A Conceptual Model for Measuring Coalition Building Effectiveness

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Abstract

The immense and complex education, environmental, health, infrastructural, nutritional, agricultural, and social challenges that communities worldwide are facing can no longer be limited to just one segment of society, to one sector, or to one region of the world. To take on these challenges, joint interventions of organizations and professionals from multiple sectors are required to leverage their resources and expertise to accomplish common goals and make an impact at a much greater scale. The increased insistence by the media and more aware civil society has also forced organizations to respond and be more accountable to the communities they influence, engage with, or affect.

Coalition building and multi-sector partnerships has thus become a ubiquitous term, used in academics and practice in different contexts worldwide. However, there is a lack of research on how to measure and evaluate the coalition building efforts by an organization. The paper analyzes how coalition building efforts should focus not only on identifying allies and cultivating their support but also on measuring the effectiveness of coalition building efforts. The theoretical foundation of this study is multidisciplinary, constituting literature from business, communication, community building, and public relations. The purpose of this research paper is to summarize and synthesize the existing literature to identify measures of coalition building effectiveness and provide practitioners with some metrics to measure the success of a coalition or multi-sector partnership.

Introduction

A national survey conducted by the Public Affairs Council looked at the views of Americans on businesses and government. The Public Affairs Pulse Survey reports that nearly seven in ten Americans (69%) have a very favorable or somewhat favorable view of big organizations. This represents a substantial increase in the past year, putting public attitudes about where they were in 2012, when 67 percent held a positive view of corporations. However, overwhelming majorities feel positively toward small businesses, 91 percent of Americans say their opinions of small businesses are either very or somewhat favorable, while only a handful hold a negative view.

The survey also reports that Americans expect big organizations to be a positive force in the society. 84% say it is very important that firms make sure their employees behave ethically and 75% state environmental responsibility as a very important priority. Large majorities want companies to make financial contributions to charities, encourage employees to volunteer their time to help others and, in general, take a leadership role in helping society in ways that go beyond operating a business.

The role of MNCs towards society has been questioned more so in an environment of extremely low trust. Rob Flaherty, Ketchum's CEO, outlines the need for transparency in an era of instant feedback loops as an important trend for public relations in 2013 (Weinstein, 2013). The need for transparency focuses on maintaining a balance between the business objectives and the external environment of an organization. Muldoon (2004) stated how transnational corporations command a crucial position in the world economy and are "active participants in global political and economic affairs" (p. 341).

Organizations today realize that effectively managing their business operations is only one part of their survival in the society. A corporation's sociopolitical environment can affect its profitability, growth, and, in extreme cases, its very survival (Lerbinger, 2005). A range of political, social, human, and environmental issues are affecting the organizations to operate successfully in an economic sphere and those issues need support and partnerships of multiple stakeholders to be addressed and resolved. In the transparent world of social media and emphasis on big data, it is critical for organizations to coordinate their messages, relationships, and issue priorities with a variety of influential interest groups, publics, and stakeholders. It is in situations where issues are too large and complex for a single organization to address, a coalition of interest groups and individuals working together can help solve the problems. A coalition can develop a coordinated response to an issue, bring together community resources, create community-wide initiatives, influence policy, and work effectively toward long-term social change (Hallahan, 2001).

Review of Literature

The term coalitions or multi-sector partnerships can refer to any associations between public and private sector; between public, private and nonprofit sector; or between either public or private and nonprofit sector to achieve common goals.

Multi-sector, cross-sector, or community partnerships are terms used for different organizations working together towards solving societal challenges in community development (Hemphill, McGreal, Berry, & Watson, 2006), organizational behavior and business (Le Ber & Branzei, 2009, 2010), and public relations (Molleda, Martínez, & Suárez, 2008). The concepts of alliances, coalitions (Arya & Salk, 2006; Shumate, &

O'Connor, 2010) and collaborations (Livesey, Hartman, Stafford, & Shearer, 2009; Keyton, Ford, & Smith, 2008) are also found in business and communication literatures, and the term networks is used by leadership and public administration scholars (Agranoff, 2007; Silvia & McGuire, 2010).

Coalition can be characterized as an organization of organizations whose members commit to an agreed-on purpose and shared decision making to influence an external institution or target, while these member organizations maintain their own autonomy (Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001). A coalition is traditionally defined as "a group of individuals representing diverse organizations, factions or constituencies who agree to work together to achieve a common goal" (Feighery & Rogers, 1990).

A coalition is defined as an interacting group of organizational actors who (a) agree to pursue a common goal, (b) coordinate their resources in attempting to achieve this common goal, and (c) adopt a common strategy in pursuing this goal (Lerbinger, 2005). Coalition building involves direct solicitations by activists to engage aware publics in an issue. Due to their varied and complex origins, coalitions have been defined in a number of ways. A generally applicable definition of a coalition is a loosely structured intra-and inter-organizational alliance of individuals representing diverse organizations, factions, or constituencies who agree to work together in order to achieve a common goal (Chavis, 1995).

Coalition building operates on the principle of mutual self-interest," Hallahan stated (2001, ¶ 41). Strategic coalitions encompass all stakeholders, those affected by the work of the coalition and by the issue it addresses as well as community opinion leaders, policy makers, and community members at large.

Coalition building has been looked at from a development perspective mostly with emphasis on the importance of social movement coalitions. Coalition building is broadly understood as activists increasingly seeking collaborators across national borders in response to globalization and the rise of transnational corporations and governing bodies (Lerbinger, 2005). Coalition-building activities can range from simply providing an endorsement or financial support to deploying volunteers in large-scale, grass-roots advocacy campaigns (Hallahan, 2001). However, measuring coalition building effectiveness has not been studied and analyzed which creates a gap between theory and practice to evaluate coalition-building efforts.

The theoretical foundation of this research project is multidisciplinary, constituting literature from business, communication, political science, public affairs, and public relations. Resource dependence theory is a theoretical lens which can help understand coalition-building practice globally. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) indicated that organizations are generally dependent on their surroundings in order to guarantee the flow of critical resources for their survival. Hence, organizations must attend to the demands of those in their environment that provide resources necessary and important for their continued survival. Resource dependence theory points to changes in dependence over time, assuming that dependence on specific external actors is not constant, as the external environment is bound to evolve. This can be applied to the rationale of building strategic coalitions dependent on a multitude of external factors.

Coalition building requires tackling a complex array of challenges, one of which is getting the communication dimension right. Strategic coalitions provide much-needed legitimacy for a cause and create the appearance that an issue enjoys a broad base of

support (Hallahan, 2001). L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002) suggested that public relations practitioners may be responsible for determining which elements of an organization's environment are "strategic for the organization—which publics are most supportive or most adversarial and those most able to constrain or strengthen the organization's ability to meet its goals" (¶ 95). Relationship management is also integral in all stages of coalition building, starting from addressing an issue or empowering communities to pooling resources or creating long-term permanent social change.

The relational approach holds appeal for scholars and practitioners because the approach "requires that practitioners develop initiatives centered on the notion of mutual benefit, thus maintaining equilibrium between organizational and public interests" (Bruning, Castle, & Schrepfer, 2004, ¶ 436). Croan and Lee's (1979) five coalition models represent a systematic arrangement of categorizing coalitions according to a purpose and a set of functions, which can be performed by the coalition.

Table 1: Five Coalition Models by Croan and Lee (1979)

Model Type	Purpose of the coalition
1. Information and resource-sharing	Acting as clearinghouse
2. Technical assistance	Deliver technical services
3. Self-regulating	Set standards
4. Planning and coordination of services	Act as service coordinator
5. Advocacy	Act as change agent

Freighery and Rogers (1989) described three types of coalitions based on membership; (1) grassroots coalitions organized by volunteers in time of crisis to

pressure policy makers, (2) professional coalitions formed by professional organizations either in a time of crisis or as a long term approach to increase their power and influence and (3) community-based coalitions or professionals and grassroots leaders formed to influence welfare practices of communities.

Cobb (1991) contented that empirical studies of coalitions were not designed to be generally applicable to coalitions in the organization context. Toth (2006) highlights the need for measuring public affairs to be measured for excellence much like public relations and look for evidence of best practices in public affairs. Coalition research within the field of organization studies is not as plentiful as that found in social psychology or political science. Previous literature suggested that although descriptive research is available on coalition building, there is a lack of empirical research for identifying best practices and measuring coalition-building efforts by organizations.

Keyton et al. (2008) defined inter-organizational collaboration as "the set of communicative processes in which individuals representing multiple organizations or stakeholders engage when working interdependently to address problems outside the spheres of individuals or organizations working in isolation" (p. 381). This definition implies the need for a variety of resources, knowledge, and skills that no solo organization owns; a synergistic participation is required to address the problem.

According to Hallahan, community building involves "the integration of people and the organizations they create into a functional collectivity that strives toward common or compatible goals" (2004, p. 259). Both public relations and community building have to do with developing and maintaining of symbiotic relationships that establish the connection between the two strategic practices.

Hallahan (2004) explained that the focus on community building shifts the organizational emphasis from cold treatment of impersonal, often adversarial publics, to a warmer, more enlightened emphasis on collaboration and cooperation with them (p. 264). Hallahan (2004) described three levels of community building from an organizational perspective: community involvement, community nurturing, and community organizing. Molleda, Martínez, and Suárez (2008) suggested, "to achieve broader solutions and improved quality of life it is necessary to capture the experiences of community members, work together toward common goals, and facilitate participation by diverse groups" (p. 106). The process of community building through MSPs is studied as a continuous improvement in the communities to collectively accomplish goals.

A brief overview of literature on coalition building highlights both a lack of research in the area of strategic coalition building and the need to have guidelines for practice and measurement. The study aims to identify measures of coalition building effectiveness. The key contribution of this research project would be to outline measures of successful strategic coalitions and set forth issues, which MNCs should consider when attempting to build a new coalition, or strengthen an existing one. The results will provide practitioners with measures of coalition building and multi-sector partnerships.

Challenges in measuring coalition building effectiveness

Literature on coalition building and strategic partnership has increasingly considered the importance of evaluating the engagement of community members involved in a coalition. However, little research on measurement tools for assessing coalition building effectiveness has been reported. Some of the challenges in evaluating coalition building effectiveness arises because measurement of outcomes is overlooked in

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the planning and funding phase (Butterfoss & Francisco, 2004). Another challenge is the focus of the evaluators on formative and process assessments instead of long-term impact (Lasker & Weiss, 2003; Ruossos & Fawcett, 2000) and outcomes. The lack of relevant theories and literature is another challenge in developing coalition effectiveness mechanisms (Lasker & Weiss, 2003; McLeroy, Norton, Kegler, Burdine, & Sumaya, 2003; Ruossos & Fawcett, 2000). Apart from the relevant empirical research is the challenge in the form of an appropriate methodology to assess coalition building success. It is often challenging and logistically difficult to conduct true experimental designs or even obtain a comparison group (Ruossos & Fawcett, 2000).

Significant professional interest and resources have been invested in assessing best practices for the development and implementation of community coalitions. However, much less is known about the outcomes and impacts of coalitions. Few systematic studies have been conducted to examine trends in community coalition outcomes and impacts (Berkowitz, 2001; Cramer, Mueller, & Harrop, 2003).

One of the key functions of a coalition is to create a collaborative capacity among coalition members through the organizational structure and programs of the coalition (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson, & Allen, 2001) to address a common goal (Butterfoss, 2007). Key metrics for assessing coalition building effectiveness must not be purely quantitatively and financially oriented as a successful coalition relies heavily on the relationship among coalition members. Coalition members should clarify expectations and define how they will measure success and the selected metrics should reflect coalition goals. The coalition building starts from identifying key constituencies, developing effective messaging to implementing successful efforts and measuring those

efforts. In response to the challenges associated with demonstrating the impacts of community coalitions through evaluation, researchers are beginning to develop evaluation models of community coalitions that capture both their impacts at the individual level and at the community level (Backer, 2003). Targeting Outcomes of Programs model and the Community Toolbox Evaluation model are two evaluation models frequently used to measure coalition effectiveness.

The Targeting Outcomes of Programs model focuses on outcomes in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs. The model is based on a hierarchy that integrates program evaluation within the program development process. The model uses a simple framework to target specific outcomes in program development and then to assess the degree to which the outcome targets are reached. Within the model, there are seven levels of evidence that can be used to assess whether the coalition is making an impact, from measuring resources to measuring social, economic, and environmental impacts. The evaluation model helps the evaluator track the coalition's individual, community, and systems-level as well as its long-term impacts.

The Community Toolbox Evaluation model is another evaluation model that provides a logical framework for assessing change throughout the stages of the coalition process, from assessing the success of problem identification to disseminating best practices identified throughout the evaluation (Fawcett et al., 2001). Based on earlier conceptual models, this framework outlines a dynamic and iterative process with six phases, and related competencies, associated with facilitating community change and improvement:

- Understanding Community Context (e.g., assessing community assets and needs)

- Collaborative Planning (e.g., developing a vision, mission, objectives, strategies, and action plans)

- Developing Leadership and Enhancing Participation (e.g., building relationships, recruiting participants)

- Community Action and Intervention (e.g., designing interventions, advocacy)

- Evaluating Community Initiatives (e.g., program evaluation, documentation of community and system change)

- Promoting and Sustaining the Initiative (e.g., social marketing, obtaining grants).

Research methodology

The research project aimed to develop measures of coalition building effectiveness and studied the multidisciplinary literature to identify the measures. The measures of coalition building effectiveness will help define, identify, and prioritize the funding decisions and coalition building efforts strategically. The researcher contacted practitioners in various communications and PR agencies who have experience working in the area of coalition building. The researcher asked for assistance in validating the premise and direction for research on coalition building effectiveness. The researcher did five phone interviews that ranged from 15 to 25 minutes and which all confirmed the conceptual approach and theoretical focus of the study to identify best practices and measures of coalition building effectiveness.

The conceptual approach of the study helped develop measures for practitioners to evaluate the success of their coalition-building efforts to reach clear conclusions about whether they are sustainable, and whether they can significantly contribute to

development to the bottom line in the long term. The researcher also included two theoretical approaches as a way of evaluating coalition building efforts. The next section summarizes the two key theoretical approaches and uses that as a lens to develop measures for coalition building effectiveness.

Theoretical models for evaluating coalition building effectiveness

Theory-based approaches can be used as an assessment tool for measuring success of coalition building efforts. In addition, theory-based approaches are integral to the evaluation and improvement of coalition effectiveness. Two prominent theories of community coalitions are the Community Coalition Action Theory (CCAT) and Empowerment Theory. These theory-based frameworks illustrate the different stages of community coalition formation and the dimensions and factors that can facilitate and impact a coalition's ability to address its goals.

CCAT builds on a number of existing models and frameworks that focus on community building, community development and structure of collaborative organizational relationships within communities. Butterfoss et al. (2009) articulated CCAT on the basis of research on the collaborative engagements of coalitions. In laying out CCAT, they provided 21 practice-based propositions that address processes ranging from the formation of coalitions through institutionalization. CCAT describes the stages of coalition development, coalition functioning, development of coalition synergy, and creation of organizational and community changes. CCAT assumes that community contextual factors such as sociopolitical climate, geography, history and norms surrounding collaborative efforts affect each stage of development. The CCAT is viewed as an important framework for building and evaluating coalitions. CCAT also introduces

several important coalition characteristics (e.g., leadership, membership, structure) that affect a community coalition's ability to foster changes in the community. The theory highlights the idea that a coalition's strategies can create community capacity outcomes.

Empowerment Theory explores the process of gaining influence over the conditions that matter to people who share communities, experiences, and concerns (Fawcett et al., 1995). Empowerment Theory suggests that community coalitions empower their member organizations to collaborate effectively and their communities to build the social capital necessary to address emerging issues. Additionally, this theory focuses on the different factors that facilitate or impede a community collaborative capacity to bring about community change. Empowerment Evaluation theory intends to increase the probability of attaining program success through two key components. The first component is to provide stakeholders with the tools and resources they need to assess planning, implementation, and self-evaluation of their activities. The second component is to include evaluation as an integrated part of the planning and management of program activities. Empowerment Evaluation theory can also be used alongside traditional, external evaluation methods (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005; Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007).

Empowerment theory and the CCAT provide useful frameworks for understanding coalitions and the factors that affect their ability to successfully perform their core functions. Although the theoretical foundations of each model differ (including both traditional and participatory evaluation approaches), a shared goal of all models is to provide a tool that is specific enough to measure and assess a particular coalition, yet general enough to allow for valid comparisons between coalitions. Even using these

models, however, it is difficult to demonstrate that a community coalition has had direct and positive impacts over time. An assessment of the CCAT, Empowerment Theory, Targeting Outcomes of Programs model, and an examination of the multidisciplinary literature yielded six measures that can affect coalition functioning and effectiveness. These measures include: control, collaboration, coordination, channels and structure, course of action, and contextual factors.
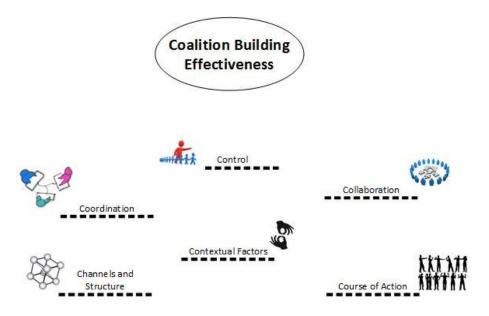

Figure 1: Coalition Building Effectiveness Measures

Control

It is important to have a strong leader at the start of a coalition and control the direction of the coalition. It is also key to identify and develop new leadership for the long haul and to insure continuity of leadership. The literature has identified effective leadership and control as a facilitator of coalition action and sustainability (Butterfoss, Goodman, Wandersman, 1996; Goodman et al., 1998). Leadership can consist of one or both of the following: the member organizations of a coalition, and the individual leaders

within a coalition (Bailey & McNally Koney, 1995). Research suggests that the convening or "lead" agency must have organizational capacity, commitment, control, and vision, among other characteristics to build an effective coalition (Butterfoss, 2007). In addition, leadership from individual staff members in the member organizations is also critical. Coalitions and partnerships with action-oriented leadership (Bazzoli et al., 2003; Hasnain-Wynia, 2003) and competent, committed leaders are most effective (Conrad et al., 2003). Hasnain-Wynia et al. (2003) found that partnerships with effective or ethical leadership were more likely to be perceived by their memberships as effective in achieving their goals. Coalitions offer strength in numbers, added credibility, networking and partnerships, media attention and increased access to policy makers. Effective leadership and control in coalition building helps move systemic changes forward.

Collaboration

Working cooperatively with others can be incredibly rewarding but also challenging. Coalition membership includes a variety of organizations in the community that provide time or other resources to the coalition. Butterfoss (2007) noted that coalitions with a diverse membership, and professional and other grassroots organizations are most successful. A diverse membership brings a variety of perspectives from different sectors, backgrounds, and constituencies. Hays, Hays, Deville and Mulhall (2000) found that representation of a large number of community sectors was associated with achieving coalition outcomes. Diverse membership may create challenges for the coalition in the short-run (e.g., difficulty in obtaining consensus, divergent perspectives), but facilitates the achievement of community improvements in the long run (Easterling, 2003).

Community readiness or preparedness for collaboration is another important dimension of context and involves the ability of the community to take on its tasks and find ways to solve its own problems, usually involving multiple sectors (Wolff, 2001). Other factors that are associated with coalition effectiveness is the collaboration among partners in the coalition and the amount of time that member organizations can contribute to the coalition's activities. There is an inverse relationship between the number of partners and the successful completion of activities: the more partners in the membership, the fewer activities successfully completed by the coalition (Hasnain-Wynia et al., 2003).

The expertise of the membership can also affect the success of the coalition. Coalitions benefit from having staff members with experience in community planning and organization, as they understand what is required to engage the community and conduct activities that meet the community's needs (Butterfoss, 2007; Wolff, 2001b).

Finally, the commitment of the membership to the coalition and its activities facilitates coalition effectiveness (Butterfoss, 2007). Research shows member satisfaction is associated with coalition effectiveness, as satisfied members are more invested in the coalition and its activities (Kumpher, Turner, Hopkins, & Librett, 1993).

Channels and structures

Butterfoss, Goodman, and Wandersman (1996) examined factors that could help a coalition effectively maintain itself over time. The key elements identified include competent leadership and control, shared decision making, linkages with other organizations, and a supportive environment. They also noted that coalitions with these attributes are more likely to perceive that the benefits of participation outweigh the costs and also will produce members who are more participative in the work of the committees

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and other task groups of the coalition. Effective internal functioning in coalitions is necessary for progress in achieving coalition goals (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002). Thus the creation of clear channels and structures involves establishing steering and governance committees, task forces, or other entities and finding ways to share decision making across these groups, the membership, outside funders, and the lead agency. Clarifying the roles and responsibilities for each of these groups is considered to be important (Wolff, 2001). Coalition channels and structure includes standing committees and task forces, and the presence and degree of use of formal bylaws, rules of procedure, and decision making. The range of skills, resources, credibility, and perspectives of the coalition's members influences its structure. Ongoing engagement of a broad section of community representatives in active coalition membership and continuous development of the knowledge and skills needed to build an ongoing effective structure are associated with coalition success (FosterFishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson, & Allen, 2001; Kegler et al., 1998).

Coalitions with structures are more likely to achieve collaborative synergy in the coalition. Butterfoss (2007) notes that the development of structure, rules, and responsibilities early in a coalition's development enables community coalitions to operate effectively. Butterfoss (2007) indicates that structures can take the form of written policies and laws (e.g., memoranda of understanding, bylaws, and policy and procedure manuals).

Another important structure is a steering committee or executive board that provides guidance and governance to coalition activities (Butterfoss, 2007). The steering committee or executive board, comprised of representatives of the member organizations,

convenes regularly to assess the goals and activities of the coalition. Such structures

facilitate collaboration, as they help members to more fully understand the purpose of the

coalition and their individual roles and responsibilities.

In addition to structures such as an active governing body and a well-formed

steering committee, the literature suggests the coalition's operations and processes as

facilitators of coalition effectiveness. The coalition institutes operations and processes for

communication, decision making, and conflict resolution that enable it to function.

Communication has been identified as one of the most important characteristics for the

success of any organization, including community coalitions (Beckham & King, 2005;

Butterfoss, 2007).

Coordination

As a hub of individuals and agencies from different parts of the community,

coalitions send and receive a lot of information. A good system of coordination and

communication through multiple channels is essential. Coalitions undertake a range of

activities to implement an action plan. The likelihood of achieving desired outcomes

depends on the extent to which activities are implemented and reach the priority

populations (Butterfoss & Francisco, 2004). How well a coalition is able to implement

activities is also thought to be associated with the extent to which participants are

involved, satisfied, loyal, committed, and contributing to the coalition's work.

Coordination and linking of the chosen activities are deemed essential to effective

coalition functioning. Indeed, coordination is the added value of a coalition working

across the community (Rosenthal et al., 2006). For a coalition to operate effectively,

messages must be accurately communicated within and outside of the coalition and

coordinated well. Decision-making processes are also important to coalition functioning because they are related to member satisfaction and involvement in the coalition.

Course of Action

Coalition effectiveness rests on having a clear sense of direction or destination, objectives, and a road map. The course of action or planning articulates strategies and responsibilities for accomplishing coalition goals and include the ways in which the coalition monitors progress and periodically reviews and revises its work priorities (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001). High-quality plans are associated with competent staffing, leadership, and resource mobilization; contribute to successful implementation; and have a subsequent impact on health outcomes (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002). The quality of action plans can be assessed using (a) how representative the plan is of the coalition's mission, (b) its clarity and comprehensiveness, (c) the degree to which it anticipates opportunities and barriers for change, (d) the extent to which responsibility for carrying out each step of the action plan is indicated, (e) how it engages diverse stakeholders, (f) how feasible the timeline is, (g) the adequacy of resources allocated, (h) if there is ongoing review of the plan by the coalition members, (i) and dissemination of written plans within the coalition (Ayre, Clough, & Norris, 2000).

The coalition's strategic vision is the overarching reference for the coalition's goals and activities (Easterling, 2003). Strategic vision helps coalition members to understand the future direction of the coalition, and to recognize the benefits of their participation (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001). A vision statement might describe the impact that members want the coalition to have over a certain period of time (Butterfoss, 2007).

Contextual Factors

Contextual factors are external conditions that either exist or are lacking in the environment, and thus can enhance or inhibit the coalition's activities. The literature highlights the impact of contextual factors, suggesting their importance in predicting coalition effectiveness. Specifically, Butterfoss, Lachance, and Orians (2006) found that contextual factors such as politics, the history of collaboration among member organizations in the coalition, geography, and community readiness can impact coalition formation. Population demographics, the cultural climate in the community, overall community attitude toward a particular issue, and precipitating events in the community are other contextual factors that may impact coalition effectiveness (Butterfoss, 2007).

Community attitudes, motivation to form a coalition, quality of available leaders, existing mechanisms for individuals and organizations to participate in local problem solving, and opportunities for funding influence development of a coalition (Lasker et al., 2001; McLeroy et al., 1994; Roussos & Fawcett, 2000; Wolff, 2001). The ways in which these characteristics come together to shape community coalitions can impact their effectiveness.

Steps in Program Evaluation

Taking stock of a coalition's progress and accomplishments is essential and should be done on a regular basis. There are a number of ways to do this evaluation, even informal evaluation processes, such as an evaluation at the end of a meeting or time on the agenda for feedback and comments, can help a coalition to measure and evaluate. The researcher found a resource for practitioners called 'The Community Tool Box' which is a public service of the University of Kansas. It is developed and managed by the KU

Work Group for Community Health and Development and partners nationally and internationally. The Community Tool Box is a part of the KU Work Group's role as a designated World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Community Health and Development. The Community Tool Box has developed a framework for program evaluation as a way to measure coalition building effectiveness. The framework in Figure 2 below is a practical tool that summarizes the important elements of program evaluation. The framework has two related dimensions of steps in evaluation practice and also standards for good evaluation.

Figure 2: A Framework for Program Evaluation

The six steps of the framework identified above are actions that should be a part of any evaluation. Each step in the framework provides the foundation for subsequent steps in the model. However, these steps can be adapted and are sensitive to each program's unique context and goals and are built as a starting points for evaluating coalition building efforts. The six steps are: (a) engage stakeholders; (b) describe the program; (c) focus the evaluation design; (d) gather credible evidence; (e) justify

conclusions; (f) ensure use and share lessons learned. The second part of the framework is a basic set of standards to assess the quality of evaluation activities organized into four groups: (a) utility; (b) feasibility; (c) propriety; (d) accuracy. These standards are recommended as the initial criteria by which to judge the quality of the program evaluation efforts.

Discussion

Evaluations of community coalitions can be used to provide accountability to the community, demonstrate the importance of the coalition to the funder, improve the coalition's activities, identify the coalition's challenges, raise community awareness, and inform policy decisions (Butterfoss & Francisco, 2004). Evaluation also plays an important role in supporting the sustainability of community coalitions (Butterfoss & Francisco, 2004). Research on coalition effectiveness remains in the early stages of development and understanding; however, a number of factors seem to be associated with effective processes, outcomes, and impacts. Process evaluation results have found that numerous coalition characteristics and factors are essential to coalition effectiveness. On the other hand the results on long-term behavioral outcomes and impacts are mixed, and call for further research and understanding to determine when and where they work best (Berkowitz, 2001; Hallfors, Cho, Livert, & Kadushin, 2002; Holder et al., 2000; Merzel & D'Afflitti, 2003).

The study found six indicators of coalition effectiveness as documented in the empirical literature. Specifically, coalitions that enact formal governance procedures, encourage strong leadership, foster active participation of members, cultivate diverse memberships, promote collaborations among member agencies, and facilitate group

cohesion maybe more effective. Evaluation should be an integral part of the planning and implementation phases of all coalition building efforts and should involve all partners and members in the process.

This study is a start for building a body of knowledge in the area of multi-sector partnerships. The measures can help bring out the possibilities and positive, far-reaching impact coalition building efforts can to the communities. The purpose of this study is to propose a framework to evaluate the success of partnerships to reach clear conclusions about whether they are sustainable, and whether they can significantly contribute to development in the long term. Another avenue of research could be to look at the impact of these coalitions on stakeholders impacted by development projects. Interviews with organizations in coalitions can give an improved understanding of rationale behind coalitions and role each organization plays. Future research should analyze the long-term goals of a coalition or strategic partnership along with emphasizing the importance of goal setting. The sustainability of a coalition and the time span is another area of research worth exploring in the future by scholars and practitioners. An analysis of coalitions with a limited life span with clearer objectives, goals, and time commitment can be used as a point of comparison with non-limited life span coalitions. Future studies can also analyze coalitions across sectors to develop best practices for coalition building and success. As highlighted in the literature, there is a need to examine the measurement and assessment models for coalitions and where in the coalition building process should it begin.

Implications for Practice

The measures identified in the study can be used by practitioners, evaluators, and even funders to assess coalition building effectiveness. Coalitions can use these measures

to adapt it to their specific program goals and objectives. Butterfoss (2007) states that a convening organization "must have sufficient organizational capacity, commitment, leadership, and vision to build an effective coalition" (p. 254). A coalition should employ one or more of the well-established planning methods in order to create an effective strategic plan. Although an excellent strategic plan does not assure effective actions and outcomes, it has been associated with positive outcomes. The coalition must develop an ongoing, strategic planning process that allows the coalition to know where they are and where they are going, how they are getting there, and how they will know when they arrive. To that end, a strategic planning process entails a number of critical steps that guide a coalition's work.

A foundational element of creating a good strategic plan is the development of a clear coalition mission statement with consensus from the members. Programs and strategies proposed in a plan should be based on evidence of effectiveness as well as being appropriate for the community setting (Lasker & Weiss, 2003). In addition the paper has implications for researchers and practitioners and provides a list of measures that can be used in subsequent evaluations of community coalitions. The findings also emphasize the importance of defining appropriate evaluation questions. Finally, the conceptual model provides a method to assess why some coalitions have not been successful over time. Specifically, evaluators can use the model to distinguish between coalitions that tried, but were unable to sustain themselves due to organizational and funding barriers, and those that have not been sustained because they have fulfilled their mission, moved on to other pressing priorities, or were no longer needed in the community.

The measures developed can be used to improve efforts at local, state, national, or global level. The measures can be used a benchmarking tools to evaluate coalition building efforts. The measures can provide ongoing feedback to continuously adjust and make changes to the programs. The measures can help coalition members to be more accountable to the goals and objectives of the programs and partnerships. The measures identified from the literature and the framework for program evaluation can help assess the impact of coalitions in three broader areas: individual impacts, systems impacts, and policy impacts. Individual impacts are changes at the person level whereas systems impacts are changes in infrastructure or capacity in the community. Policy impacts can be seen at the local, state and federal levels. The measures can also help practitioners to develop intended effects or outcomes that can be short-term, intermediate or long-term effects.

The research on coalition building informs how coalitions and multi-sector partnerships is a step forward in improving the world. Although such partnerships may or may not lead to huge differences in the home and host communities, they still have the ability to significantly progress the lives of the people they target. Hence, creating meaningful coalitions is a challenge that requires commitment from all potential partners to share values, resources, build mutual understanding and trust, and create a common objective among others. To conclude, there is need for further analysis, to observe, and articulate how these shared values and principles inspire and guide different partners in the transition to a successful coalition and sustainable future.