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**The Impact of Collaborative Leadership
On Community Building**

By

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May, 1998

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Introduction

As the twentieth century comes to a close a shift in paradigm is taking place in civic life. The feeling of anomie and disaggregation is slowly giving way to the belief that citizens do indeed have the capability and desire to invest in and take responsibility for their communities. Past attempts in problem solving have seen repeated failures and an increase in the frustration of communities as the same problems plague their lives. In hopes of eliminating this cycle of despair, the citizens of today's society are turning more and more to the benefits of collaborative efforts.

As a fourth year Bonner Scholar I was assigned to a new initiative of the Richmond Service Associates called *In My Back Yard: Village Keepers*. The project asked for a volunteer capable of developing a team-building and visioning process for the members of the Highland Park Neighborhood. This community, located in the Northside of Richmond, is characterized by its Victorian style homes that were once occupied by upper-middle class whites before fleeing to the suburbs during what is now termed white flight. The population is predominantly African-American. Economically, the community has suffered as well. The local business district has experienced instability reflected in the high turnover rate of businesses is extremely high. The unemployment rate is documented by the number of males that can be seen on any corner at any given hour of the day. In addition, voter turn out is shockingly low. In the most recent elections for City Council the elected councilman won with only 300 votes. There are over 5000 registered voter in this area. It is this community that I entered into both in the capacity of volunteer and researcher.

My position in this project manifests itself in two roles. First, I am a volunteer for the key community organizer in the Highland Park neighborhood, Art Burton. Art served as the President of the Highland Park Neighborhood Association until January 1st of 1998 and is the Community Outreach Partner for the Bethlehem Community Center. This position requires of me the development and implementation of a team-building and visioning process for the community members of Highland Park. My questions concerning who should participate in this process brought me to my interest in collaborative efforts in community building. Here my actions as a volunteer and my academic interests as a student cross paths creating a second role as a researcher.

After working with the Highland Park Neighborhood Association for a little less than five weeks I began to notice the territorialism that was present among the civic associations responsible for the social well-being of the community. Factions were quick to form along any topic of discussion, with sides having been already decided based on the boundaries pre-drawn by these rival groups. The problems pressing this community are severe. Open-air drug markets exist, drive-by shootings occur, and unemployment persists. In the past, solutions have been implemented by single community organizations in Highland Park, yet none were influential enough to have a lasting impact on the problems being addressed. Band-aid solutions are no longer appropriate or acceptable. “Collaborative leadership is about how citizens and civic leaders can make a difference in addressing the most pressing public challenges in their community” (Chrislip and Larson XV).

Methodology

The purpose of this research project is to define and apply the concept of collaborative leadership in the community of Highland Park, Richmond, Virginia. The questions that focus this research are “How can collaborative leadership be implemented into the community building of Highland Park?” and “Is it effective in a practical application?” I have chosen participatory action research as my framework of methodology. This project uses the key steps outlined by Whyte to guide the research effort. Whyte outlines five key steps to follow in this framework (Whyte 127).

Formulating the approach to the problem: Through an extensive literature review on the topics of *community building* and *collaboration*, the necessary questions to ask in the pursuit of understanding the potential for collaborative community building in the setting of Highland Park will be created. Thorough knowledge serves as an aid in designing a plan to develop a collaborative form for this community.

Design/Planning: A strategic plan was laid out by Art Burton and myself for the creation of a collaborative forum based on the information disseminated from the literature review and the needs of the community as reviewed by members of the Highland Park Neighborhood Association.

Acquiring Data: The bulk of data came from observation combined with research. To complete this I became an active participant in the role of creating a collaborative leadership forum in Highland Park. I also sought to bring this forum together for team-building and visioning workshops as well as to collect information on how they felt about

and perceived the collaborative effort. By active participation in the process and the information collected via interview, the extent to which collaborative leadership in community building is successful in the Highland Park neighborhood can be determined.

Analysis: Data will be reviewed by both myself and Art. Questions to be answered are: Is the designated leader of this process a collaborative leader and is he perceived as one? What was the progression of civic engagement and enthusiasm throughout the process? What resistance to collaboration was met? Was the group able to overcome these obstacles? If so, in what manner? How was the collaborative process managed? Did alternate civic leaders emerge?

Reflection/Interpretation: This section provides an opportunity for me to meld together the underlying assumption that collaboration will benefit Highland Park and what really happens when theory is practically applied. Are there implications for collaboration in community building? What are they? Does collaboration really work? What are its strengths and weaknesses in this particular context? What parts of the collaborative process needed to be revised in order to be more successful?

The limitations of this research are found in the fact that the long-term results will not be observable due to the time constraints of the research project. In addition, my direct connection to the designated leader of the process may bias my perspective of successes and failures and may cause interviewees to not completely reveal all feelings they have

concerning the process. Furthermore, I may not have been afforded the opportunities privy to a long-time community member.

Defining Terms

Before proceeding, it will prove useful to define a number of terms before defining *collaboration*. They will be used with frequency throughout this report under the assumption that the reader has a working knowledge of these terms. Definitions have been taken from Community Building: What Makes It Work. A Review of Factors Influencing Successful Community Building published by the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. These definitions provided the clearest understanding of the words within the context of this particular report.

- **Community:** *People who live within a geographically defined area and who have social and psychological ties with each other and with the place where they live. (57)*

- **Community organizing:** *refers to the process of bringing community members together and providing them with the tools to help themselves. Community organizing is a strategy for building communities and for community development. (60)*

- **Community building:** *Any identifiable set of activities pursued by a community in order to increase community social capacity (60)*

If we were to measure the outcomes in community building, we might look at whether the process strengthened community ties, whether community members came to consensus about how to solve a problem, or whether they worked **collaboratively** to solve a problem.” (58)

- **Social Capacity:** *The extent to which members of a community can work together effectively. (61)*
- **Social Capital:** *refers to the resources such as skills, knowledge, reciprocity, and norms and values that make it easier for people to work together. (62)*
- **Community Competence:** Leonard Cotrell developed this list as a definition of a competent community: “A competent community is one in which its various parts are able to:
 1. Collaborate effectively in identifying the problems and needs of a community
 2. Achieve a workable consensus on goals and priorities.
 3. Agree on ways and means to implement the agreed-upon goal.
 4. Collaborate effectively in the required activity.”
 (Cotrell 25)

Literature Review

The new buzz word of the 90's is *collaboration*. The word is used in reference to politics, economics, and sociology. Within the discipline of sociology the term collaboration is becoming more frequently connected to another defining concept of the 90's, *community building*. However, it seems that more often than not, the ideas of collaboration are not used effectively in repairing distressed communities. Decades of unsuccessful attempts have left civic entrepreneurs and citizens thirsty for new ways of addressing the problems in their community. Collaboration has provided the most quenching results.

Despite its role as a defining term of the 90's, collaboration is not necessarily a new idea or concept. Over the past two decades Robert Putnam and several colleagues

have been studying the implications of collaboration in Italian communities. Starting in the 1970's the Italians formed a nationwide set of potentially powerful regional governments. All were identical in form but the contexts they were placed in (culturally, politically, socially, and economically) were vastly different. Some of the new governments proved to be horrid failures, becoming corrupt and dysfunctional, while others grew to be remarkable successes. Some regions such as Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany are known for their civic communities, and others are known for their inability to function as cohesive units like Calabria and Sicily. Why were some successful while others failed? What Putnam and his colleagues discovered was "The successful, civic communities did not become civic simply because they were rich. The historical record strongly suggests precisely the opposite: They have become rich because they were civic" (Putnam 5).

FDR's New Deal and LBJ's Great Society both resembled the theories behind collaborative leadership. They supported the thought that America must learn that they are one great family and must learn how to function that way. This means sharing benefits and burdens. Here we see that collaboration is not only considered an effective solution on a micro-scale of communities, but in the macro-society of nations. Americans have often times been identified as rugged individualists. They define themselves by liberty and independence, yet it is these two characteristics that allow them to form relationships and collaborations of their own choosing (Joyce 8).

Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations or groups to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to a vision and a set of shared goals, a jointly developed structure, shared responsibility, mutual authority and accountability for success, and sharing of resources

and rewards. In his book Collaborative Leadership: How Citizens and Civic Leaders Can Make a Difference, David Chrislip offers a more civic-minded definition and defines *community collaboration* as “how citizens and civic leaders can make a difference by serving as catalysts for collaboration” (39). Further, it is about “how citizens and civic leaders can make a difference in addressing the most pressing public challenges in their community” (XV). What people are beginning to realize is that for effective solutions to difficult problems to be implemented, all the stake holders must have a collective will to sit down at the same table and work together. “The word collaboration, and its siblings coalition-building and negotiation, are concepts that more and more communities are embracing out of need rather than nostalgia” states Dr. Suzanne Morse, Executive Director for the Pew Partnership for Civic Change (Morse 1).

David Chrislip identifies ten factors that must be present or purposely built into the process from the beginning of the process in order for collaboration to succeed. First, there is *good timing and clear need*. People are ready to act in response to a need. There are *strong stakeholder groups*. The community has well organized groups that are stakeholders in the collaborative process who are able to clearly articulate the interests they represent. There are many participants from many sectors to create *broad-based involvement*. The stakeholders perceive the process to be *credible and open* in that it was not dominated by any one particular group. There is *commitment and/or involvement of high-level, visible leaders*. Leaders such as mayors or councilmen are committed or involved in the effort. If they are not directly involved, their commitment is known. In addition, there is *support or acquiescence of “established” authorities or powers*. These high-level stakeholders agree to support and abide by the suggestions given by the

collaborative process. They do not undermine the process. One of the largest challenges is *overcoming mistrust and skepticism*. Given that there is usually a level of mistrust and skepticism in the initial meetings, this should decrease over time. *Strong leadership of the process* is present. The process is characterized by many examples of leadership rather than leadership through one point of view. Leadership is exhibited through keeping stakeholders in the discussion during times of frustration and doubt, recognizing the small successes as they go along, helping negotiate difficult points in the process, and enforcing group norms and ground rules. *Interim successes* are celebrated. The process has recognizable successes along the way that lent to a feeling of momentum and credibility. They are proof that something really is happening which provides the commitment of the stakeholders to the effort. Finally, there is a *shift to broader concerns*. As the effort evolves, the participants focus less on narrow self-interests and more on the broader interests of the community.

The context in which a collaborative effort is to be initiated has a large influence on how the process should be instigated and maintained. It becomes the responsibility of the collaborative leader to oversee this process. People must understand where each other's motivations lie and, therefore, what their context for working together is (Chrislip 55). This context includes all variables that characterize and define a particular community. As a preliminary step to the collaborative process a collaborative leader evaluates the context of the situation in order to identify the proper people, specify the action to be taken and provide good information. Chrislip identifies six steps for the collaborative leader: identifying the problem type, understanding what makes leadership difficult, identifying the relevant community of interests (stakeholders), assessing the

extent of stakeholder agreement, evaluating the community's capacity for change, and identifying where the problem/issue can be most effectively addressed.

The challenge of the collaborative leader is the change in focus from *outcome* orientation to *process* orientation. The difficulty falls in the inability of "people to work together constructively" (Chrislip 63). It has little to do with the substance of the issues or problems. This distinction is important: "it means that the primary focus of leadership when people have to collaborate needs to be on the process of how people work together to solve problems, not on the content of the problem itself" (63). A collaborative leader must be able to analyze the different perspectives needed for defining problems and solutions. This does not begin with a list of powerful names and organizations. People who the problems and solutions affect are the most powerful voices in the collaborative process (Chrislip 63).

As defined earlier, community building is *any identifiable set of activities pursued by a community in order to increase community social capacity*. Mattessich and Monsey, in their study on community building, found that there were three significant factors that influenced the success of community building: characteristics of the community, characteristics of the community building process, and characteristics of the community building organizers (Mattessich 19). The first factor, *characteristics of the community*, listed eight qualities that, if present in a community, would lead to a greater likelihood of successful community building. Among these eight there were several that were parallel to the ten factors listed as necessary for successful collaboration by Chrislip. Mattessich and Monsey identify *community awareness of an issue* as a characteristic pertinent to the success of community building while Chrislip states that *good timing and clear need*, in

the sense that people were ready to act in response to a need and a sense of urgency had been created, was imperative to successful collaboration. Chrislip also identified *broad-based involvement* as crucial to success. Many sectors of the community must be represented in the collaborative effort and they must be motivated. Mattessich and Monsey targeted *motivation from within the community* as a characteristic similar to this idea. They assert that more successful efforts occur when initiated by the community itself rather than forced by those on the outside. Both ideas suggest that the level of commitment from the stakeholders is paramount. Chrislip expands upon the importance of *strong stakeholder groups*. The community needs to have preexisting and well-organized groups that have a stake in the collaborative process. *Preexisting social cohesion*, suggested by Mattessich and Monsey, runs parallel to this idea that the strength of interrelationships among community residents is critical to community building as well.

Mattessich and Monsey continue to list *characteristics of the community building process* that are very similar to Chrislip's ideas as well.

Chrislip	Mattessich and Monsey
Interim success: being successful in the smaller feats before tackling the larger	Progression from simple to complex activities
Strong stakeholder groups: preexisting community organizations	Early involvement and support from existing indigenous organizations
Broad-based involvement	Widespread participation
Strong leadership of the process	Focus on product and process concurrently & Existing Identifiable Leadership

It quickly becomes apparent that there is a direct relationship between the characteristics of successful collaboration and successful community building. Both are contingent upon the particular traits of the community and the ability of the community to acknowledge and work with them.

In *The Community Builders' Guide to Telecommunications Technology*, a process of how collaboration and collaborative leadership can be used in community building melds together the ideas of Mattessich and Monsey and Chrislip. The *collaborative community assessment process* helps communities to identify the issues that should be assessed, the community's local resources, and the available human and technological resources (15). The guide then identifies five major elements in the collaborative community assessment process that combine the once isolated ideas of collaboration proposed by Chrislip and the concepts of community building proposed by Mattessich and Monsey. These common elements include identifying issues, stakeholder involvement, refining the issue, gathering information, and developing a strategic plan (16).

The need for reform in the way community problems are addressed and resolved is seen in the plight of today's urban communities. The Committee for Economic Development offers these insights into what distressed neighborhoods are not in their report *Rebuilding Inner-City Communities: A New Approach to the Nation's Urban Crisis*. Distressed neighborhoods are not necessarily plagued by their location in a large city; plenty of urban communities are prosperous and well organized. Distressed neighborhoods do not have to be low income; there are plenty of neat and welcoming communities that are low income. Finally, a distressed neighborhood is not necessarily one of minorities (10). The defining characteristic of a distressed community is the

“simultaneous presence of multiple social problems” such as poverty, joblessness, crime and violence, dependency on welfare, and depressed real estate values (10). Coexisting, these problems feed off of each other and instill fear in a passerby. These relationships “cumulatively overwhelm the mechanisms of social control. Thus, inner-city distress is about more than poverty or individual problems; it is about the collapse of a community’s ability to cope with problems” (10). It is in these distressed neighborhoods that collaborative community leadership could have its greatest influence.

However, the problems that characterize a distressed community are just symptoms of a larger problem. The intertwined problems can only be unraveled by many mechanisms of social coping. Among these is *social capital*. Social capital refers to the “resources embedded in social relations among persons and organizations that facilitate cooperation and collaboration in communities” according to the Committee for Economic Development (11). Distressed neighborhoods are usually experiencing a deficit in social capital. The dearth of social capital exacerbates all the problems characteristic of a distressed neighborhood including educational achievement, unemployment, and crime. Social capital is hard to create even though it occurs quite commonly. Routine activities of community living such as joining a community center for recreation or a neighborhood watch association to prevent crime create social capital. It is not necessarily created for the purpose of solving future problems, but without this initial structure in place, problem solving is impossible.

The snowball effect best describes the growth and development of social capital in communities; those that have more create more. “Successful collaboration in one endeavor builds relationships that can be applied to unrelated tasks” (3). In fact, social

capital is depleted if it is not used. So how are social capital and collaboration related? Social capital is created through collaborative efforts, but successful collaboration is not possible without social capital. “Without social capital to sustain problem solving with distressed communities and to link community residents to the broader society, efforts to address specific problems of individuals, families, and neighborhoods will make little progress” (3). The two terms are inextricably woven.

In all successful examples offered by *Rebuilding Inner-City Communities: A New Approach to the Nation's Urban Crisis* about local action creating and using social capital, a key link continues to resurface; collaboration. Collaboration is required for expanding employment through efforts such as CDC's. Community Development Corporations seek to become owners or sponsors of businesses with their own communities that hire local residents. Another collaborative effort is seen in revitalizing retailing. Many low income neighborhoods have poor access to retail goods such as grocery stores, banking, appliances, etc. What little they do have is of poor selection and is overpriced. The development of retail shopping for reasonably priced commodities draws more opportunities for other business to come to the neighborhood. “Local retail establishments also become resources for further community building. For instance, a supermarket might collaborate with a local health clinic to promote proper nutrition among mothers and children” (23).

Communities are also using collaborative efforts to ensure public safety. Most crime occurs out of the view of patrolling officers. For this reason many police departments are turning to community patrolling units. “Community policing works if it engages the collaboration of community residents...residents serve as the eyes and ears of

the police, and they and their community-based institutions become active partners in enhancing public safety” (25). Finally, efforts to promote youth development have started to incorporate the concept of collaboration into their programs. One example is Logan Square YMCA’s innovative gang intervention program. By using recreational activities to attract gang members, they hope to then put them into contact with opportunities in employment and education. Training for former gang members to speak out against violence and to mediate between rivals is also provided. “It brings rivals together in the neutral territories of classrooms, jobs, and games to build personal relationships that make them less willing to attack each other on the street” (26). The key is to pull together the fragmented resources available from government, nonprofit, and business into a comprehensive program that is accessible to the community.

The Committee for Economic Development states that in order for communities to become cohesive units once again, traditional programming and efforts in the community will have to give way to a new paradigm in community building (3). The study suggests that the best way to vamp these renewed efforts is by evaluating communities that do work. What characterizes them? What makes them work? “Such communities encompass many relationships and institutions by which residents share information, work toward common goals, and acquire needed support. They are not isolated from the society outside their border, and residents maintain and utilize resources and contacts from across their metropolitan areas” (3). In not so many words, collaborative leadership and its importance in innovative and effective community building has just been described. The community itself is an invaluable resource that has been looked over in the equation of community building. Past efforts have neglected to see the benefits of including the

community members in the problem solving process. They do not view them as partners. Solutions have been implemented without the input of those who it will affect and with no regard for how these residents live and interact. The incapacibilities of the residents are emphasized rather than their ability to successfully create their own solutions for their community (4).

Communities of the past have had their problems as well. They were unable to deal with strangers and in many ways incapacitated by homogeneity. However, John Gardner suggests that “the traditional community did create, through the family, through the extended family, and through all the interlocking networks of community life, a web of interdependency and mutual obligation in which individuals gave and received support - all giving, all receiving” (21). Current efforts, be they by government, nonprofits, or civic associations, have been unsuccessful not only because they lack a united front against problems, but because they also ignore the fact that the problems in the inner-city communities are compounded or “mutually reinforcing” (3). Therefore, narrow-focused efforts are unable to make substantial change whereas broader comprehensive efforts have further reaching effects. These broad-based efforts are only achievable through collaboration.

Findings and Results with Analysis

To understand the context into which I entered as a volunteer and researcher, it is necessary to give a brief background of the process that was already in progress. Having recognized the need for stronger efforts in community problem solving, a group of three to five community agencies in the Northside and the Near West End had convened to explore the possibility of creating a Leadership Training Seminar. The program planning

project was to create a series of seminars devoted to community organizing to be offered to promote leadership development within the struggling community. Specifically, the adult education was to focus on acquiring leadership skills and knowledge of methods of community organizing and activities. The target population is low to moderate income, African American adults in the Highland Park region. The organizational and social context was deemed a community based collaborative effort at a grassroots level where neighborhood residents were learning from leadership development from other neighborhood residents.

The two major power influences asked to join the planning team were the Bethlehem Community Center (BCC) and William Byrd Community House (WBCH). While both agencies are perceived by the Richmond community as legitimate service agencies, neither agency has been perceived by the local community as a viable resource brokerage for the neighborhood. In response to local funders and a combined ethical belief that their neighborhood centers are for the benefit of their neighbors, these two non-profit organizations sought to work collaboratively. Representing the Northside through BCC was Barbara Heckman, Executive Director; Maxie Cannon, Youth Director; and Art Burton, Community Director and also President of the Highland Parks Neighborhood Association. In addition, Roy Reed, serving as Director of the Community Coaches Citizens Patrol was asked to join. Representing the Near West End from WBCH was Norma Hall, Assistant Director; and Jeanette Voas, Community Builder and Intern at the VCU Survey Research Lab (Appendix A).

Representing the interests of the *learners* were Art and Roy, both residents of the target communities. Art was raised in the Near West End yet resides in the Northside as

does Roy. These two men were charged with soliciting the opinions of their peers on the idea of a leadership forum.

Representing the *teachers* for the leadership development seminars were facilitators from Community Empowerment Organization (CEO). This organization offers day-long custom-designed workshops to teach citizens the actual leadership skills needed in community organizing. CEO is perceived as a viable resource of knowledge and support in the area of community building.

In essence, this planning machine was in and of itself a collaborative effort. Its mission was to begin the development of the Leadership Development Training Seminar, a collaborative effort to include community leaders, potential leaders, youth, and everyday citizens.

I was the last member of this planning team to be added. The University of Richmond had developed a team called the Richmond Service Associates in order to increase the impact the University had on its community. The team was a collaboration of key community players from the University and the Richmond community. Examples of participants are its spearhead, President Richard Morrill, Viola Baskerville, Zeddie Bowen, and others. The Richmond Service Associates developed the *"Village Keepers In Our Backyard"* program through the office of the University of Richmond's Chaplain. This program assists local communities in improving their neighborhoods. The grant offered to the planning team offered them not only \$1500 but a Bonner Scholar volunteer who would aid in developing a team building process and a visioning retreat for the participants in the Leadership Development Training Seminar. After applying for and receiving the position, I began my direct work with the planning team in early November.

Due to my status as an outsider to this community, I began my involvement by simply sitting in on the meetings of the Highland Park Neighborhood Association of which Art Burton was president of at the time. I was received primarily with curiosity rather than skepticism. People seemed excited to actually begin the process of fertilizing the leadership development in their community in hopes of curbing many of the over-grown problems. However, despite their enthusiasm there were several characteristics of the groups that sent red flags up in my head which will be detailed later.

For the next few weeks I continued to familiarize myself with the key players on the planning committee. The William Byrd Community House invited me to sit in on several of their meetings in order to expose me to a different community and the problems they were facing. After approximately four weeks of observing and participating in these meetings, Art and I felt we were ready to begin the process I had been recruited for, team building and vision development (Appendix B).

After discussing the dynamics of the potential participants in the Leadership Training Development Seminar, it was determined that it would be necessary to have a two-part series of team-building workshops. Though many of the participants knew of each other and had quite possibly worked together in other contexts, I felt that it was pertinent to break down any barriers that might have been built up between people and organizations. For years many of the non-profits in this community, as in most every community, have been forced to fight each other for funding. What they have neglected to realize is that their goals are usually quite common. It would be unusual, yet hopefully productive, for them to come together and work towards common goals. However,

before that could happen we needed everyone to see each other as equals and to feel a certain level of comfort and trust with their community peers. The team-building workshops spawned from this theory.

The first workshop developed was designed around the idea of simply getting to know one another, our roles in the community, problems we saw, goals we thought needed to be established, and whether there was a place for a leadership forum in Highland Park. In order to collect this information we drew up a series of oral questions to be answered by each individual. By opening discussion we hoped to offer the opportunity for common backgrounds, interests, and goals to be shared. (Appendix C). A questionnaire was also drawn up for participants to complete. The questions were focused on learning more about the needs of the organizations involved (Appendix D). The second workshop focused on creating a collective perception of what the leadership forum could do for the community as a whole. A clip from the movie *Sister Act* was selected to demonstrate the power and influence a unified body could have on a distressed community. A series of small-group discussion questions were developed to follow the movie clip (Appendix E).

The final part of the seminar was to be a visioning retreat to be held on the UR campus. The University was chosen as a neutral location that would provide a setting conducive to brainstorming and action planning. A six month action plan to hand to the city councilman for implementation was to be the end result (Appendix F). This three part workshop was never implemented in the course of the past three months due to constant delays, cancellations, and setbacks which will be discussed and analyzed in detail.

Unfortunately, the hands in which the community members had placed this project were unable to function themselves much less motivate a team of other citizens to create a leadership forum. Therefore, it is the collapse of one collaborative effort that led to the inmaterialization of another, being the Leadership Development Training Seminar. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the demise of the planning team as a collaborative effort in order to explain the failure in conducting a team-building and visioning process, much less an entire Leadership Development Training Seminar. It would not prove productive to evaluate the dynamics and failures of a collaborative effort that never existed. Its failures lie in the fact that the planning team did not succeed as a collaborative effort itself. In order to establish a framework in which the results of my action research may fit into and analyzed, a model has been developed using Chrislip's list of ten factors that must be present or purposely built in the process from the beginning in order for collaboration to succeed. Included in the discussion is Chrislip's recommendation, what the actual situation was with the planning team, how the conditions affected the development of a Leadership Development Training Seminar, and why.

The first factor identified by Chrislip was the presence of *good timing and clear need*. People were ready to act in response to a need. Unfortunately, my first-hand knowledge was limited to the small amount of time I had spent in the various meetings of the organization, research previously done on the team, and Art Burton's advice since I was working directly under him. Based on my observations, the need for action was obvious to the community members. They were aware of the problems that plagued their community such as drug dealing, youth warfare, unemployment, and high crime rates.

They were also aware that past efforts had been ineffective in solving these issues. For these reasons they were ready to see action happen. A needs assessment survey designed by the former executive director of the Bethlehem Community Center, Barbara Heckman, showed a variety of community interests ranging from increased youth programming to housing renewal. The varied interests rallied around several underlying concepts about the Northside community. Of particular interest to the planning team was that residents believe the community lacks a cohesive, central organizing body of its own members. Citizen action was cited as a method to rectify many of the unwanted conditions in the neighborhood. Creating a core of residents to develop initiatives in lieu of those led by city personnel was a stated desire. What occurred in actuality is that a core of residents and leadership was never brought together in the five months I spent in this community. This has been hard to explain considering that the brick and mortar of any collaborative effort existed...or so it appeared. Where the problem lay was in the timing.

Chrislip dictates that there must be *strong stakeholder groups*. The community had well organized groups that were stakeholders in the collaborative process who were able to clearly articulate the interests they represented. However, in meeting with these members of the planning team it became obvious that the needs and goals of each group were very different. BCC hoped to bring together established leaders of various organizations in the Northside such as pastors from area churches, local police officers, businessmen, and highly interested citizens. WBCH, on the other hand, wished only to bring in common citizens with no former leadership positions. Therefore, the stakeholders in the planning team lost enthusiasm as their interests continued to clash. Resulting was

that no additional stakeholders for the Leadership Development Training Seminar were even invited to participate in this collaborative effort due to the lack of consensus within the planning team.

Broad-based involvement was necessary so as to include participants from all sectors. Within the planning team there was not broad-based involvement considering there were only two major power influences represented, being WBCH and BCC. Though there was significant representation from both of these organizations, their clout and influence on the surrounding community was often limited to the roles they played within the two community houses. As mentioned before, the goals of the two community houses were similar in the fact that they both wished to bring civic leadership to their communities but differed in their ideas of who the participants should be in the process. Unfortunately, neither of the groups had the foresight to include some of the potential participants in the initial planning phase. As the two groups began to plan the leadership forum the ideas introduced were the perspectives of those who had served their community in formal leadership roles. Outside views were not invited to sit on the planning committee. In fact, their opinions were very rarely solicited during the process. The effort which was being perceived as collaborative by its participants was actually slightly exclusive considering the voices of the actual stakeholders in its outcome were absent. The sense of urgency was lost in the details of planning rather than reenergized by progress made towards the goal of creating a leadership forum. Enthusiasm and energy generated by a passionate group of stakeholders could not be imitated by such a small and select few.

The fourth recommendation that Chrislip makes to ensure an effective collaboration is *credibility and openness of process*. The stakeholders needed perceive the process to be credible, fair, and not dominated by any one particular group. Within the planning team this was a noteworthy problem. A sense of distrust of each other's capabilities and level of commitment seemed to overshadow any meeting the planning team had. WBCH felt overpowered by the higher number of representatives from BCC. BCC felt held back due to the fact that WBCH was not nearly as ready as they were to actually start inviting people to the first team-building session. These two conflicts were major contributors to the constant delay of our original timeline. If a date was set by BCC, WBCH felt that their need for a slower process was being overlooked, but the more the dates were postponed the more WBCH and BCC began to lose steam and enthusiasm. Due to the inequality of influence, the stakeholders in the planning process did not perceive the process to be open or credible. If invitations to participants had actually been issued, this constant delay and postponement of progress would have discouraged and frustrated everyone. This discontent and animosity would have permeated the entire community through the assorted connections the participants have with various organizations and would have eventually turned the entire community off to the idea of the leadership forum.

Commitment and/or involvement of high-level, visible leaders is necessary in order to make the process viable. High-level, visible leaders were committed or involved in the effort such as mayors and city councilmen. This recommendation was not met by the planning team. Though all of the members were viewed as community leaders, their

influence was the strongest at the grassroots level rather than in public office. Both Viola Baskerville and Councilman James Banks were made aware of the possibility of the Leadership Development Training Seminar yet their participation and opinions were never solicited. The presence of such an established leader would have served as not only an excellent resource on organizing and leadership, but could have served as a third-party or bridge connecting the two major power influences, BCC and WBCH.

In addition, *support or acquiescence of "established" authorities* must be acquired. Councilman Banks was the representative for the district in which Highland Parks is located. Unfortunately, Banks was elected with only 300 votes in a region of 5,000 registered voters. His two years have been characterized by stagnation and lack of progress in addressing the grassroots problems of the community. He is not perceived by the masses as a man who gets things done or has his fingers on the "pulse" of the community. Ideally, the planning committee had hoped to place the product of the visioning retreat, a long-term agenda for the community's plan of action, in the hands of Councilman Banks to begin implementation. However, his reputation made the planning team skeptical of his level of commitment to such an effort. Therefore, it was perceived that there was not a strong body for a community agenda to be handed over to. This was discouraging to the planning committee and simply added to the feeling of lack of support from the general community. Should Councilman Banks have been someone the planning team saw as a participant, stakeholder, supporter, and implementer, I believe it would have lit the match that would have kept their fire going. However, this was not the situation.

Overcoming mistrust and skepticism proved to be one of the most difficult challenges on several levels during this process. Ideally, the members sitting on the planning team should have been completely trusted by the constituents they represented. In order for any product that this team may have produced to catch on and be bought into, it would need the support and backing of the organizations that the planning team derived from at the very least. At the end of December 1997, Art Burton was excused as President of the Highland park Neighborhood Association. His dismissal was allegedly hinged to a conflict in interests. The organization wanted to have a definitive voice in what the planning team was setting as their goals. Art and the others felt that a shift to broader concerns was imperative to creating a leadership forum that was inclusive of all community members and took into account their goals as well. As a result the Highland Park Neighborhood Association felt that their goals were being underrepresented given the fact that their president was sitting on the planning committee. This instability eventually permeated the attitudes of the community and lent to an increase in the level of mistrust they had for the planning team in general. Had any formal effort been attempted to recruit community members onto the leadership forum, I believe that the effort would have proven futile. Mistrust also existed between members of the planning committee. Norma and Jeanette, representatives from WBCH, were always skeptical of Art's ability to carry out his responsibilities. However, Art was never comfortable with the more narrow-sighted community goals that Norma and Jeanette seemed to be striving towards. As a group there was not a sense of unity and trust which was further emphasized by the lack of a collective goal to serve as a cohesive.

In a collaborative process it is absolutely necessary for there to be *strong leadership of the process*. Leadership must be exhibited through keeping stakeholders in the discussion during times of frustration and doubt, recognizing the small successes as they go along, helping negotiate difficult points in the process, and enforcing group norms and ground rules. Within the planning team Art served as the key motivator. No other members of the team were willing to step up and assume leadership of the process if for some reason Art needed, or simply wanted to step back for a moment. However, Art was not the most reliable leader either for several reasons. First, he was extremely over-committed. Many other projects were under his direction during this time and created a feeling within the team that this was not his top priority. Art's strong opinions often alienated other members of the team. By February Art and Roy, two key representatives for BCC, were not on speaking terms and remain so today. Animosity ran high after Art was asked to leave the Highland Park Neighborhood Association. Not only was his credibility lost with that committee but with the planning team as well. Finally, Art was asked to be the campaign manager for the opposition against Councilman James Banks in the upcoming elections in May. The planning team quickly got pushed to the back burner. Taking these various situations into account, the fact that Art was operating as the key leader of this collaborative process seems to point away from fulfilling Chrislip's original recommendation of strong leadership of the process.

Despite his flaws as a collaborative leader, Art was very committed to celebrating *interim successes*. He saw the importance of not only making progress but celebrating it as well. It proved essential in tying the community to the process in the initial phase. On

November 15th the Highland Park Neighborhood Association and the planning team celebrated *A Day Against Violence, A Night Against Crime*. The City of Richmond brought in saplings to be planted, two bands came out to play, and a renovated city bus painted jet black drove through the neighborhood with the words *Carrying a concealed handgun gets you 5 years in federal prison* written along its side. Together the neighborhood “reclaimed” a block on 3rd St. that was notorious for being one of the largest open-air drug markets in the Northside. The energy of the community was overwhelming coming off of this victory. Sadly, the planning committee was not at a strong enough point to harness the community’s enthusiasm and use it for their benefit. Art continued his effort to celebrate interim successes by initiating a Christmas Party for the entire neighborhood to be held at a posh events center downtown. This party proved to be the crashing point of Art’s presidency with the neighborhood association. Art wished to have the party completely sponsored by outside funding so attendance would not be affected by the inability to afford tickets. For reasons I am not privy to, the association contested this idea and then were unable to come up with a solution themselves. The Christmas Party did not happen and thus began the downward spiral of community cohesiveness that has marred these past four months.

The most revealing reason why this collaborative effort of the planning team suffered, beyond poor leadership and mistrust, was the group’s inability to *shift to broader concerns*. As the effort evolved, the participants were unable to focus less on narrow self-interests and more on the broader interests of the community. It is my belief that had the visioning retreat taken place that this might have been accomplished for the community as

a whole. However, as pointed out throughout this analysis, the collaborative effort of the planning team failed before the leadership forum was ever given a chance. In the meantime, the narrow interests of the two community houses were simply battling out to see who could get their goals on the agenda rather than attempting to focus on the larger needs of the community.

In conclusion, the collaborative process of the planning team was neglected in the pursuit of establishing another collaborative effort, the leadership forum. Enough attention was not paid to the process the planning team needed to go through before a large scale collaboration could ever be pulled off. The collapse of one collaboration led to the inmaterialization of another. Using Chrislip's guide to successful community collaboration, it is clear that collaborative process was not cared for in the necessary manner.

Recommendations and Conclusions

After five months of observing the efforts of the planning team, seeing the results they were or were not able to achieve, inquiring through literature research, and participating in Suzanne Morse's class on collaborative leadership, it is obvious that there are several key areas in this effort that should have been reevaluated. Ideally, the planning team should have gone through the same process that we were developing for the Leadership Development Training Seminar. However, we were too busy planing for others to be successful in collaboration to see that we were failing as a group ourselves. The Leadership Development Training Seminar was seen as the collaborative effort rather than including the planning team in that process as well. The team members needed to

become more trusting of one another, develop a better understanding of one another's' goals, and set in place a collective vision. This could have been accomplished through the same process of two team-building workshops and one vision retreat.

The make-up of the members on the team needs to be reevaluated. As detailed previously, the current participants represent a narrow section of the community seeing as they stem only from the key community houses. It soon became apparent that the goals were being set around the agenda's of these community houses rather than around the broader interests of the community. The stakeholders in the process, being the leaders, potential leaders, and citizens, were not sufficiently represented in the planning process. For example, of the 22 blocks that constitute Highland Park each has been appointed with a block captain to oversee patrolling and recruiting members into the neighborhood association. Not a single block captain sits on the planning team. Community leaders from churches, elderly homes, and businesses do not have a voice on the committee. Without the presence of these stakeholders the proper amount of input is not available and the number of organizations ready to buy into the group's decisions is limited. Stakeholders bring passion to the group and provide missing pieces to the bigger picture.

The planning committee lacked norms and expectations. For a group to work efficiently and effectively, regular meetings must be scheduled. Over the course of the past five months approximately 40% of my meetings have either been canceled or poorly attended. Without 100% attendance the momentum of the group depreciates rapidly. Timelines were often set with unreasonable expectations that could not be met. At three different times the team-building and visioning workshops were delayed and then

canceled. Most recently was the weekend of April 4th. The planning team's perception of what could be accomplished in a given amount of time was often misconceived. Had more members been participating on the planning team more information could have been disseminated among their respective organizations quickly. Finally, because there was a lack of community stakeholders on the team, there was no one to hold the team accountable for what they did or did not do. No one expected the Leadership Development Training Seminar to happen on a particular date, so when things began to look as if it might not happen on the date, no one held the team to the fire and kept them on track. Desire to make the seminar happen faded with no one there to hold the team accountable.

There must be at least one person on the team who has made the success of the collaboration their number one goal. Art was able to serve in this role until constant conflict with outside groups began to affect his clout on the planning team. It also discouraged him, lessening any motivation he originally had. In addition, Art was further distracted by his new position as campaign manager. The seminar was quickly moved aside. Without his leadership and constant drive the team seemed unable to move forward. This points to the fact that during the time when Art lacked motivations and directions there was no one on the team passionate enough to assume leadership. With the proper stakeholders on the team who were passionate about the outcome the likelihood of this happening would have been significantly reduced.

Finally, leadership must come from within the stakeholders. In several situations my status of not being a member of the community was limiting. My brief introduction to

the community was not sufficient enough for me to completely understand the depth of the problems or the web of human connections. My time to build stronger relationships was also constrained by my status as a part-time volunteer rather than full time. Due to the fact that I could not be present as much as other members of the planning team, I felt that I lacked the influence I needed to push my agenda along, completing the team-building workshops and vision development. Being a white 22 year old from the University of Richmond did not lend any additional impact to my credibility. It simply emphasized the idea that I had no true concept of the problems facing this community.

Collaborative leadership is not a style of leadership, it is a process. Without careful care of that process the outcome is sure to be slighted. James MacGregor Burns outlines his idea of an *initiator*. This is the person who “takes the first step toward change, out of a state of equilibrium in the web. She breaks the ice. And what is this act? To communicate with other potential actors to gain a positive response” (3). The first half of this quote occurred in Highland Park. An initiator did break the ice and decide that the status quo was not acceptable. That person was Art. With the addition of more diverse voices or “potential actors” and the presence of stronger accountability a more positive response and a higher level of commitment to the collaborative process would have been achieved.

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The Planning Team

Appendix A

ORGANIZATION	ABBREVIATION	PERSONNEL	POSITION	INTEREST
Bethlehem Community Center	BCC	Barbara Heckman Maxie Cannon	Executive Director Youth Director	supporting community-based initiatives youth representation in community solutions
		Art Burton	Community Director	using agency resources to support leadership
Highland Park Neighborhood Association	HPNA	Art Burton	former president	organizing community to become change agents
Community Coaches Citizens Patrol	CCCP	Roy Reed	Director	elimination of crime, developing leaders
University of Richmond	UR	Lindsay Sikes	Bonner Scholar	developing a series of team-building process
William Byrd Community House	WBCH	Norma Hall	Asst. Director	strengthen agency's position in community
		Jeanette Voas	Community Builder	establish a viable link between neighborhood and agency
VCU Survey Research Lab		Jeanette Voas	Intern	document community building efforts of WBCH
Community Empowerment Organization	CEO			supporting grassroots efforts in communities

Community Mobilization and Leadership Project:

SPONSORED BY:

Bethlehem Community Center
Highland Park "Southern Tip" Neighborhood Association
University of Richmond
Northside CDC
William Bryd Community House

PROJECT MISSION:

- I. to provide leadership development and organizational training to the Highland park-Northside Community.
- II. Provide technical support for such training and ongoing technical support for community Leadership.
- III. Development of framework and model that allows for effective communication and development of issues affecting the community.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

Identify 15-20 Community leaders willing to devote 20 hours to a leadership and Communication training program that consists of the following segments.

- A. Team building and Team Development
Sponsored By: University of Richmond
Bethlehem Community Center
- B. Community Visioning process
Sponsored By: Northside CDC
University of Richmond
Bethlehem Community Center
- C. Community Organizational Training
Sponsored By: Community Empowerment Organization
Bethlehem Community Center

Team Building

Oral Discussion Questions:

1. Tell us your name and the organization you represent.
2. How many members are in your organization?
3. Does your organization have annual goals established?
4. What do you see as the number one problem in Highland Park?
5. What do you see as Highland Park's major strength?
6. What would you do to get more youth and young adults involved in community problem solving?
7. Would you embrace a leadership council representing Highland Park?
8. Would you participate in its development?
9. Would you attend the leadership council meetings?
10. What geographical boundaries should be considered when developing this council?
11. What organizations and groups should be included in the council?
12. What do you see as the next step this group can and should take?

D

Handout Questionnaire

1. How long have you been associated with your organization? ...as a leader?
2. Have you participated in any formal leadership training courses?
3. Has your organization developed a mission statement or purpose?
4. Would workshops in goal strategizing be of any benefit to you or your organization?
5. Would a workshop on recruiting and retaining members be beneficial?

team building



1. Why was sister Mary Clarence (Whoopi) able to initiate a larger transformation of the entire church and community by simply starting with the choir?
 - * What are some smaller “wins” that we can claim or set as goals as a group?
2. What inner changes had to take place in the nuns before they could have any effect on their neighborhood?
3. What changes in the church had to occur before changes in the community could be expected?
4. What happened when the nuns refocused on why they had become nuns in the first place?
 - * Why did you originally get involved with this group?
5. How did the neighborhood respond to the nun’s newfound focus and energy?
6. What would you like to see change within this group and within the community?

Visioning Retreat

Goal: What do we want at the end of this retreat?

- A six month action plan
-
-

Hour 1: How do communities become owned by their citizens?

-
-
-

Hour 2: What issues exist in the community that citizens can address?

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-
-

Hour 3: If you could pick only 3 of those issues mentioned above, which would you pick to address NOW (within the next 6 months)?

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-

Hour 4: How can we as leaders and citizens begin to take action as a cohesive unit (the six month plan of action)?

-
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Summarizing and Concluding: What is it going to take to make this plan a success?