: NPOs and their government partners thoroughly discuss all angles and possibilities, including any possible pitfalls and challenges, and then confidently move ahead with a jointly agreed upon decision.

Interaction. *Code: Action based references for interaction.* Description: NPOs and their government partners consistently interact to ensure that their joint efforts to ensure public service deliver continues to move forward.

Example: NPOs and their government partners hold regularly scheduled meetings to discuss their joint efforts.

Code: Decision based references for interaction. Description: Consistent interaction between NPOs and their government partners is a recipe for a sound joint decision making process that is comprehensive and undertaken with deliberate speed.

Example: NPOs and their government partners employ regular and consistent interaction as a basis for both undertaking all decisions in terms of their priority and importance to the implementation of the public service.

Past experience. *Code: Action based references for past experience.* Description: NPOs and government partners who have worked together previously may choose to work together again due to positive past experiences and comfort level with one another.

Example: NPOs and governments partner again to deliver public services a result of their shared past experience in which they were successful as a reflection of their positive joint collaboration.

Code: Decision based references for past experiences. Description: NPOs and governments decision to partner again is a reflection of the rationale decision-making process they previously employed to take actions that resulted in beneficial outcomes.

Example: NPOs and governments partner multiple times, a signal of their success in developing a workable and effective decision making process that reflects their shared goals and objectives.

Data-Driven Codes

The next set was the data-driven codes that were directly related to the interview questions posed to the participants in each of the case studies. While the interview questions were derived from the research questions and the conceptual framework (stewardship theory and game theory), these data-driven codes are manifested from the words of the participants in response to the interview questions. Data-driven codes are meant to complete the linkage between the research questions, conceptual framework, and the interview questions. Theory-driven codes confirm what the participants said, while the data-driven codes moved the research forward and formed the foundation for the conclusions that were drawn from my research.

Code: References to trust. Description: Trust influences partnerships - Trust between NPO and local government partners is developed through open communication, a strong commitment to the goals of the partnership, and intrinsic motivators.

Code: References to factors beyond trust. Description: Other influences on partnerships - Familiarity, confidence, and a proven track record of success are reasons why NPOs perceives themselves as equal partners in the eyes of their local government partner.

Code: References to power. Description: A balance of power between NPO and their government partner could be a recipe for a successful partnership and reflect

dynamics (characteristics and variables) of trust, joint decision-making, and consistent interaction.

Code: Complicating factors. Description: Challenges that creates complexities - A strong commitment is a necessity, which is frequently challenged due to external influences, such as a lack of financial and human resources.

Divergence is also important as a mechanism to consider data that differs and allows for consideration of other themes that are not dominant in the data collected (Patton, 2002). A qualitative data analysis software program helped to organize the data collected, the code development process, and ultimately served as an effective tool to commence analysis of the research data.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Limitations

The discussion now turns to limitations of qualitative case study research. Atieno (2009) stipulated that the principal limitation of qualitative research is that any finding cannot be applied to the general population with the same degree of confidence as quantitative research. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the researcher to be methodical and comprehensive in their approach to collecting data that will serve as useful and purposeful to the topic they are researching.

I believed that the primary potential weakness was that the data collected would paint a confused picture of the issue, meaning that the information supported scattered points of view rendering it impossible to make a significant contribution to research. Since the case study approach relied on a small sample, such a reality could have been

possible. Therefore, it was critical that the pre-interview process aimed to ensure that all of the informal partnerships could be defined as successful, which helped to ensure a quality study. Success was defined in terms of results, meaning that the partnership was the enabler for the efficient and effective delivery of a community service.

Developing a pre-interview questionnaire (refer to Appendix B) as a tool to vet participants was essential. The aim was not to secure one point of view, but to collect information that enabled me to illustrate the issues that were critical to partnerships between nonprofits and governments. For the interview, composing questions that were open-ended as well as developing rapport with the participants were also necessary steps. Please refer to the Interview Protocol in Appendix D.

Maxwell (2013), Miles and Huberman (1994), and Patton (2002) all mentioned that researcher bias is a significant threat to the validity and credibility to research findings. The researcher could approach their research with a certain disposition and may strive to shape the data acquired to fit such a disposition (Maxwell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Patton recommended that the researcher search for data that enhances findings that are counter to what he/she seeks. Creswell (2013) added that the researcher should address their own bias from the outset so that the reader will understand their perspective and the interpretations presented by the researcher. With respect to my research, the process was about understanding the core elements that define partnerships between nonprofits and governments, which could be based on trust, a combination that includes trust, or other elements that do not involve trust.

While arguably the most important strategy for ensuring validity and credibility was reducing bias, an important characteristic about qualitative research was the allowance for flexibility. The goal was to acquire data that enabled me to understand the root of an issue and then analyze the data to present findings that address the research questions. Alternative or counter explanations arose that differed from my initial position, and such occurrences hopefully represented an important contribution to research for which I embraced. As the researcher, I employed measures to reduce bias by embracing alternative and/or counter explanations as necessary steps to reduce threats to validity as well as illustrating my contribution to research on informal NPO and government partnerships. Such a process was adhered to as a part of my data analysis and interpretation process. While I do not have any personal or professional relationships with the NPOs, I was cognizant of my personal perspective as someone who works for the government.

As previously mentioned, triangulation is a vital component of qualitative research. Konecki (2008) stated that triangulation enables the researcher to validate differing interpretations through various methods of data collection. Jonsen and Jehn (2009) referenced that triangulation aims to minimize or eradicate biases while maximizing reliability and validity. The primary objective was to produce a wide-ranging study in which the results are conveyed with a great deal of assurance (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). Miller and Alvarado (2005) advised that through triangulation researchers are able to confirm their findings, which affords a solid defense in the face of challenges to validity. Inherent within triangulation is the reliability of each source of qualitative

data. For the interviews, reliability involved transcribing the interview and taking

extensive field notes (Creswell, 2013), such as recording those nonverbal queues that

provided additional perspectives from the interviewees. Such data enabled a more

thorough and revealing coding process to aide interpretation and the resulting research

findings (Creswell, 2013).

Another important issue for consideration was transferability of the conclusions

drawn from the qualitative data collected. Burchett, Umoquit and Dobrow (2011)

defined transferability as the probability that situations in specific settings could be

replicated in other settings. For example, a successful informal NPO and government

partnership may be applicable to similar such partnerships in terms of the dynamics that

makes them effective. Transferability was not the objective of this research study, but

rather that some or all of specific dynamics that emanate from the five successful

informal partnerships between NPOs and governments could be replicated by other such

partnerships in their quest to achieve success. The selection of five different informal

partnerships to review provided the necessary details to demonstrate that common and

unique dynamics defined these informal partnerships.

Patton (2002) and Thomas (2003) reminded that limitations from interview data

could involve distorted responses from the subjects due to their own personal bias,

sensitivities, and experiences. Moreover, the subjects may react in certain way to the

interviewer depending on how they act, their tone, demeanor and ability to help the

interviewee feel at ease and comfortable during the interview (Patton, 2002). Such issues

were vital to recognize and to then develop a plan to counteract them should they have arisen during the interviews.

An additional point to address was confirmability of the data collected, particularly from the interviews. Creswell (2013) stressed that requesting the subjects to review portions of the research study relevant to their contributions is vital. I requested all of my interview participants to review the data they provided to ensure that it accurately reflected what they conveyed during the interview(s). Such a process aligns with triangulation of data, since the documents also helped to validate the sentiments expressed by the participants, reinforcing internal validity.

Shifting the discussion to document review, there were certain limitations to consider within this process as well. Patton (2002) advised that documents may be incomplete, imprecise and inconsistent. For example, one the one hand, NPOs may provide documents that are complete and comprehensive which communicate valuable data. On the other hand, other NPOs may have documents that are incomplete which do not provide any useful data. Such a process was difficult to control supporting the notion that a thorough search and inquiry for documents was an important element of this research process.

Ethical Concerns and Procedures

Due to the nature of qualitative inquiry that involves the thoughts, feelings, emotions, perspectives, and opinions of subjects, Patton (2002) advised creating an ethical framework to guide the interview process. Such an ethical framework principally involves informed consent and confidentiality (Patton, 2002). Aluwihare-Samaranayake

(2012) countered that guidelines and codes that are associated with such documents may be insufficient to cover all of the ethical dilemmas that could arise during the research process. Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012) added that the development of a "critical consciousness" is vital as a sign of how the researcher and their subjects collaborate so that the subject's thoughts and perspectives are transcribed to reflect respect, transparency, and magnanimity.

Creswell (2013) and Patton mentioned that obtaining informed consent of the participant before the interview is essential, because it affords the opportunity to explain the interview process and how the information conveyed by the subject would be used for the research. Patton added that informed consent also addresses the risks and benefits as well as confidentiality that should help put the interviewee at ease. Banister (2007) framed the issue as power between the researcher and their subjects. The qualitative researcher should seek to limit their dominance and seek to empower their subjects so that the research process can be conducted more on an equal footing where the subject will feel more at ease to express him/herself. Brinkmann and Kvale (2005) explained that understanding ethical guidelines and processes in qualitative research is insufficient. The morality behind ethics is the critical link in which the researcher demonstrates their quest for understanding the thoughts and ideas of their subjects while they are contributing to research in their chosen field. Such a notion may be in alignment with critical consciousness (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005).

With respect to interviewing NPO executives for my research study, the major ethical issue concerned securing informed consent and respecting the participants

involved in the study in terms of informing them of the purpose of the study and how

they could be incorporated into the study (Creswell, 2013). As a part of ensuring quality,

it was necessary to share with each participant any information attributed to them to be

included in the final research product. Such a process eliminated any ethical concerns

and the participant had a clear picture of how they contributed to the research. Informed

consent agreements were utilized for each of the NPO executives interviewed, all of

which were obtained ahead of each interview. Please refer to the sample consent form,

reviewed by the IRB, in Appendix C.

All data collected, including from the participant interviews and documents was

securely stored and password protected for electronic materials. I only have the access to

all of the data. I consider all of this data to be confidential since it is attributable to

specific individuals and therefore its access is restricted. There were not any sensitive

printed documents collected for this study. All electronic data will be kept, but password

protected to which I only have access.

Significance of the Study

Patton (2002) detailed that demonstrating significance may be accomplished by

the validity of the data through triangulation, how the findings and interpretations

contribute to knowledge of the research subject, to what extent are the research findings

reliable in the face of current knowledge of the research topic, and how can the research

be applied in terms of it usefulness and for some end (e.g., goal, objective). The practical

contributions of this study were an in-depth analysis that concerned the dynamics and

characteristics of informal partnerships between NPOs and government agencies. A

characteristic of particular importance involved trust and whether its existence was critical to the success of these partnerships as measured by the efficient and effective delivery of a social or health service to the target community.

This study was important for research, since it is an area that has not been widely explored. Moreover, NPOs engaged in informal partnerships may benefit as well, specifically through knowledge sharing. Therefore, the experiences expressed by the nonprofits interviewed, including best and possibly ill-advised practices, are relevant for other nonprofits engaged in informal partnerships with local governments.

The implications for social change were linked to social and/or health service delivery. If there was indeed certain dynamics and characteristics that hold the key to a successful nonprofit/government partnership, then such successes were symbolic of their joint efforts of having implemented the efficient and effective delivery of a social or health service. Such service implementation should and has led to positive social change. On another level, researching these informal partnerships was an opportunity for learning and knowledge sharing that could help shape other similar partnerships leading to improved service delivery and ultimately positive social change.

Summary

This chapter presented the framework for qualitative case study inquiry considering the philosophical and interpretative framework that forms the foundation of this particular qualitative research study. The process is then presented through the lens of case study research involving qualitative interviews and documentary review. The discussion shifts to the analysis of the qualitative data collected to include coding, and

interpreting and developing conclusions that address the research problem. Issues of

limitations, ethics and significance of the study round out the discussion having set the

stage for the research process to commence.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to explore the dynamics that define

successful informal partnerships between NPOs and local government entities. The

research questions centered on these dynamics, and in interviews NPO executives were

asked to define and explain the factors that enabled such informal partnerships to be

successful. The research questions focused on trust and the balance of power between

NPOs and local governments yet considered other factors, such as rationality, the

decision making process, and other characteristics and variables as reported by the

interview participants.

This chapter describes the data collection progress, specifically the settings for the

interviews, the interview participants, and the document process collection. A detailed

description of how the data were gathered, organized, and coded is then provided. The

chapter then describes the process of using the coded data to discover the resulting

themes. The chapter also includes emerging codes and infrequent codes that were

discovered during the coding process, followed by a consideration of how the

trustworthiness of the data was ensured based on what was outlined in the proposal. The

chapter concludes with a results section, specifically referencing the answers delivered by

the participants for each of the questions posed during the interviews.

Setting

All of the interviews were conducted as planned, but there were two significant

changes to report. The first change involved the representative to be interviewed for one

of the NPOs. The representative had to go out of town and was not available for an in-person interview, and the original representative therefore designated another representative from the NPO to be interviewed. This representative was knowledgeable on the informal local government partnerships and was able to effectively answer all of the research questions. The data collected from this NPO were useful and were incorporated into the analysis.

The second issue involved interviewing a NPO that turned out not to be relevant for the research. I requested this organization to complete the pre-interview questionnaire and spoke with their representative by telephone as well. There appeared to have been a miscommunication on what was meant by an informal partnership. This representative interpreted an informal partnership to be informal dealings with local government representatives. During the interview, it became apparent that the representative's organization only had contractual partnerships with local government entities, and while the representative communicated and met with local government representatives on an informal basis to discuss issues beyond their contractual agreement, it did not appear that such interactions represented an informal partnership, particularly in the absence of a specific project or purpose. Therefore, the data from this interview were not included in the analysis or discussion because they were not relevant in answering the research questions.

Demographics

I interviewed one representative from six NPOs. As mentioned, one of the NPOs was not included in this research study, and interviews with the five other NPOs were

included, which was within the framework of the research proposal of interviewing four

to six NPOs. I interviewed NPOs from a cross section of industries, including health care,

resources for mentally challenged and disadvantaged individuals, youth and adult

empowerment, youth music programs, and youth community programs. All of the

participants were executives within their NPOs and frequently dealt with local

government representatives with respect to their informal partnerships. Two of the

representatives interviewed were executive directors and the other three were at the vice

president or director level and designated by their respective executive directors to be

interviewed. With respect to the three cases involving the vice president or director, the

executive directors designated them for the interview because they possessed more

knowledge and experience concerning their organization's partnership(s) with the local

government entity(s). The NPOs ranged from very small to large, but their

communication and interactions with local governments were consistent, specifically

their level of access to local government representatives and elected officials.

Data Collection

I interviewed executives from five NPOs, one representative from each NPO,

during which all of the interview questions were posed and relevant data collected. One

of the NPOs provided supporting documents, which I incorporated into the data analysis.

For all of the NPOs, documents from public sources were used to support the discussion

to be included in Chapter 5.

Interviews

The data were collected by interviewing five NPO representatives at their office location, in a private setting, either in their personal office space or other private room. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. I spent approximately 1 hour with each representative, but some of the time was used to review the purpose of the research project, review the consent form, and answer any of their questions. Following the interview, I answered any additional questions that were not related to data collection. The data collection for each interview was recorded, from the point at which the first question was posed until the participant finished his or her response to the last question. Each representative was interviewed once, and it was not necessary to conduct any follow-up interviews. The information provided during the five initial interviews was sufficient for this research project.

The data were recorded on a tape recorder set in front of the interview participants with their consent. I used two tape recorders in the event that one of the recorders malfunctioned. The recordings were saved to my computer, and I then personally transcribed each interview. There were no variations in data collection based on the plan presented in Chapter 3 of this research project, with the exception that the data from one of the NPOs interviewed, although collected, were not used. The original plan included the possibility that data from one or more NPOs interviewed may need to be discarded for various reasons, which accounts for the range of using data from four to six NPOs.

There were some anomalies in the data collection, but none that impacted the information conveyed by the interview participants that was used for the data analysis. In

one of the interviews, we were interrupted twice, one to investigate an apparent water leak and the other by someone wishing to speak with the interview participant. In both cases, I stopped the interview recording, and we later resumed the interview. For the other interview, there was significant background noise and in some cases other NPO employees walking into the conference room to gather items. However, such disturbances did not impact the interview participant responses as these disturbances were ignored and the participant focused on the responses.

Documents

Participant E provided a document with respect to the organization's partnership with the municipality. The document described the nature of the partnership in detail, but the information contained in this document was widely distributed and considered public information. The document conveyed a perspective on the partnership and reinforced the data collected from Participant E during the interview. There was no revealing information contained in this document other than to reinforce what Participant E stated.

For all NPOs interviewed, I reviewed publicly accessible documents through Internet searches (refer to Appendix E). These documents were primarily useful to determine if the NPO would make a good candidate for this research project. The documents described the partnerships and nature of the project(s) being undertaken by the NPO and the local government entity. These documents revealed information on the nature of the NPO and local government partnerships, but they did not describe or detail the relationships between the NPOs and their local government counterparts. However,

these documents are useful in the discussion in Chapter 5 because they described the projects and joint efforts of the NPOs and their local government partners.

Data Analysis

Coded Units to Larger Representations

In the proposal, a preliminary map of theory-driven codes and data-driven codes was presented, and the interview questions were composed in such a way as to address these codes without influencing the interview participants. The expectation was that the interview participants would focus on certain codes and that new and unexpected codes would emerge as well. I left open the possibility that new themes would emerge, but after reviewing the data, no new themes were discovered. Fortunately, the expectations were met and a description of the process of moving from coded units to themes will now be presented. Saldana (2009) provided a useful reference for how to transform coded data into themes, and a part of the process he described was incorporated into the process undertaken for this research study.

Two approaches were implemented in order to move from the coded units to the themes. The first approach was to organize the answers to each question in NVivo as a mechanism to compare how the participants answered each of the questions. In the results section of this chapter, the common threads expressed by the participants are identified and the unique answers expressed by the participants for each of the questions are revealed. This approach was helpful to understand their answers, but such a process did not fully capture the codes that emerged and the resulting themes. For instance, it was

found that in many instances participants tended to answer one question and also provide material relevant to another question.

I then decided to read through each of the interviews and coded the passages based upon the codes already established in the proposal as well as discover emerging codes. The passages were then coded in NVivo, which enabled me to compare and contrast responses based upon existing and emerging codes, to make linkages between the codes, and to utilize those code linkages to develop the themes. Each of the interview transcripts were coded in NVivo and a chart illustrating the linkages between the codes was developed. Once this process was completed, I then re-read all of the interview transcripts to ensure that all of the codes were discovered, to see if there were any other emerging codes, and this time, if there were any relevant infrequent codes. I was interested in the statements expressed by one or two participants that related to one or more of the research questions that would be worth analyzing. The emerging codes and infrequent codes are detailed later in this chapter.

There were three themes that emerged from the interviews, which matched with the themes I had anticipated would emerge. The difference was the emerging codes that related to the themes. The three themes are actions, decisions, and positive social change, and they are detailed along with their relationships to the codes in the graphic illustrations below. These three themes define the evolution of the informal partnerships between NPOs and local government entities, and a more in-depth exploration of these codes is undertaken in Chapter 5 to include how they relate to these themes.

Emerging Codes

The most significant code to emerge from the interviews was influence, particularly as it relates to the balance of power. All of the participants either directly or indirectly referred to influence as the conduit to either approaching or achieving a relationship with their government partner that is equal in terms of the balance of power. For example, Participant E stated,

We could go back and say, you know, we're not finding that this is working or we're not satisfied with the kinds of jobs were developing, conversely the City could come back and say, you know this isn't giving us the outcome that we're looking for, and so you know, it's not something that we want to participate in.

Participant B revealed,

I think if you have a positive informal relationship with government that makes the conversation easier to go back and say, gosh, you know, you really want us to serve this kind of kid and we're actually seeing that the bigger need is with this kind of kid, could we talk about that.

Participant C conveyed,

With an informal agreement that decision making at the table tends to be more of a dialogue and more of a what is that you need to get out of this and what can we bring to the table, and I probably have more, more influence than on what it looks like, because I can say this what our program looks like and here's the ways we can bend or not bend, and then they just have to say OK or this how we bring it.

The role of influence is considered with respect to the balance of power in the discussion piece in Chapter 5.

Another code was interactions, but those interactions that took place outside of the informal partnership yet influence the relationship between the NPO and the government entity. These additional interactions take many forms and influence the informal partnership in different ways, yet all of them have had a positive impact. Participant D stated, "I'm involved in other cityish things," which gives the impression to city officials that Participant D is dedicated to the community and supportive of the city and ultimately enabling stronger relationships to be built between the organization and the city. Participant C referenced their organization's efforts to support the government's effort on an important initiative and through their influence and long-standing relationships with government officials, Participant C positioned their organization to become involved,

> We could participate on that committee to have some influence from a community
> level because most of the people, all the people so far that were involved were
> strategic planners and politicians at a different level than direct service, so now
> we represent, we often then show up as community to represent at that systemic
> level work meeting.

All of the participants stated that they interact with local government officials in other forums outside of their informal partnerships, which has helped them build new relationships and ultimately new partnerships.

The next emerging code was flexibility, specifically the openness on the part of the government entity to be flexible in their dealings with the NPOs. Flexibility takes many forms and routes, but the result appears to translate into stronger partnerships that produce beneficial results. Participant B described flexibility as comprising of a commitment to jointly work together as the partnership evolves in order to "evaluate what's effective and not effective and what could be stronger." Participant C spoke of many instances where their organization and local government partner were able to expand the elements of their partnership as conduit to ensure that their joint initiative evolved to continue producing beneficial results. Participant E explained flexibility in terms of relationships and policies. With respect to relationships, Participant E said that individuals have to be open to trying new things that may be beyond their comfort level. Related to that is being able to look beyond policy and regulation and to make every effort to interpret them so that they can fit within the rubric of the partnership.

Philosophical alignment was another code that emerged, and the majority of the participants conveyed that it was extremely important, particularly in building relationships with individuals in the local government that are involved in or can influence the partnership. The participants conveyed that these individuals share their vision, and they are their champions for convincing others in the local government to share that same vision. Participants expanded by stating that the local government entity must clearly see and understand the issue or challenge before they will be able to work with them to address it and convincing them can be a complex and difficult challenge. Participant B explained that in some cases finding individuals with the same

philosophical alignment can help jump start a project, because their enthusiasm and desire to see it happen will help get the right players in the room to make it happen. Participant E agreed and added that it is about "finding a champion" who is flexible and rationale when it comes to making decisions and implementing them, which reflect the shared goals and values that comprise the informal partnership.

The final emerging code was perceptions or rather misperceptions. Participants mentioned that misperceptions on the part of their local government partners was a complicating factor in their partnerships, and persisted eventhough their personal relationships with their government counterparts were strong. One misperception mentioned by Participant C was that NPOs were not organized and did not have the ability to effectively and efficiently implement projects. Participant C added that such a notion was sufficient justification for their local government partner, in their view, to conduct audits and checks to ensure compliance. Another misperception, expressed by Participant B, is that NPOs seek to plunge into projects without first considering all of the facts and planning ahead. Participant B acknowledged that such misperceptions might be well founded based on past experiences, but that NPOs are changing with the times. Participant E shared that other players enter the partnerships and carry misperceptions about the project and are skeptical that it can succeed, which could limit or even derail the project.

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases are defined as anomalies to the research data collection process, which in the case of this research study both involved data that was not included and

relevant data that emerged and documented as infrequent codes. First, discrepant cases included one interview that was not included in this research study, because during the interview it was revealed that in fact the participant's organization is not engaged in an informal partnership with a local government entity. There was a misunderstanding on the definition of an informal partnership in which the participant thought it meant informal interactions with local government officials. The material collected during this interview was not relevant for this research since it concerned a formal (contractual) relationship.

Discrepant cases also incorporated infrequent codes expressed by the NPO participants interviewed, which are germane to this research study. I discovered relevant codes mentioned by one or two participants that were pertinent to the research questions. These infrequent codes helped to discern the dynamics of informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments yet were not universally expressed by all NPOs as important. These infrequent codes are analyzed in more depth in Chapter 5, but for now the infrequent codes discovered when reading through the interview transcripts are mentioned.

A significant infrequent code was put forth by Participant D, who said that having a game face on in public is vital, particularly when dealing with those individuals who can influence the partnerships. Participant D made a comparison between those individuals with whom her organization works within the city administration and the elected officials and community leaders who influence the organization's partnership with the municipality. Participant C also alluded to having a game face when being able

to speak the language of the organization's government partners when working with them. The issue of having a game face plays into the game theory and the decision making process, a concept that is explored as a part of the discussion in Chapter 5.

Another infrequent code is opening doors. Participant B mentioned that a key benefit of any informal partnerships is that government counterparts open doors for the NPOs by introducing them to other local government players who could be potential partners for other projects. Door opening is a reflection of a positive personal relationship and affirmation that the NPO has a strong track record for delivering successful results.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The relevance and validity of the data collected in answering the research question is critical and the elements to measure it are considered as evidence of trustworthiness. Credibility involves collecting data from participants that are credible in that the information provided will enable the research questions to be answered (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). Transferability is about the relevance of the data collected to a wider population beyond those interviewed for this research project (Creswell, 2013: Patton, 2002; Whittemore et al., 2001). Dependability refers to the acquisition of different types of data (e.g., interviews and documents) from multiple sources (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002; Whittemore et al., 2001). Confirmability is ensuring that the data collected is accurate from the viewpoint of those who provided it (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002; Whittemore et al., 2001).

Credibility

In chapter 3, I described my intention to use a pre-interview questionnaire to vet participants, which proceeded smoothly and enabled the confirmation that five of the six participants interviewed were engaged in successful informal partnerships. As previously mentioned, one of the participants misunderstood the concept of an informal partnership, but the proposal acknowledged that one or two participants may withdraw or not be included in this research study due to various reasons. The other part of credibility was to reduce bias through flexibility. It was important to be open to new information that emerged from the interviews that differed from initial thoughts and explanations of what constitutes successful partnerships (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). Such material is acknowledged through the emerging codes and infrequent codes mentioned above.

Transferability

The next component of trustworthiness is transferability in that the dynamics surrounding the partnerships of the participants interviewed are applicable to other similar partnerships. Such dynamics are transferable due to the fact that all participants expressed identical and similar characteristics and variables that define their partnerships. Many of them even alluded to their colleagues in other NPOs as having similar experiences to their own.

Dependability

Dependability is assured through triangulation and the strategies outlined in Chapter 3 were followed. I personally transcribed the interviews and took field notes that both revealed additional details on the data collected and reinforced certain points made

by the interview participants. Moreover, I was able to pick-up some nonverbal cues, particularly to understand if the interview participant was genuinely passionate about a particular issue or point, or if they were just conveying information as a fact that they acknowledged was important to the partnership but may not have been important to them personally.

Confirmability

During the interviews, I asked clarifying questions when the information presented was unclear or to reconfirm what the participant stated to ensure that all questions were answered. Also, the descriptions of the participant organizations, their activities, and partnerships with local government entities are general and do not reveal any specific information that one could easily identify them. I emailed each of the participants their respective interview transcript and requested that they review it for accuracy. They all responded that the transcript accurately reflected what they said.

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Results

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This section presents the data through each of the questions posed during the interviews with the five NPO participants. The answers reveal the coded data (refer to Appendix F: Code Frequency Table) that informs the discussion in Chapter 5. Moreover, three additional concepts were inferred from the coded data: communication, interactions, and building trust. These concepts are necessary in the process of moving from the coded data to themes that emerged from the interviews. In this section, the viewpoints of the NPO participants are linked to the coded data, which paves the way for answering the research questions for this project. The data collected illustrates the common and

differing perspectives of the NPO participants yet reveals the dynamics that enable their informal partnerships with local government entities to be successful.

Nature of Informal Partnership – Local Government Entity

Question one concerned the nature of the NPO's partnership with the local government entity. Four of the five participants reported that they currently have an informal partnership with local government entities, one of the participants conveyed that their partnership was informal but recently became formal when their local government partner enacted a business agreement for their services. Most of the participants either currently or in the past had formal relationships with their local government partners in the form of a contract, but for the purposes of this research study they only focused on their informal partnerships.

Some of the participants couched the nature of their informal partnership to involve financial considerations, specifically the absence of funding around a particular project or initiative. For example, Participant A stated, "We have what you might call vendor relations, they sometimes involve money and they sometimes don't, just in-kind exchanges. And then, there is a lot that we do that is simply volunteering." Other participants specifically stated that their informal partnership does not involve any memorandum or document, but it is purely based on a verbal agreement. Participant C conveyed,

Our agreement, our service agreement is less formal, there is no memorandum of understanding between us, there's no formal contract that works between us, so

there's an informal agreement that public health can refer their clients and we will

refer their clients.

All of the participants confirmed that there was no formal agreement or contract in place,

expect for one of the participants whose partnership with the local government entity

recently transitioned from informal to formal.

Partnership - Characteristics and Variables

The next question centered on the characteristics and variables that define the

informal partnerships between the NPOs and the local government entities. All of the

participants defined the partnerships as relationship based, in which they have focused on

developing a good rapport with the individuals in the local governments entities who

manage the partnerships from their side. Moreover, they have sought and developed

relationships with other individuals who could either influence the partnership or perhaps

expand the informal partnership to include additional projects.

In some instances, participants conveyed that the relationship with the

municipality ended when their primary point of contact left the entity. For instance,

Participant A mentioned, "So, the nature of our relationship with municipalities is based

on individuals in those municipalities that have an interest in, that promotion of the same

things. If those individuals leave that municipality, we leave with them." Other

participants mentioned that it is critical to find individuals who share their vision on a

particular issue and then work to build a partnership with them. Participant B shared,

A characteristic that I have seen be really effective is people who are willing to be

door openers to each other, so getting a phone call or an email saying, here's this

other person that I met who is doing similar work that you've been talking about,

you two should connect and see what you can accomplish together.

While Participant E explained, "The ongoing challenge continues to be finding, finding

those partners that have philosophical alignment."

With respect to variables, Participant D mentioned that the one variable that

creates problems is lack of communication. There was an instance where they were

supposed to be present at event, and the event was cancelled and their local government

partner failed to inform them.

Why Characteristics Are Important

The subsequent question requested all of the participants to communicate why the

characteristics are important with respect to their informal partnership(s). All of the

participants emphasized that developing and sustaining relationships are important to

achieving the goals and objectives that form their partnerships with local governments.

Moreover, they stated that it is critical to build relationships with as many people as

possible, which will mitigate any potential negative impacts when individuals transition

from the government entity.

Most of the participants believe that philosophical alignment between their

organization and their government partner is critical to the success of the informal

partnership. Participant A conveyed,

Relationships are important because we build relationships with people who share

that mission and our vision, or have a piece of it where we can assist them in

developing their vision and achieving it or individuals they service within the cities or municipalities.

Participant E added, "I think identifying people with philosophical alignment is the key, I think that characteristic that openness is the most important thing, because if you don't have that, you really have no way of getting in the door." Some of the participants couched valuable relationships as ascending from the transactional level to the transformative level. Participant B defined transformative as "you're trying to go beyond just the basic and trying to get a place to where you can actually change, make meaningful change in the community."

The participants also explained that relationships between NPOs and local governments occur at all levels of the spectrum, from the working level to the systematic level where the senior level representatives, including elected officials are involved, but it is at the systematic level where the partnership is controlled. Participant C stated, "Well, it's hard for us to get our work done if we can't leverage our partnerships at a systemic level," in which she was referring to those who are managing the partnership from the local government side. Participant D summed up the systematic part as an exercise in self-control in order to be perceived by the local government partners and the community at large as a reliable player. Participant D stated, "You don't want to loose your game face in public," which could seriously damage relationships and the partnership.

Setting Goals and Objectives

The following question was a two part question requesting the participants to share how they set the goals and objectives for the specific projects and initiatives that

are the subject of their informal partnerships, then at what stage of the partnership did they set these goals and objectives. Most of the participants explained that they held a series of meetings with their government partner(s) to develop such goals and objectives and usually these meetings took place before the project or initiative was implemented. Multiple participants mentioned that while they set the goals and objectives at the outset, they continue to evaluate and refine them.

Participants explained that setting goals and objectives was important as an exercise in forming a uniform approach where they are aligned and able to move forward. However, each participant took a different approach, but most of them stated that the goals and objectives were formed at the outset as a precursor to forming their informal partnership. Participant A conveyed, "Usually our executive director does a vision setting meeting so a representative from our organization will meet with an individual in the municipality." Participant B mentioned that they usually seek out the individuals within the government entities to discuss formulating a project, and then they invite all of the relevant actors (other NPOs and local government representatives) to the table to discuss the project and develop goals and objectives over a period of time. Participant C responded,

> When we started this relationship there wasn't any question around funding, so we were able to just get at the good stuff of how do we create a program to serve people, so when that happened the idea was, OK this is our client need and we know what that looks like, we know the part we can't do, you guys can actually can do, so now let's partner with you, you do that part and we'll just keep talking.

Participant D was the only one to mention that the goals and objectives were not developed in the beginning and conveyed that "They sort of morphed, there was no like sit down meeting." Participant E explained, "So there was a year of everything from larger committee meetings to small one-on-one work to really establish what the goals were for the partnership and to layout the logistics before anybody ever actively got engaged in the work."

When asked about when the goals and objectives were set, the responses were mostly consistent, meaning the goals and objectives were set at the beginning of the partnership with the spoken agreement to evaluate and making changes, as necessary, along the way. A couple of participants mentioned that for some of their projects, they described setting goals and objectives as "an ongoing process" or as an evolution whereby the strength of the relationship enables the goals and objectives to change without negatively impacting the partnership. For example, Participant B conveyed, "I would say more often than not, it's either happening as an evolution or you start it thinking one thing and it evolves over time into something else, and the reason it evolves is because those relationships are intact."

Power

The next question was a two-part question concentrating on power. For the first part, I asked each participant to convey his or her definition of power. The second part was to describe how power factored into their partnership with the local government entity(s). A common thread among all the participants is their belief that power is about purpose, specifically the ability to take action mainly for positive outcomes, but in some

cases there are negative consequences as well. Participant E mentioned that power is with the person who writes the check and is also with the "consumer" (intended recipients), whose "interest and desire" can be a driving force as to how a project unfolds. Participant D summed up the definition of power to incorporate all of these factors, "I would say power is when you can make a change for good, well I guess bad too, but power is when you have the ability to make a change."

The next part centered on how power factored into their informal partnership(s) with local government entities. All of the participants alluded to influence as a critical element of power. Participant A stated,

> Power, based on our, the partnership is based on our mutual and individual purposes, our agreed upon purpose and our individual purposes, because very often we have individual, each entity has its own purpose in addition to the agreed upon purpose and power is our ability to achieve those purposes.

Participant B recounted,

> I would describe is informal where you're trying to like tease out opportunities to influence, and then I don't think of it as like a power dynamic, like clashing but more trying to find common ground, and I think from my perspective, I don't think I can speak well to, in terms of generalizing to the other nonprofits, but I think from my personal perspective, I am not trying to exert power, I am trying to, in acknowledging that I may have power, I may not have power, I want to at least have influence and the connotations that come with power are not necessarily

connotations that I want have myself, but I would like to be seen as somebody with influence.

Participant C conveyed,

I think authority defines the relationship. I think in the end what we have cultivated, we have used our power to develop influence, I think that local government has authority and power so when those two things come together, the can, they do have the power to kind shut us down, and shut us out of conversations.

Participant E described,

It means we have to do a lot more work. I feel like we're always pushing forward, we're always putting ourselves a little bit at risk to say you might not agree with where we stand philosophically, but we believe this is the right thing to do, and we're going to continue to push forward on this belief, that what we're doing is right, and that can, and that can create some ripples in that power relationship, in some ways it feels more equal, because I don't feel like we approach situations from a passive perspective, when we start something, we're starting it because it's what we think is the right thing to do.

Decision Making Process

The participants were asked to describe the decision making process between their organization and their local government partner with respect to the informal partnership. All of the participants equated the decision making process with power, though in the context of an informal partnership that power differential was much less

than in a formal partnership. The participants mentioned that money, authority, and influence play critical roles when making decisions that impact their partnerships and some mentioned that the size of the municipality also impacts how decisions are taken. When working with a smaller municipality the decision making process is much less complex than with a larger and more bureaucratic municipality.

Participant B couched the decision making process around influence in that their organization and government partner participate in a dialogue which Participant B described as "talking things through and sharing opinions" through which decisions are made. However, such mutual decisions are possible because Participant B has influence over the process and can express the outcome their organization wants to achieve. Participant C agreed that they have more power at the decision making table and described the process as a "language thing" in which Participant C needs to be able to speak the language of their government partner. For example, if they are speaking of some regulation or policy, Participant C needs to understand it and be able to interpret in the context of their partnership. Participant E depicted the process as "very collaborative" as an ongoing process in that the program evolves when decisions are made in the context of making the program function better that incorporates input and suggestions from both sides.

Role of Rationality

The NPO participants next responded to a question on the role of rationality in their informal partnerships with their government partners. The responses to this question ran the gamut, from a deliberate process to the absence of rationality, at least

overtly, from the dealings with their government partner. In some instances, participants defined rationality in terms of an internal organizational process and an external process that directly involved their government partner. In most instances, the participants had to think of how rationality was present in their relationship with their government partner, because it was not a concept in which they thought of on an ongoing basis.

Participant A depicted an internal and external process through which rationality played into the informal partnerships with local governments. Participant A described a "scientific process" through which they ask a series of questions internally analyzing the potential benefits and challenges with a respect to an informal partnership. Such a process helps them to prepare as they meet and communicate with their government partner even to the point where they are prepared for the unexpected. Participant B stated, "I think the best informal relationships are going to be heavy on rationale, but also have a bit of intuitiveness too." Participant B described NPOs has being a bit too intuitive, but that is changing as NPOs are increasingly becoming more rationale and deliberate as they partner with governments. Participant E described rationality through the individuals in the local government that are driving the partnership from their side and are in "philosophical alignment" with that they and their government would like to achieve. Participant E also mentioned that the "most rationale" individuals are able to operate outside of the box and interpret rules and regulations in the "context of what makes sense" to make the project(s) that comprise the partnership actually work.

Definition and Role of Trust

The first part of the question asked each of the participants to define trust. The universal response was track record, meaning that the trust is a belief that the other party will follow through on what they promised to undertake. Trust was also described in terms of integrity, honesty and transparency. It is about shared responsibility and being able to share views and opinions in which all sides commit themselves to genuinely find workable solutions that will be beneficial.

The second part requested information on the role of trust in their informal partnership with the local government entity. The responses on how trust factored into the partnerships were consistent with the definition that a positive track record is essential to developing trust, but the dynamics that shape how trust is developed was quite different among the participants. Participant A framed trust in terms of subjectivity as a conduit in building a long-lasting relationship with a government partner in which trust is developed. Participant A stated,

> I mean you develop, subjectivity as a role, the longer you work with someone, and the more they come through one what they say they're going to come through with, the more you can do something with them next time.

Participant B couched it in terms of reputation; if a NPO has a solid track record then others will see that and will want to work with them. However, Participant B added that dependability is not necessarily a condition to be viewed a reputable organization with a solid track record. Participant B stated that honesty and integrity can overcome

deficiencies, such as not being able to follow-through on what was promised. Participant B summed up it as such,

> If you're not dependable, but you are honest about that, like I know I made a commitment to this, and I'm not, I actually can't do it, because of XYZ, like, at least your coming out owning that, that ownership. That ownership is more about the trust thing, then keeping the dependability.

Participant C stated that "the onus of developing trust is on me" in terms of demonstrating a positive track record to specific individuals in the local government, but Participant C added that transparency is a vital element of building trust. To express oneself when something is not working involving the partnership and/or the project, but be being able to get to that point, involves Participant C and the NPO's ability to build trust with their government partner. Participant D who works with a local government in a small town explained that "I'm trusting with caution" meaning that Participant D is careful about dealing with government officials that have influence over the partnerships, especially those who are elected and well known in the community. Participant E conveyed it is also about building trusting relationships with individuals, "I think you have to go in and find those, those people sort of one by one, you can build those trusting relationships with and then that's how you're going to expand."

Strategies to Foster Trust

The next question concerned the strategies employed by the NPOs to foster trust with their local government partner(s). Most of the participants' linked fostering trust with being transparent, meaning they are honest, act with integrity, and are

straightforward with their government partner. They all conveyed that the word partner

is meaningful in that without trust and transparency, a real partnership is not possible.

The other element that came through in the responses was track record, meaning the NPO

follows through on their commitments and develops a reputation as having a positive

track record. Inherent in this discussion of fostering trust is owning up to mistakes by

willing to take the blame if something goes wrong and coming up with solutions to repair

the damage.

Trust and the Balance of Power

A linkage between trust and the balance of power was the basis for the next

question, in which participants were asked if such a linkage exists in their informal

partnership(s) with the local government entity. All of the participants responded that

there is a linkage between trust and the balance of power in their partnerships, but the

reasons stated were different.

Participant A described the linkage in terms of financial considerations, whereby

the absence of funding or financial support from the municipality creates an environment

where the NPO and local government entity are equal partners with shared goals and

objectives and trust that they will follow-through to make the project happen. The

funding and resources could come from the municipality in the form of in-kind

contributions or a third-party source or through the NPO's own resources. Participant B

compared trust and power in a formal and informal partnership. Participant B stated, "I

think power and trust exist in both formal and informal, and I would say, trust is even

higher in an informal and power is less of a deal in informal as well." The balance of power could then become a reality in an informal partnership.

Participant C brought influence into the equation in that without influence, the linkage between trust and the balance of power could not exist. The ability and opportunity to influence levels the playing field, which in turn enables the two sides – NPO and government entity – to develop trust. Participant D explored cultural issues as setting the scene where trust and the balance of power come together. Participant D said that understanding the dynamics of how the city works and those individuals who make key decisions is critical in their interactions with them. It would be difficult to develop trust-based relationships if the local government exercises their authority as a power ploy. Participant E stated that without a trusting partner within the government entity, the balance of power is impossible. Participant E's organization would then become much more vulnerable in the absence of trust. In Participant E's view, "trust levels out the balance of power."

A Successful Informal Partnership – NPO and Local Government

The next question was posed into two parts. The first part asked about the characteristics and variables that define a successful partnership between a NPO and local government. The responses from the participants varied, but the one common theme was communication. All of the participants expressed that strong and open communication is important. Another common thread was collaboration, a sense that the both sides developed shared goals and objectives and that they are fully aware of and embrace that they are engaging in a joint effort.

Participant A alluded that a successful informal partnership between a NPO and local government entity is built to last, but that both sides must openly communicate their intentions to sustain and grow their relationship. Participant B agreed and continued that successful partnerships are able to withstand staff and leadership transitions on both sides. Participant B also stated that the NPO and local government entity must always be transparent and act with honesty and integrity. Participant C spoke of trust and the balance of power, meaning the relationship must be built on trust and the NPO and local government entity should recognize the source of their power and how to channel it into the partnership. Participant D mentioned collaboration in that the NPO must develop and sustain a positive track record and follow-through with actions that match their intentions. Participant E conveyed that philosophical alignment is key in which the players from the local government understand and are aligned with the NPO in what they would like to achieve. Such alignment is the foundation for the shared goals and objectives that form the partnership.

The second part of the question requested details on why the characteristics and variables of successful informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments are important. The responses all reflected the importance of sustaining and growing their partnerships drawing on the characteristics and variables mentioned by the participants. However, there were some revealing details conveyed by some of the participants. Participant A stated, "So we keep our power," which could be an indication that the balance of power between the NPO and local government entity may evolve over time as their partnership sustains and grows. Participant A also conveyed that staff development

is a benefit in that the partnerships present opportunities for the staff to grow and employ

their skills. Participant D shared that being nice and respectful are important, because in

the absence of such seemingly simple characteristics the relationships could suffer.

Participant D continued that both sides should seek to "build each other up" as a sign that

the partnership is mutually beneficial.

Anything to Add

All participants were asked if there was anything they wished to add at the

conclusion of the interview. There were two responses worth noting here, both

mentioning how this interview afforded an opportunity to step-back and reflect on their

partnerships. Participant B stated:

> I think it's a really interesting question, like, it's really interesting, it's a question
>
> that I don't think people think about very much or talk about very much, but I
>
> think it's really important even just having this conversation seeing. For me, it
>
> validates how important those relationships are and when I think about where my
>
> most of my time has gone in the last three days even, it's been in informal
>
> partnerships more than formal partnerships with government folks. And I think
>
> that there is more that can get done because of that.

Participant C mentioned,

> I mean that I love the questions, I think they're getting at the essence of what has
>
> to be there and what it is actually like to relate in these ways, but I would say that
>
> I think in general our relationship is a good one, but as I'm talking too I'm

realizing just how much the onus of that is on me as a director to make sure that happens in a way that is, that continues the relationship, so.

Summary

Four of the five NPOs interviewed clearly stated that both trust and influence were critical elements to successful informal partnerships with local government entities. Trust is achieved through being transparent and honest in which there is consistent communication and interaction. Moreover, trust is about familiarity, getting to know their government partner and achieving a level of comfort in dealing with them. Influence is about attempting to level out the balance of power, which in some instances has created informal partnerships that are equal. Financial considerations play an important role in that the absence of money reduces the government's authoritative position and enables a dialogue among equals. All of the participants acknowledged that there is a link between trust and balance of the power, and the two work together in tandem defining successful informal partnerships.

Chapter 5 will involve a discussion of the data and how the linkages between the codes reveal that trust and the balance of power are positively correlated within the rubric of an informal partnership between an NPO and a local government entity. Also a discussion on the accuracy of the data and its applicability to NPOs and local government partnerships in general will be included. Moreover, there will be recommendations on areas for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the dynamics that enable informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments to be successful. These dynamics involve elements of trust, power and influence, transparent communication, familiarity among the interlocutors, level of interactions, and other characteristics that define these partnerships. The research involved interviewing NPO participants at their premises and reviewing public documents that explained and provided perspective on their informal partnerships with local government entities. This study was conducted because there is limited research on informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments, particularly partnerships that are successful of which specific characteristics could be replicated by other NPOs and local governments engaged in similar partnerships.

This research study revealed that there are successful models of informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments in which there are common characteristics that illustrate their success while there are elements that are relevant to some of the partnerships. The common elements include trust between the NPO and their local government partner as a core component of their relationship. Another factor is an environment where the NPO is able to exercise influence and possesses power that either approaches or equates to a balance of power where they are equal partners. Open and transparent communication where honesty and integrity reflect that words are matched with deeds from both the NPO and their local government partner was also apparent in

these partnerships. The final element was positive social change in which both the NPO and their local government partner shared a strong commitment and vision to achieving beneficial results for their communities.

Some elements that were not expressed by all of the NPO participants yet relevant in answering the research questions are also noted. The first factor was a commitment to understanding the culture and language of how each other's organizations operated. Another element was the flexibility to think outside of the box and rely on policies and regulations for the benefit of the project that binds the partnership. Finally, building relationships with individuals that influence the partnership yet are not directly involved in its implementation was also mentioned.

In this chapter, there is a discussion on the interpretation of the findings. Central to this discussion and analysis are the three themes of actions, decisions, and positive social change. As a part of the discussion, perspectives from literature presented in the proposal and new literature that reflected the findings that emerged are considered. Moreover, the stewardship and game theories were applied to the findings as appropriate. Limitation, recommendations, and implications of the study are presented, followed by the conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

The discussion turns to the three themes that correspond to the data collected from the NPO participants for this research study. These themes include actions, decisions, and positive social change. Each theme will be analyzed in the following sections, which will draw upon the literature, data collected, and the stewardship and game theories, as

necessary. The findings are consistent with the themes presented in the proposal, though

some components of these themes emerged in the data collection process.

Theme: Actions

The first theme focuses on actions through building relationships, specifically

between the NPO and the local government partner. There are two sides to this coin, one

of which involves shared goals and objectives and the other familiarity, but linkages exist

between these two sides, which are depicted in Figure 2. The section first considers

shared goals and objectives, then familiarity, and explains the linkage the between two as

illustrated in Figure 2.

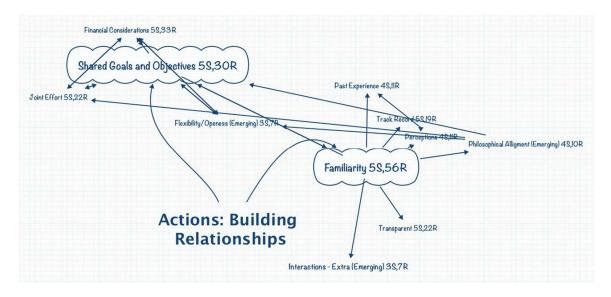*Figure 2*. Theme: Actions—Building relationships.

Before referencing the codes in Figure 2, it is important to note how they were

referenced in the interview sources, which are also noted in Figures 3 and 4 as well. For

example, shared goals and objectives lists *5S,30R*. The *5S* indicates that this code showed

up in five sources, with each source representing an interview with an NPO. Because

there were five interviews in total, the code *shared goals and objectives* was revealed in all five interviews. *30R* means that there were 30 references in total from all five sources, in which shared goals and objectives was coded.

Figure 2 is an illustration of how the codes involving actions are linked. There are two primary categories, shared goals and objectives and familiarity, though these two categories as linked by the arrow pointing in both directions. Shared goals and objectives would not be possible to develop without familiarity, a relationship between the NPO and local government partner, and vice versa, meaning the foundation of a good relationship is built on shared goals and objectives.

Some of the codes are also connected both within each category and between the two major categories. For example, financial considerations (i.e. issues concerning money) are linked to flexibility and joint effort in an inverse fashion. For instance, if the local government entity is providing the funding for the project, it might negatively impact the flexibility and openness of the two partners to creatively find solutions to make the project a success. Staying on the topic of flexibility, philosophical alignment directly impacts flexibility, in that philosophical alignment between the NPO and local government entity is a recipe for flexibility and openness within the rubric of their informal partnership. One other linkage to mention is the mutual relationship between perceptions and past experience in that NPO and local government partners' perceptions of one another will be more realistic if they have worked with each other in the past. The discussion now turns to a more in-depth review of the codes and why some of them are linked.

Shared goals and objectives. The first element of actions is shared goals and objectives. Eschenfelder (2010) stated that shared goals and objectives are reflective of the positive intentions of both sides (NPO and local government) to strategize and commit resources that will maximize the possibility to achieve positive social change. Valentijn et al. (2015) made the link between the shared commitment of the partners to develop shared goals and objectives and their ongoing dialogue that incorporates the interests of both sides that will produce beneficial outcomes for everyone involved.

The participants interviewed for this research study expressed these sentiments. Participant A referenced them by considering financial issues:

The money isn't there, and we have a philosophy that if do the right thing, and its in their interest and its in our interest, then the money to make it happen will come. It might not come from them, but it might come from some wealthy individuals that you can market the idea to and they'll help fund it, but its in the interest of the community to do the right thing.

Participant A postulated that shared goals and objectives equals a strong a commitment to collaborate, which means that their organization and their government partner will be able to find a way to make the project happen.

Participant B took a different tact by essentially defining *partner* as someone that shares their vision and aspires to reach the same goals,

We really think of them as partners and when we think about how we're going to approach solving community problems, addressing community needs, we see the government entities in our community as partners and reach out to them as such,

and try to make sure that they are at the table and I would say in many cases as we

either are leading or participating in solving community problems.

Participant B added that informal partnerships are more effective than formalized ones

since both sides are engaging in dialogue together to solve community problems, and

Participant B has personally built relationships with individuals around the table.

Participant C stated that with the absence of any financial contributions from their

local government partner, the collaboration looked like this:

We were able to just get at the good stuff of how do we create a program to serve

people, so when that happened the idea was, OK this is our client need and we

know what that looks like, we know the part we can't do, you guys can actually

can do, so now let's partner with you, you do that part and we'll just keep talking.

Participant C added that since their organization controlled how the project was to be

funded, it demonstrated a clear signal to their local government partner a strong

commitment to jointly serve their community together.

Participant D drew on the basics of how to treat their government partner,

I think the collaboration is the biggest thing is, is the give and take, and what you

have to offer each other. And the other thing is you just have to keep being nice, I

mean just in any relationship, you can't be a jerk, you know, and you can't be my

way or the highway or you have to be a little bit flexible.

Participant D also spoke of having a "game face" in public, which means building and

maintaining relationships with those directly involved in the partnership and those who

can influence it, such as city council members. The concept of *game face* will be considered later in this discussion.

Participant E commented that it is the commitment of their government partner that made collaboration possible and the eventual development of shared goals and objectives,

> When you have a group of people at the city saying, we're going to give you a
> year of our time for this thing that isn't even funded, because we just believe it's a
> good or right thing to do, it really tells you that you're actually working with
> something viable, so that was, that openness right there was kind of what started
> the whole process.

Participant E also mentioned that building relationships with both those individuals who are directly involved in the partnership and those who can influence it is also critical.

Shared goals and objectives are indicative of collaboration and joint effort of both the NPO and their local government partner to achieve positive social change. However, this equation is not complete without considering flexibility. In the proposal, flexibility was considered in its relationship to trust, not necessarily as mechanism for openness to change. The NPO participants interviewed stipulated that the willingness of their government partner to be open to new ideas, change course or consider alternative arrangements within their partnership are dynamics that are present. Lau (2014) presented how flexibility enters into partnerships, specifically the decision making process, resource allocation, and interpretation of policy and regulations. Such flexibility could be in response to external pressures or democratic accountability (Lau, 2014), but

the essence of flexibility is linked to the willingness of the local government entity to employ it. Such willingness may be a reflection of how the local government's goals and objectives align with that of their NPO partner.

Participant E conveyed that flexibility is about finding the right people in local government who are willing to be flexible. Participant E explained,

I find that those are the people that we reach towards when we're thinking of new initiatives or when looking for new ways to partner with cities, we're looking for those people that really are thinking outside of just what's on the piece of paper.

Participant D shared that flexibility involves "give and take" in that both sides come together in the spirit of collaboration. Participant A described their local government partners as representing the full spectrum in terms of their background and political beliefs, but who share their same goal of educating and empowering people. They can set aside their own personal beliefs and come to the table to collaborate on efforts to educate and empower the future leaders of tomorrow, the vision of Participant A's organization.

Familiarity. The other part of actions is familiarity, which is the foundation for building relationships between NPOs and their local government partners. A key element expressed by many of the participants is philosophical alignment, which is directly linked to their ability to develop shared goals and objectives. Metcalfe and Lapenta (2014) spoke of philosophical alignment in terms of the government's interest, in which they seek partners who are aligned with their interests. The same could be said for NPOs who seek government partners whose interests are aligned with their own. Since current

literature does not offer much of a perspective on this point, it could be a potential area for further research.

Familiarity and philosophical alignment. The participants described finding those government partners based on philosophical alignment as a precursor to building relationships with them. Participant A explained the mutual benefits of philosophical alignment,

> So, relationships are important because we build relationships with people who share that mission and our vision, or have a piece of it where we can assist them in developing their vision and achieving it or individuals they service within the cities or municipalities.

Participant B mentioned that sometimes one is lucky to fall on local government contacts that are philosophically aligned without knowing how they would perceive a particular project or initiative. Participant B stated, "I think sometimes there's just an organic nature of finding people who are lined up in terms of your values or want to make the same kind of impact and so, even without necessarily planning it."

Participant C shared that philosophical alignment is present at the service level, where their staff and the local government staff are directly serving clients. They are aligned in their mission, goals, and objectives, and therefore, they work very well together. Participant C added that philosophical alignment becomes elusive at the systematic level when dealing with the senior level leadership and management in the local government.

While Participant E discussed philosophical alignment in terms of flexibility:

When we talk about finding a champion and finding somebody that can really, you know that has that philosophical assignment, alignment, I really do need coffee, those are the people I tend to think of as the most rationale, I tend to think of those individuals as thinking beyond what policy or statute is to really interpreting those rules and putting them into the context of what makes sense.

Stewardship theory is complementary to philosophical alignment when describing the relationship between the steward (NPO) and the principal (local government). Davis et al. (1997) asserted that stewardship theory is reflective of an environment where the steward is selfless and is determined to take action that will create win-win situations for everyone. In order to undertake such actions, the steward must be philosophically aligned with their government partner; otherwise the stewardship theory would not apply.

Familiarity and perceptions. Another element of familiarity is perceptions, which are particularly important when NPOs and local government entities come together to form informal partnerships. In the proposal, perceptions were mentioned in terms of how the NPO and local governments might act in certain situations and their motives for engaging in such partnerships. However, what emerged from the interviews was that perceptions extend to an understanding or rather misunderstanding of how each other's organization operates. In the absence of any past experience working together, the misperceptions could be potentially damaging. Sullivan (2012) spoke about partnerships in the health care arena, in which the partners communicated through channels only related to their project and were not able to beyond a transactional type relationship to a more transformative stage. The relationship building process was somewhat constrained,

which may have fueled misperceptions about the ability of the other side to deliver.

Leland and Read (2013) added that an individual's background impacts their perceptions,

which affects their behavior in the workplace. Otherwise stated, certain commonly held

perceptions or misperceptions within local government about the ability of NPOs to

deliver could hinder the relationship building process and the development of shared of

goals and objectives that are core components of informal partnerships between NPOs

and local governments.

Participants interviewed for this research study shared similar concerns.

Participant B mentioned how their organization values their local government

partnerships, and it is reflective through their behavior and interaction with them.

Participant B stated that NPOs can sometimes be "aspirational" and rush into projects

without taking the time to evaluate them, but this is changing as NPOs, such as their

organization, are engaging in a more deliberate and rational process before engaging in

projects. Participant D couched it as an understanding of how the local government

system operates and those involved who can influence their organization's partnership.

Participant C asserted

> Our local government entities tend to believe that they have the answers, and that
>
> they are doing everything well, and they tend to treat community based
>
> organizations as if we are all about passion and don't run well and don't really
>
> know what we're doing and so, and I find that with local funders as well, so
>
> they're always talking to us about capacity building and assuming that you're not
>
> doing things the right way because really we all just touchy feely social workers.

Participant C mentioned that even when their organization has demonstrated a high-level

of competence and understanding of processes and procedures related to projects, local

government perceptions have been slow to change regarding Participant C's

organization's capacity.

Such perceptions are not universally held, however, as many of the other

participants have been able to overcome such perceptions. In fact, Participant E's

organization was sought after by a municipality to engage in an employment project due

to their perceived capacity and high regard with which they were held in the community.

Such developments could be indicative of the importance of building relationships with

various individuals in local governments whose perceptions change and are then

communicated to their colleagues who start to believe that the NPO can deliver

efficiently and effectively.

Interactions with local governments beyond partnerships. An emerging data

stream was revealed during the interviews, which involved the NPOs interacting with

their local government partners outside of the realm of their partnership. These

interactions were about building relationships and an opportunity for the NPO to

demonstrate its commitment to the community and positive social change. Participant B

mentioned developing relationships with local government counterparts on more of an

informal basis so that they can approach them about ideas for projects, discuss current

projects, or just dialogue on current issues facing the community. Participant C spoke of

becoming involved on committees and teams orchestrated by the local governments on

issues and initiatives that impact her organization's work. Participant D explained being

involved in other city programs and events, which demonstrate to their local government partner that Participant D is supportive of the city and their community.

Building relationships was cited as a key component of informal partnerships by all of the NPOs interviewed for this research. It is this action that leads to the formation of the partnership and facilitates an environment where the NPO and local government entity are able to work together for a common cause. There are complications that arise along the way, but if there is a strong foundation that reflects the relationship, these complications can be overcome. The participants who were interviewed for this research study also expressed these sentiments in relation to building relationships. The next theme that defines informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments is decisions.

Theme: Decisions

Decisions represent the next theme that was confirmed by the data collected from the five NPO participants. Decisions in this regard concern the dynamics that make them happen, not the content of the actual decisions that are undertaken by the NPO and their local government partner. Issues of power, trust, and the motivations of the players involved are a reflection of the decisions that are eventually reached under the guise of the informal partnerships, and they are reflected in Figure 3.
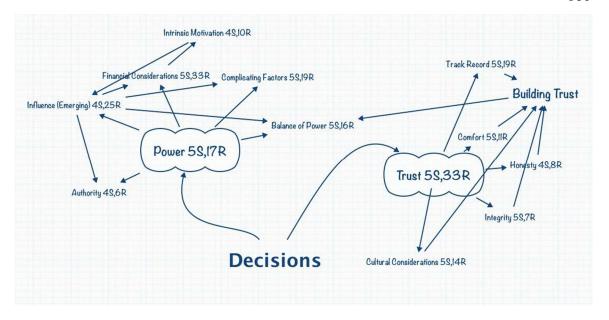
Figure 3. Theme: Decisions.

Figure 3 is a visual showcase of decisions and the relevant codes that are representative of the informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments. The two major categories are power and trust, and some of the codes associated with each category link them together. With respect to trust, the key element is building trust between the NPO and their local government partner. All of the codes associated with trust, such as track record, cultural considerations, integrity, honesty, and comfort level are all elements that are relevant for building trust. Then, building trust is linked to the balance of power, specifically reflecting that decisions are mutual and made with equal input from the NPO and the local government. Trust and the balance of power is one of the most critical elements of successful informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments, which will be explored further in the discussion below.

Power takes many shapes and forms as evident by what is depicted in Figure 3. One code that is central in its relationship to power is influence, which brings to the fore

many different scenarios relevant to the informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments. The first issue is that influence impacts authority in such a way that the local government entity's level of authority may be weakened since the NPO is able to exert more influence. By the same token, influence affects the balance of power, raising the position of the NPO to become a more equal partner. The second issue involves the financial considerations and intrinsic motivation and their eventual impact on influence and ultimately the balance of power. If financial considerations do not complicate the relationship, such as the local government entity funding the project with strings attached, intrinsic motivation is more likely present, which is the impetus for the NPO to exert influence for the good of the project that bounds the informal partnership. Such a scenario enables the NPO to become a more equal partner reflecting a more balanced relationship. The third and final issue is the complicating factors, which clouds the prospects for an informal partnership that reflects a balance of power and trust.

Power and influence. The first component of decisions to consider is power, of which influence was found to be an important factor. Influence was an emerging code, and one that all of the participants addressed as a critical element to achieving a balance of power. In the proposal, the discussion focused on power and influence within a NPO, which could place the NPO in a position of strength vis-à-vis their government partner. Pfeffer (2013) explained that a more traditional hierarchical structure is a necessity for a NPO to operate, but there is some flexibility to implement innovative structures that could help the organization prosper. Such scenarios open the possibilities for individuals at lower levels to exert power and influence. This is especially true in NPOs where

middle and lower level management possess the knowledge and know-how to implement the projects and initiatives that comprise their informal partnerships with local governments.

Goncalves (2013) introduced the concept of information power, which is relevant in this context and within the rubric of power and influence. He said individuals, usually leaders, utilize their knowledge to "strategically influence the behaviors, attitudes and values of others in their favor" (Goncalves, 2013, p. 3). Magee and Frasier (2014) agreed and stated that power emanates from "asymmetric information" in which information is sought and "valued by both parties" but one party "has access to more valuable information that the other party" (p. 308). They continued by expressing that expertise emphasizes the delicate balance in "power relations," where one side is dependent on the other to implement a project or initiative (Magee & Frasier, 2014, p. 308).

Participants A's and E's organizations are clearly operating from this position, since their respective involvements in their projects are both necessary and desired by their local government counterparts. Participants B and C are also in the same position, but it appears that their power and influence may not be as strong. Participant D is fulfilling an important need from the city's perspective, but it not one that is critical in the view of their local government partner.

Influence plays into game theory in that the NPO is using its influence to shape the decision making process. The NPO's are rationalizing the process in order to ensure that their vision of how the project should unfold becomes a reality. In most cases, their local government partners share this vision, so the process is not usually too complicated.

Stirling and Felin (2013) stated that, "The fundamental doctrine of game theory is that players make choices on the basis of preferences that take into account all factors that can influence their behavior" (p. 1). Such a definition aligns with what Schelling (2010) and Vasile et al. (2012) believed, which is the steward (NPO) and the principal (local government entity) utilize their knowledge and know-how to make rational decisions in the face of uncertainty. It is exactly that uncertainty which the NPO participants referred to in the decision making process and their ability to influence outcomes.

Participant A takes a structured approach in that their organization conducts an internal exercise to determine what they would like to achieve and possible scenarios on how their government partner might react. Therefore, they are engaging in the decision making process from a position of strength considering both their interests and that of their government partner in order to guide the decision making process to align it with the positive social change goals they seek to achieve. Participant B also implements elements of Participant A's approach, but stated that through increased interaction and familiarity with their local government partner, decisions will be rationally based. The commitment to get to a transformative stage will enable their organization and their local government partner to go on that journey together to evolve the partnership and resulting program to a successful outcome.

Participant C explained this process from a different viewpoint. Participant C said that learning the language of their government partner and understanding their interests is the key in order to create a workable dialogue with them. As this dialogue unfolds, their organization's opinions and desires of how the program could be shaped

are brought to the fore as more of an equal partner in the informal partnership context. Therefore, the game theory applies, because Participant C can play the game and have an opportunity to win, but win within the framework of positive social change where everyone wins.

Participant D spoke of keeping a game face in public, which helps to guide their relationship with their local government partner. Rationality is building and maintaining a good reputation that enables their organization to ensure that the goals and objectives of the informal partnership are met. Participant E recounted a situation where their organization's local government partner made a decision that was counter-productive, and they used their power and influence to convince them to reverse course. They played the game in a different manner through the lens of persuasiveness and coalescing other stakeholders around their view to reach a decision that was beneficial.

Power, influence, and financial considerations. Informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments are characterized by power and influence. It is evident that NPOs posses a great deal of influence that is elevating their power vis-à-vis their local government partner. In some cases, there is a true balance of power while in others the local government entity retains a power edge though diminished compared to a contractual (formal) partnership. Therefore, in order to ascertain and discern a NPOs level of power as measured by influence, there are specific factors to consider.

Money is an obvious factor, and as Gazley (2008) stated, informal partnerships could involve the government entity providing financial resources to make the project or initiative a reality. From a local government's perspective, their decision to participate in

a partnership is most likely guided by value for money. Sarmento (2010) stipulated that they are concerned with achieving economy, effectiveness, and efficiency when contributing financial resources to any project or initiative. T he local government entity will then probably seek to exert power so that their interests are served.

The participants interviewed for this research project made the association between money and power. For three of the five participants interviewed, money was not directly involved in their informal partnerships with the local government entity. According to Participants A, C and E, the absence of money is clearly a recipe for an equal partnership where there is a balance of power, though achieving that balance is not an easy proposition.   Participants A, C, and E are engaged in informal partnerships where the local government does not directly fund or pay them for their service. In fact, they are all involved in raising funds, sourcing resources to make the projects a reality, or relying on funding sources from foundations or other governments, such as state governments. The local government entity may have some influence on the NPO's ability to source these funds.

This is where the linkage between power and influence is critical to understanding how the NPOs are able to utilize their influence to mitigate the perceive power advantage of their government partner. For Participant B, the local government is funding the project though not providing funding to their organization directly, so Participant B uses their influence to ensure that the project is implemented to the benefit of the recipients, but the final decisions (i.e., the authority) ultimately rests with the local government because they are providing the funds. For Participants A and C, the partnerships involve

sourcing in-kind donations and funds from other sources and working with the local government entity to implement the project. Participant C said their organization holds more power and influence in the relationship when their organization is the one sourcing the funds rather than their local government partner. For Participant E, the funding is coming through local government sources that contribute to the project, but their organization is not directly paid by the municipality for their work.

Financial considerations and intrinsic motivation. Another factor to bring into the conversation is intrinsic motivation, which also reveals that power and influence are linked to financial considerations within the context of informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments. Intrinsic motivation, a concept that Deci (1972) put forward, stipulates that there is an inverse relationship between intrinsic motivation and money. Bechetti, Castriota, and Tortia (2013) presented this inverse relationship in terms of an employee's relationship with their employer in that the employee may be willing to give-up financial benefits due to intrinsic motivators (e.g., positive social change) that come with doing their job. Participant A mentioned that the executive director and other employees in their organization have donated their salary to the organization so that specific projects could be implemented, a clear sign of their intrinsic motivation for the social good. Such an act of generosity could be explained by Tonin and Vlassopoulos (2014), who made the linkage between the intrinsic motivator of "pure altruism" and positive social change, in which some people are willing to donate their own personal resources to support projects and initiatives that lead to positive social change. Intrinsic

motivation is a catalyst for influence, because the NPO is demonstrating its strong

commitment and will to make the project happen.

There is also the relationship between stewardship theory and intrinsic motivation

to consider. Van Puyvelde et al. (2012) postulated that the steward is intrinsically

motivated to produce the most beneficial results possible yet takes responsibility for their

actions even if there are less than desirable results. Wilson (2013) added that stewardship

is the conduit for everyone to take ownership of a project or initiative that is effectively

embedded in the relationship and joint desire to be successful. The intrinsic motivator is

that ownership and desire for positive social change. Participant C spoke of such

collaboration between their employees and the county's employees involved in the

project implementation. Participant C stated that county employees were so invested in

the success of the project that they actively support fundraisers organized by participant

C's organization in support of the project. Participant E shared this view but from a

different perspective in which their interlocutors in the city committed their time and

energy to make the jobs project a reality, in the absence of funding, because they believed

it was "a good or right thing to do" conveying a clear message that their joint project was

feasible and practical.

While power, influence, financial considerations, and intrinsic motivation are

related in some form within informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments,

there are other dynamics to consider that explain how these linkages are possible. All of

the NPO participants asserted that a central tenant behind joint decisions is trust. Without

trust, the intrinsic motivators that propel stewards could be absent, the influence exerted

by NPOs would likely be minimal, and the balance of power that would define an informal partnership between a NPO and local government would be elusive. Therefore, trust must also be considered as an explanation of how NPOs and local governments reach decisions.

Trust. All of the NPO participants interviewed for this research study agreed that trust is a central element of a successful informal partnership with a local government entity. Trust involves many factors, but two in particular were mentioned as critically important, transparency and track record. Palanski, Kahai, and Yammarino (2011) spoke of transparency, integrity, and trust in a team environment and as behaviors exhibited both in the group and individual context, which is applicable to informal partnerships between NPOs and governments. The notion is that the NPO and their local government partner will openly share and communicate information, and act in accordance with what they express, which will lead to a relationship based on trust (Palanski, Kahai & Yammarino, 2011). Such a scenario fits within the framework of a relationship between a steward and a principal, and reflects the informal partnerships of the participants interviewed.

Participant B expressed the importance of trust in an informal partnership with a local government as such:

We aspire further to be a foundation of respect, a shared commitment to common cause or at least a common group of people that we're trying to influence or help, I guess, serve, a willingness to be true and authentic and honest with each other.

Participant B linked trust and transparency together through the lens of integrity, in which words and deeds are aligned. The steward and principal work well together because they share the same values.

Participant C explained this phenomenon from the perspective of their organization, especially with the intent of overcoming complicating factors that could dog the relationship. Participant C conveyed,

I say we walk with integrity which again means that we follow through on things, if we mess up that we actually say, wow that was a spectacular wipeout, we're sorry, here's how we're going to pick up those pieces, and I think we have a reputation for that where people know they, what you see is what you get and what you get is really big, and it works that way, and that that has fostered the trust of the institution back to us, that we will deliver.

Transparency and track record are also related to perception, meaning that the NPO can overcome any misperceptions through transparency but also maintaining a strong track record, which will be considered later in this discussion. Transparency, integrity, and trust are linked, but each and every participant involved in the informal partnership must aspire to these values.

Participant E shared a similar perspective:

I think our values as an agency, and our values as individuals, are that, we don't want there to be any surprises, and we don't want there to be any punches pulled, and so, you know, if we see a problem, we're going to say it, if we made the problem, we're going to own up to it, we're not an organization that, that has a

history of deceit or half truths, so I think, I think that our reputation is enough out there that we bring that transparency that other people can see that and it helps us develop those trusting relationships.

It is clear that there is a linkage between trust, transparency and track record, but the relationship between trust and track record is a compelling one that is actually measured by positive social change while transparency may be more of a process that enables the partnership and resulting project to move forward. Mohr and Puck (2013) made the linkage between trust and performance (i.e., track record), and how performance leads to more trust. They stated that trust and performance are interchangeable as far as trust influences performance, just as performance influences trust (Mohr and Puck, 2013).

The NPO Participants interviewed agreed with this assertion. They linked trust and performance together and added that it occurs when perceptions on both sides reflect reality. Participant B couched it as taking ownership, meaning being honest and consistently following through to gain a reputation that will attract other local government and entities to work with them moving forward. Participant D added that through improving their performance, the local government entity eventually upgraded their partnership. By the same token, their organization began to view the local government as a reliable and trustworthy partner that also follows through by matching words with deeds. Such actions result in positive social change, which is why trust and track record are strongly linked.

Trust, integrity and track record – Decision making process. Trust, integrity, and track record are vital elements of the decision making process, because without them beneficial decisions become elusive. Both the stewardship and game theories are applicable in this regard. Davis et al. (1997) spoke of mutual accountability as the cornerstone of stewardship theory in which the principal and steward take equal responsibility in which words and deeds become interchangeable. Kluvers and Tippett (2011) confirmed that the steward, in particular, is concerned with achieving the goals of the organization and are not motivated by self-interest. It would appear that the steward is guided by altruistic values (i.e., intrinsic motivation), and it would follow that their words and deeds would match, reflecting integrity, honesty, and transparency.

The NPOs shared differing perspectives but all were consistent with the tenants of the stewardship theory. Participant B expressed that influence is part of the equation:

I think you try to arrive at together or if somebody, if we're asking the government for something, the government part or the government partner is asking us something, then they have an outcome in mind potentially already and so we just sort of mutually acknowledge that there's a decider there and then it gets back to talking things through and sharing opinions. I think it's the same thing as before, around influence.

Participant D shared that it is a clear win-win situation, but in particular, the municipality benefits in the eyes of the community because they look good. Participant D stated that their organization's ability to match words with deeds has enabled them to build a relationship with the city built on trust. Participant D explained that in reference

to the city events in which their organization participated, "I think, we produced a quality for them, and also, because they, it made their, their event way cooler. So, yeah, so, anyways that, it, it makes the city look good."

The above examples are aligned both with the stewardship and game theories. In terms of the stewardship theory, the principal and steward possess shared goals and objectives, and they are collaborating toward a mutually beneficial outcome that leads to positive social change. The game theory comes into play for reasons of the interests of the organization, but interests that are with a view for positive social change. Participant B directly acknowledged by using the word 'influence' which is an indication that their organization is able to position itself to shape the project or initiative as more of an equal player with their local government partner. Participant D is appealing to the interests of the municipality yet also ensuring that their organization benefits in the eyes of the community. Therefore, combining the stewardship and game theories, the principal and steward are negotiating and making decisions that will clearly reflect well upon their organization yet create win-win situations that will benefit their communities.

Theme: Positive Social Change

The next theme concerns positive social change, which is combination of the actions and decisions that lead to positive social change, which is depicted by Figure 4. The actual decisions that are an outgrowth of the strong relationships and the sound judgment exercised by the NPO and their local government partner to undertake decisions that will be beneficial for their communities. Positive social change is that shared vision between NPOs and local governments, and every action and motive are in

accordance with this vision through the lens of successful informal partnerships between
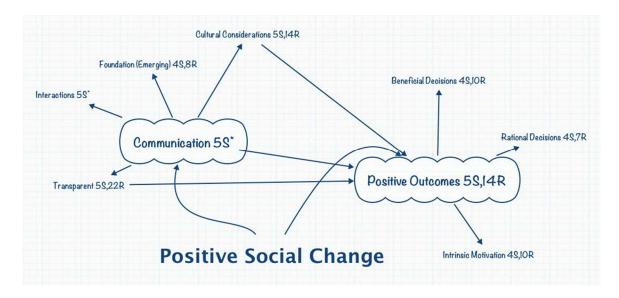
NPOs and local governments.

Figure 4. Theme: Positive social change.
*Communication and Interactions are found in all five interviews through other codes.

Figure 4 showcases how communication leads to positive outcomes, which results

in positive social change. The first primary category is communication, which reflects

cultural considerations, transparency, consistent interactions, and the foundation of the

relationship between the NPO and local government entity. While strong communication

leads to positive outcomes, transparency and cultural considerations, on other their own,

also contribute to positive outcomes, and the linkages between these variables and

positive outcomes are considered in the discussion later in this section. Positive

outcomes are also possible when intrinsic motivation is present as well beneficial and

rational decisions that are taken by the NPOs and local government partners. The

foundation for these beneficial and rational decisions were considered in the previous

section and that discussion is now taken a step further in relation to positive social

change.

It all boils down to positive social change, which is the goal of these informal

partnerships. If NPOs and local governments are not committed to positive social

change, than their partnerships will likely suffer. Communication and the desire to

achieve positive outcomes are the key elements to consider. Communication is the

foundation that fuels informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments.

Communication transcends any other element, because with effective communication

comes actions and decisions that lead to positive social change. In the proposal,

communication was positioned as the enabler for building relationships that are based on

trust, but the interview participants expanded communication to include the foundation of

which their partnerships are based. The first component considers cultural considerations

and transparency in relationship to communication.

Cultural considerations and transparency. Cultural considerations are also

important when NPOs and local governments come together for a common cause.

Cultural considerations are about mutual understanding that includes overcoming

misperceptions that can damage the partnership, which could provide perspective on why

transparency between NPOs and local government partners is essential. Su, Fang, and

Young (2011) stated that transparency is "value creating and purpose oriented" (p. 458).

Sablah et al. (2013) conveyed that engagement of those connected with the partnership in

an equal and equitable manner is essential and inherent, and within this engagement is

transparent communication that transcends individual preferences. Alexander and Nank

(2009) alluded that transparent communication is one of the conduits to resolve conflicts and build relationships that are based on trust. Cultural considerations have already been incorporated into the dialogue so that those around the table are participating in a higher-level dialogue that enables decisions to be taken that will lead to positive social change. Transparency is the genesis for an enduring relationship between NPOs and local governments, a concept with which the NPO interview participants agreed.

Participant B spoke of staff transitions in the local government as a test of their enduring relationship with local government partners. If the relationship involves transparent and open communication, then any staff transition within the local government or even his organization will not negatively impact the partnership. In fact, the new people around the table can build off what has been started.

Participant C explained that it is the intangibles of the enduring relationship that reflect whether those involved are past the cultural considerations and are dialoging at a higher level. Participant C stated that there have been instances where staff misinterpreted statements from their local government partner, and where the staff relied on Participant C's strong command of cultural considerations and conveyed to them that the individuals they work with at the county are their friends and "we need to kind of make leap of faith here" to see what is going on. It is important to step back to see what transpires, which indicates "there's some level of trust between a community based organization and a local government that is the intangible."

Participant E documented that it involves their staff experiencing the work environment inside the city's departments so that they can view first-hand the work that

is being accomplished and use that information to match participants in their program with specific job opportunities in the municipality. Participant E described the partnership as "a very embedded kind of relationship" where cultural considerations are a catalyst that makes the program successful. With communication established, positive outcomes become the focus, which involves the tangibles and intangibles behind how decisions are undertaken. In essence, it is the foundation that dictates the success of the informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments.

Interactions, transparency, and foundation. With consistent and transparent communication, positive outcomes become more likely judged by the decision-making process and the good intentions of those involved in the process. It is these good intentions that help build the foundation of these partnerships, which involves familiarity between the partners, trust, and a positive track record in which there is transparency and integrity.

Participant B stated that under the umbrella of informal partnerships, it is all about the people who come to the table to make it happen. It is not about the local government giving money or the NPO being told what they have to do to make the partnership work. It is about the good intentions of the people who are committed to the shared goals and objectives of the partnership. Participant B stated, "I just think without these qualities there is not a foundation for the partnership." Participant C agreed that it is also about the people who build that foundation, which is particularly relevant to an informal partnership. Participant C explained that "the decision making at the table tends to be more of a dialogue," where the partners are collaborating on how the program should be

shaped in which their organization is an equal partner in that process. Such a process could not unfold in the absence of a foundation that gels the informal partnership.

Participant E also concurred with this same notion and referenced the interaction in terms of collaboration and consistently providing input and suggestions on how to improve the projects and feedback on how the local government can improve its operation. In Participant E's organization's case, it involves bringing a lot of people on board with the concept, but if there is a strong foundation between their organization and the main drivers in the local government, who are strongly committed, it becomes all the more possible.

The foundation is representative of the critical elements that enable informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments to be successful. The theoretical perspective on how the foundation is established should be considered to understand how these foundations are built. The stewardship theory offers some perspective in terms of the collaborative interaction that exists between the principal and the steward. However, the intersection between intrinsic motivation and game theory reveals a different explanation that gets to the core of how the foundation is built.

Game theory and intrinsic motivation. The last piece of the puzzle is the good intentions on those who are at the core or could even influence the informal partnership. These good intentions are manifested through intrinsic motivation. This is where the stewardship and game theories come to the fore and reflect how the NPOs and local governments collaborate and make rational and beneficial decisions that maximize the possibilities for positive social change. While the linkage has already been made

between intrinsic motivation and the stewardship theory, it is equally important to understand how intrinsic motivation interacts with the game theory, specifically the decision-making process.

Frank and Sarkar (2010) depicted a game in which the principal offers financial incentives to the agent as a motive to achieve their own goals and objectives. If the agent accepts the financial incentives, their intrinsic motivation may drastically decrease (Frank & Sarkar, 2010). Dixit (2005) asserted that the game theory is used for strategic purposes involving rational decisions that involve financial considerations. However, if the individual is a steward they may resist the financial incentive and rather seek to find common ground with the principal since their intrinsic motivation is that much stronger for achieving positive social change. Dixit's definition could be expanded to include intrinsic motivation that transcends financial considerations. Moreover, through their own devices, the NPOs could be following Baniak and Dubina's (2012) advice of developing their own solutions to make projects and initiatives a reality. Participants A and C provided evidence that such a scenario is possible.

Participant A conveyed relevant examples to reflect such a situation. In many instances, their organization and their local government partner did not posses the financial resources to implement a program. Therefore, the executive director and some of the staff donated some of their own financial resources to make the program happen. Their intrinsic motivation was very strong and they employed the game theory to make a rational decision that the program must move forward. Moreover, they may have also relied on the tenants of the game theory to position their organization to conduct similar

programs in the future and build a track record with their government partner to further

their organization's cause.

Participant C also took a similar tact due to their organization's desire to improve

medical care for women, but with a different motive. Their organization partnered with

the county to improve the standard or such care, which has positively impacted the lives

of many women. The decision to proceed was rational and reflected intrinsic motivation.

However, there was an ulterior motive, reflecting how game theory and intrinsic

motivation come together. When the county is considering new initiatives or programs,

Participant C ensures that their organization, a trusted partner of the county, is at the table

in developing and shaping these initiatives.

The data from the NPO participants revealed that positive social change is the

cornerstone of their informal partnerships with local government entities. Positive social

changes brings all of the dynamics that surround these partnerships together, because it

encompasses the shared vision that NPOs and local governments wish to achieve.

Without the elements that define the successful informal partnerships, positive social

change becomes increasingly elusive. While there are challenges and complications that

arise and while the dynamics that define each partnership are different, there is a common

thread that is present in all situations. It is the desire for positive social change, which

means that all of the necessary ingredients are employed to make it possible.

The Role of Money in Informal Partnerships

Figure 5 represents elements of the three themes along with the theoretical

framework to demonstrate that financial considerations are a key factor that impacts the

direction of informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments. The discussion

will now consider the elements of the illustration using the data collected to present a

perspective of the relationship between money and intrinsic motivation, money and the

balance of power, and money and trust.

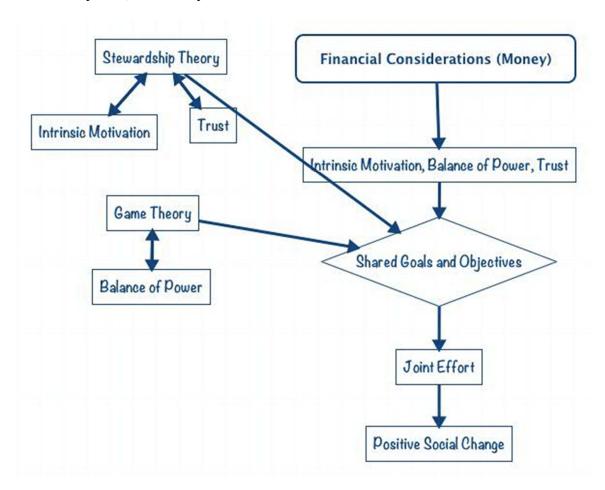*Figure 5*. The role of money: NPO and local government informal partnerships.

Figure 5 depicts how financial considerations (i.e., money) intersects with the

stewardship and game theories that eventually lead to positive social change.

Stewardship theory is about trust and intrinsic motivation that enables the NPO and local

government partner to develop shared goals and objectives. Likewise, game theory

proves that the balance of power between NPOs and local governments is possible taking them down the path to develop shared goals and objectives. Working in tandem is financial considerations, which incorporates the elements of both the stewardship and game theories leading to the same result of shared goals and objectives. Once shared goals and objectives are developed, the NPO and local government entity form a joint effort aiming for positive social change. The relationships and linkages between these variables are now considered and their relevance to this research.

While there were three themes that the data confirmed to reveal the dynamics of informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments, there is another issue to consider. The issue concerns the role of money in these partnerships and how it may impact the linkages between the codes that emerged. Formal contracts almost always involve the government partner paying the NPO for a service, but informal partnerships do not always involve money or could involve funding that comes from a source other than the local government partner. Therefore, an understanding between money and three relevant codes of intrinsic motivation, balance of power, and trust reveal another dynamic that it is unique to informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments.

The data reveals that there is an inverse relationship between money (i.e., financial considerations) and intrinsic motivation and the balance of power. What the data does not clearly show is the relationship between money and trust, which was not an issue directly explored for this research study. The literature focuses on the economic relationship between money and trust, specifically individuals and companies that entrust organizations to handle their money or their government to implement monetary and

fiscal policies that will protect their currencies. However, the literature does not specifically focus on the relationship between money and trust with respect to partnerships, including between NPOs and local governments. Such an area could be the subject for further research. However, some inferences regarding the linkage between money and trust could be made from the data collected for this research study.

For example, Participant C's organization has informal and formal partnerships with their local government partner. There was an instance when the local government partner terminated a formal relationship, a contact for a service that their organization was providing. Participant C requested a meeting with their contact at the local government to find out why the contract was terminated. After some back and forth, the meeting was pushed up several levels to the deputy of the local government agency, an individual with which Participant C had not previously dealt. Participant C met with the deputy who highlighted the great partnership between their agency and Participant C's organization, which was an indication to Participant C that their organization was valued and an important community partner with whom they looked forward to continued collaborations to include their informal partnership. The deputy also justified why the agency cancelled the contract.

Participant C understood that their local government partner needed to "manage" their partnership, an indication that they wanted to maintain the level of trust built between their organizations. Moreover, the issue of money came into play, because the local government partner pulled the trigger on a contact where they were paying the NPO, but yet sought to preserve an informal partnership where the NPO was bringing the

funding to the table. Participant C had mentioned that the onus was on their organization to build trust with their local government partner, but Participant C speculated that in this instance their local government partner was the one trying to maintain that trust.

The relationship between money and intrinsic motivation, balance of power, and trust could also be framed by examining the stewardship and game theories. Under the guise of the stewardship theory and relying on the perspective of the NPO, it is possible to postulate that money has an inverse relationship with intrinsic motivation, because the steward is altruistic and their goals and objectives are aligned with their government partner. The inverse relationship between money and trust is not as clear, because money causes the relationship to become more complex.

For example, Participant D used to have an informal partnership with their local government partner, in which their organization performed a service free of charge for the community. Participant D's interactions were with the city's parks and recreation department, and they had built a trusting relationship and worked well together. When the partnership became formal and the city started to allocate funds to Participant D's organization, the dynamics changed. Participant D had to form relationships with city council members who controlled the budget allocations. Participant D mentioned that each year, about three city council members employ political messaging stating that they are reason their organization is receiving funding from the city, while in fact Participant D knows that it is the city manager who is ensuring that the allocation for their organization is in the budget.

This example is an indication that when money is brought into the equation, trust can be comprised because some or all of the actors involved are not operating with the genuine intentions that are consistent with the stewardship theory. It is difficult for Participant D to trust with the knowledge that the city council members are more concerned with self-interest and personal gain rather than the positive social change elements of their organization's partnership with the city. The hope is that the dynamics involving the relationships with the city council members will not spill over to Participant D's relationship with the parks and recreation department.

The inverse relationship between money and the balance of power could be explained through the lens of the game theory. The game theory involves each side's engagement in the decision making process, relying on a rational process, to achieve specific objectives. If there is trust established between the NPO and their local government partner, the decision making process should result in decisions that are mutually beneficial reflecting their joint collaboration. This process is defined by a negotiation that involves transparent and honest communication yet two players who are aiming for specific outcomes that eventually meld into one.

The role of money in informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments is an area that requires more research, especially in relationship to trust. All of the NPO participants acknowledged that financial considerations, in some form, are a factor when dealing with their local government partner. The next section addresses the limitations of this study comparing what happened with what was prognosticated in the proposal.

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative case study research involved five successful informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments. While case study research is limited in scope, certain findings that were clearly expressed by all of the NPOs interviewed are most likely applicable or can even be generalized to similar informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments. While the NPOs interviewed were located in one geographical area, it could be possible that the findings are unique to that specific area, but it would be plausible that such sentiments are shared by their NPO colleagues in other areas of the country. Many of the common values and beliefs expressed by the NPOs are also consistent with what has been reported in the literature, which is an indication that the findings from this study could be applicable to a wider audience. While some of the findings could be characterized as unique, most of the characteristics that define these informal partnerships are most likely germane to a wider population.

As a federal government employee, I understood that my personal bias could somehow impact the data collection process and interpretation of the data. By recognizing this limitation, I was able to maintain a high level of objectivity, which is reflected in the research findings. I relied on my vast experience of interviewing individuals in different settings and was cognizant of any potential bias that could have seeped into the data collection process. I believe that my tone and discourse during the interview process was objective as measured by the level of comfort and ease with which the interview participants spoke of their experiences. Moreover, it was only necessary to interview each participant once, since the essential data was collected on the first attempt.

It is important to note that some of the interview participants expressed negative experiences with government partners, but through encouraging these participants to fully share their experiences, such encounters were presented in a balanced manner. Open-ended questions and any clarifications requested were meant to enable the participants to recount their experiences without any influence or leading on my part. I believe that their answers reflected perspectives that were relevant to their informal partnerships yet demonstrated a maturity and understanding that complications and challenges were present in their partnerships many of which had been overcome.

Recommendations

A recommended area for further research would be to understand how the level of influence NPOs are able to exert equates to their ability to shape the projects and initiatives that form their partnerships with local government entities. It would seem that NPOs are only able to influence the direction of projects when they are engaged in a informal partnership, but it would be interesting to make a comparison between formal and informal partnerships and measure the level of influence. A quantitative research study that relies on survey data from a wider population of NPOs may be useful for this purpose.

Another area for further research is philosophical alignment with reference to the interests of the NPO and their local government partner. The data demonstrate that NPOs and local governments would be inhibited from partnering with one another in the absence of philosophical alignment, but the literature offers minimal analysis on this point. Therefore, a research study on how the interests of NPO and local governments

are aligned, or perhaps not aligned, would be relevant in the context of informal partnerships. The participants interviewed for this research study mentioned that philosophical alignment is relevant, but as previously noted, it is an emerging concept and one that I had not considered as a central component of my research.

A third area for further research involves exploring the relationships between money and trust and how it plays into the partnerships between NPOs and local governments. The data reveal that there is most likely an inverse linkage between money and trust, though it may be the local government partner who is precipitating this inverse relationship rather than the NPO. Specific influences to explore could be cultural considerations, meaning turning misperceptions into perceptions that reflect an understanding and appreciation of each other's organization and how it operates. If the NPO and their local government partner are able to speak the same language, then they could demonstrate that money and trust can go hand-in-hand.

Implications

Successful informal partnerships between NPOs and local governments reflect positive social change because the proponents involved share this vision and collaborate to make it a reality. The potential impact for positive social change is enormous, because it involves small and large communities that are deriving benefits as a result of these informal partnerships. The beneficiaries include a diverse set of demographic groupings that transcend age, ethnicity, gender and culture. The impact of the projects and initiatives that are the outgrowth of these partnerships are life affirming and can and do change the direction and shape the lives of the beneficiaries in many different ways and

forms. The NPOs are cognizant of the potential impacts, because they consistently interact with the beneficiaries and keep them in mind when collaborating with their local government partners.

This research adds credibility to the stewardship theory as a practical foundation for a relationship that enables partners to successfully collaborate. The NPOs interviewed demonstrated that the stewardship theory is applicable to informal partnerships, where the NPO is in the role of the steward working with the principal to develop and implement the project that is the foundation of their informal partnership. The presence of the game theory explains how the NPO is able to exert its power and influence to either approach or become an equal partner indicating that a balance of power is possible.

Conclusion

The advent of informal partnerships between NPOs and local government may be a recent phenomenon, but partnering between nonprofits and local governments has been ingrained in American society for a long time. The new phenomenon is that NPOs are ascending up the latter to become equal partners who have earned the right to influence and take decisions that impact the nature of their partnerships with local governments. It is no longer just about the NPOs knowledge and connections to local communities, it now concerns their ability and know-how to create positive social change. NPOs have demonstrated that they are community players who can make things happen independent irrespective of local government's resources or assistance, but they also believe that

collaborating with local government is much more impactful in bringing about positive social change.

The data collected for this research illustrates that NPOs can be equal partners vis-à-vis their local government counterparts, because they are able to rise above the challenges that have presented such a scenario in the past. In particular, money and resources, in which NPOs are developing capabilities and the infrastructure to bring money and resources to the fore that were formerly the role of governments. Moreover, NPOs are relying on rationalized and well-conceived processes to make decisions that are informed with a clearly define path on how to implement projects that eventually lead to positive social change. Local governments are increasingly viewing NPOs with the respect they deserve and relying on their advice to move projects forward. While such scenarios are not universal, they are certainly trending in this direction.

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Appendix A: Preliminary List of Possible Documents

1. Documents sourced from on-line sources that are public and specifically relate to

   and/or describe the informal NGO and government partnership:

   a. Documents from the relevant NPOs websites

   b. Documents from the relevant government entities' websites

   c. Documents obtained from third-party websites

2. NPO internal documents provided by the subjects during the interviews that are

   considered sensitive and could specifically detail the following:

   a. Memos and letters between the NPO and their government partner

   b. Minutes from any meetings and interactions between the NPO and their

      government partner

   c. Any documents that describe the goals, objectives and mission of the

      informal partnership

Appendix B: Pre-interview Questionnaire

Description: Pre-interview questionnaire for the case study research on successful informal partnerships between NPOs and local government agencies.

Purpose: To determine if the NPO is a relevant and good candidate for the research.

Administration: The pre-interview will be conducted on the telephone or by email with the NPO as a part of the selection process

Questions

1. Are you engaged in an informal partnership with a local government entity in the Seattle metropolitan areas to deliver a public service?

2. How long have you been engaged in this informal partnership?

3. Are there are any organizations that are involved in this informal partnership? If so, would you say that the relationship between your organization and the government agency is critical to the functioning of the partnership?

4. Would you term the informal partnership as successful, measured against the successful delivery of the public service?

5. Who are the individuals in your organization that are the point people for the informal partnership?

Appendix C: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of informal partnerships between nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and government entities with the intent to deliver a public service. The researcher is inviting NPOs who are engaged in these partnerships to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Scott Pozil, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to understand the dynamics that enable NPOs and governments to engage in successful partnerships with an aim to deliver a service to the public.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Participate in one face-to-face interview of one hour in length.
- Provide any relevant documents that detail your partnership with the government.
- If necessary, participate in a follow-up interview on the telephone or through an online mechanism, such as Skype or Adobe Video.

Here are some sample questions:
- What are the characteristics and variables you would use to describe your relationship with your government partner?
- What strategies does your organization employ to foster trust with your government partner?
- How would you describe the linkage between trust and the balance of power in your partnership, if such a linkage exists?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study.

Benefits of Being in the Study:

The research study is an opportunity to showcase successful informal partnerships between nonprofits and government, which could serve as models for NPOs and governments that are in the process of developing such partnerships.

Payment:
No financial payments or gifts will be provided as a condition four participation.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by Scott Pozil, the researcher and will not be shared with any source. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email (Scott.Pozil@waldenu.edu). If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **10-10-14-0168527** and it expires on **October 9, 2015.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By agreeing to be interviewed for this case study I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above. Please reply to this email with words, "I consent".

Appendix D: Interview Questions (Protocol)

Description: Interview questionnaire for case study research on successful informal partnerships between NPOs and local government agencies.

Purpose:

Date:

Time:

Name, Title and Agency of the Interviewee:

Interviewer: Scott Pozil

Overview of the Study:

Questions

1. Could you please describe the nature of your organization's partnership with the local government entity (entity to be specified)?

2. What are the characteristics and variables you would use to describe your relationship with your government partner?

3. Why are these characteristics important?

4. How did your organization and your government partner set the goals and objectives that are a part of your partnership? At what stage of the partnership were these goals and objectives set?

5. What is your definition of power? In your view, how does power define a partnership between a nonprofit organization and a government entity?

6. How would you describe the decision making process between your organization and your government partner?

7. How would you describe the role of rationality in your dealing with your government partner?

8. What is your definition of trust? How would you describe the role of trust in your partnership with the government entity?

9. What strategies does your organization employ to foster trust with your government partner?

10. How would you describe the linkage between trust and the balance of power in your partnership, if such a linkage exists?

11. In your opinion, what are the characteristics and variables that define a successful partnership between a nonprofit organization and a local government entity? Why are these characteristics and variables important?

Appendix E: Documents

Participant A/Organization A

- Current and Former Partners and Collaborators
- About Us
- Description of Participant A's Organization

Participant B/Organization B

- Programs
- Consortium Document
- Partnership Description Document
- Project Description Document

Participant C/Organization C

- Programs and Services
- Partners
- NPO Service Description
- Description of Participant C's Organization
- Local Government entity partners

Participant D/Organization D

- Programs
- Description of Participant D's Organization
- News and Announcements involving
- Participant D's Organization

Participant E/Organization E

- General Program Description
- Program Description – Partnership

Appendix F: Code Frequency Table

Code	Frequency
Familiarity	56
Financial Considerations	33
Trust	33
Shared Goals and Objectives	30
Influence (emerging)	25
Joint Effort	22
Transparent	22
Track Record	19
Complicating Factors	19
Track Record	19
Power	17
Balance of Power	16
Cultural Considerations	14
Positive Outcomes	14
Past Experience	11
Perceptions	11
Comfort	11
Philosophical Alignment (emerging)	10
Intrinsic Motivation	10
Beneficial Decisions	10
Honesty	8
Foundation (emerging)	8
Flexibility/Openness (emerging)	7
Interactions - Extra (emerging)	7
Integrity	7
Rational Decisions	7
Authority	6