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A Library and its Community: Exploring Perceptions of Collaboration

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A Library and Its Community: Exploring Perceptions of Collaboration

by

Phoebe Vincenza Daurio

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
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ABSTRACT

This study explores perceptions of interorganizational collaboration through an investigation of the opinions and actions of a public library and three community-based organizations. Interorganizational collaboration is often viewed as an effective strategy for accomplishing objectives that would not otherwise be possible with a single organization. Particularly for complex societal issues such as adult literacy, researchers and practitioners believe collaboration between organizations is necessary in order to achieve desired outcomes. Public libraries are engaging in collaborations also to extend their reach, establish the library's relevance, increase community involvement, and advocate for their position as a community asset.

This thesis is a case study of one such library and its community partners. In 2005, Oregon's Multnomah County Library (MCL) developed a strategic plan that included helping adults reach their personal literacy goals. Recommendations for the implementation of adult literacy services included advice against the library becoming a direct service provider and advocated instead for the use of community relationships in order to pool resources, generate new ideas, and improve access to services. This thesis explores how MCL and three employment agencies envision and enact collaboration, and how they perceive and engage with each other as partners or collaborators.

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews with central players at MCL and staff from three employment agencies formed the basis of this research. These thirteen participants represented multiple perspectives on adult literacy and collaboration in the

library and its community. Participants' responses were coded and organized according to themes found in the literature, and additional themes emerged from significant topics in the interviews. Analysis consisted of comparing and contrasting the themes with existing theory and across participants, determining patterns and relationships, and developing a framework for understanding the perceptions of collaboration held by the library and its community.

Although the collaboration literature distinguishes between partnership and collaboration, the participants in this study used both terms interchangeably. However, they typically referenced and had experience with relationships between individuals (partnership) as opposed to relationships between organizations (collaboration). Participants indicated that the role of the individual, characterized by the importance of a personal connection and the effort required to engage in partnership or collaboration, was the most important factor in building working relationships. Considering that participants typically described relationships between individuals as representative of collaborations *or* partnership, a logical consequence is that an individual contributes significantly to the process.

Other findings of this study focused on the differences between how MCL perceived its role as a partner and how the employment agency staff perceived the library as a partner. Although the community participants believed in the benefits of collaboration, they did not often pursue collaboration, and they did not see the library as a partner. Conversely, engaging with the community was part of the library's mission,

and each library participant confirmed that the goal of the library was to reach out to those who did not already know about the library. Three factors that shaped the process of partnering with the library were used as a framework for exploring the different perspectives held by the library and the community participants. Through an exploration of the library's goals for community engagement, the library as a resource, and the library meeting community needs, this study found that the community participants perceived barriers to using the library as a resource and didn't realize that the library wanted to help them meet their needs.

Implications of these findings for libraries and communities include the need for clarification of goals for collaboration and type of collaboration. Through a concrete awareness of the objectives for each collaborative endeavor, the library and community agencies can better understand the initial effort and resources required. Because the employment agencies did not see the library as a partner, the library may have to lead the process of engaging with the community, helping the community identify its needs, and explicitly linking library resources to specific community needs.

Suggestions for future research include investigation into individuals who seek partnership or collaboration, specific information about initial interactions between individuals that eventually leads to collaboration, and the importance of linking the collaboration research to the public library setting.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Collaboration and partnership are often employed as strategies for solving problems ranging from a lack of resources, staffing, and funding to complex societal problems such as unemployment, poverty, and adult literacy. Wood and Gray (1991) noted that "the increasing importance of collaboration as an interorganizational phenomenon [is] designed to achieve desired ends that no single organization can achieve acting unilaterally" (p. 140). Through collaboration, organizations hope to pool resources in order to be more effective, generate new and innovative ideas, and improve services for and access to a target population.

Public libraries have also begun to use collaboration as a tool for making their services more effective, gaining access to potential patrons, and increasing their publicity. In the last twenty to thirty years, public libraries have adjusted their philosophies and missions to include an active role in meeting community needs such as adult literacy. Through community information services, strategic outreach, and an increasingly proactive role in the community, public libraries are advocating for their place in the community. Collaboration is seen as essential to the maintenance and development of a public library's role in its community, and recent library literature stresses the importance of partnerships and collaboration in order to extend the reach of the library (Boaden, 2005; Cooper, 2004; Croneberger, 1990; Durrance & Schneider, 1996; Kranich, 2005; Marcum, 1996; Milam, 2008).

Although interorganizational collaboration is well documented, and there is ample information on the factors involved in a successful collaboration, studies mainly address the process of collaboration and not the specific factors necessary for forming collaborations. The literature often claims that a collaboration emerged or describes the formation of a collaboration without elaboration of the exact steps that took place. In addition, the collaboration literature rarely mentions public libraries, and although the library literature provides extensive examples of partnership and the reasons for partnering with the community, the nuances of *how* a library successfully collaborates with the community are not well defined.

The library literature often defines the library as the proactive organization, and the benefits to collaboration are described from the library's point of view. Because the library literature that describes community collaborations is primarily written by librarians, the community perspective is often missing. Through an understanding of how community organizations perceive the library's role in collaboration as well as the potential benefits of collaboration, the library and community organizations can be better prepared for building productive relationships.

This study characterizes the perceptions of collaboration by exploring the opinions and actions of a public library and three community-based organizations in its community. Through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, this thesis explores the perspectives of both the library and the community. Instead of focusing on the factors that contribute to successful collaboration, this study analyzes participants' responses to

questions regarding how collaborations are formed, what contributes to and hinders collaborations, and the potential or active role the library plays in these collaborations.

Although the participants in this study describe similar reasons for collaboration as those found in both the collaboration and library literature, they also discuss several features of collaboration that were not well-represented in the literature. The participants in this study articulate several factors that do not match those of the collaboration literature, including the role of the individual and a personal connection or relationship. Issues of terminology also contribute to differences between the findings of this study and previous research on collaboration. The library participants portray a framework for forming collaborations with the community that closely matches the guidelines described in the library literature; however, this study discovers that the community organizations perceive the library as a partner differently from how the library perceives itself.

Background

In 2005, the Multnomah County Library (MCL) system developed a strategic plan that formulated seven goals, the sixth of which stated, “Adults and families of all ages and backgrounds will have materials and programs to help them reach their personal literacy goals” (Multnomah County Library [MCL], 2006, p. 3). A Library Services and Technology Act grant from the Oregon State Library was used to conduct an Adult and Family Literacy Needs Assessment and to make recommendations for the implementation of adult literacy services. As a member of the task force assigned to

make recommendations, I conducted preliminary interviews of peer libraries to determine the key factors that characterize successful adult literacy programming. A common theme was the need for community partnerships, summarized in the following statements and based on information gathered in the interviews.

- There is no need to compete with other programs. The library should identify the gaps in services and work to fill those gaps instead of replicating what already exists.
- Both the library and the community-based organizations (CBOs) can provide information about the other's services.
- Both the library and CBOs can refer learners and tutors to the other for services and resources.
- Both the library and the CBOs are consistently short on funding, space, instructors, materials, and assessment methods. If resources are pooled, or combined, then the programming across the community becomes much stronger. One group's deficits may become another group's assets.

Multnomah County Library was able to hire an Adult Literacy Coordinator (ALC) in August of 2008, and she is currently working to implement the recommendations of the task force, which include the following reminder:

The recommendations intentionally do not suggest that Multnomah County Library become a direct service provider of adult and family literacy programs, including classes and ESOL services. Based on the data, the task force

recommends that Multnomah County Library support the great work that is already going on in the community. (Oregon Literacy, n.d., p. 6)

The ALC is working to forge relationships within the community, and this case study seeks to understand the factors involved in collaboration between Multnomah County Library and three community-based organizations. This research focuses on the perceptions of the library held by three CBOs, the perceptions of CBOs held by the library, and the definition of collaboration as defined by the library and three CBOs in Multnomah County. This study centers on adult literacy programming, but in order to comprehensively depict the nuances of collaboration described by the participants in this study, it includes perceptions and notions of collaboration in general.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions

This thesis will refer to *libraries* as public libraries in the United States, and *CBOs* will include private, nonprofit organizations that are “representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and that [have] demonstrated expertise and effectiveness in the field” of literacy (U.S. Department of Labor, 1998, p. 5). This definition also includes volunteer literacy organizations, social service providers, community development organizations, and community colleges. The term *literacy* will refer to adult learners’ goals in seeking higher levels of proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking English, including but not limited to workforce, health, financial, computational, and family literacy contexts.

The literature uses many terms to signify working relationships, and I will delineate between cooperation (or partnership), coordination, and collaboration. Mattessich, Murray-Close, Monsey, and Wilder Research Center (2001) defined *cooperation* as informal relationships that share information but maintain separate resources and rewards; *coordination* involves more formal relationships, some established planning and communication, and resources and rewards can be shared; *collaboration* involves a long-term commitment, a formal structure, and resources are pooled (p. 60). Wood and Gray (1991) and John-Steiner, Weber, and Minnis (1998) wrote definitions of collaboration that include an original, structured framework that is

independent of any of the participant organizations. All of these authors remarked that this shared structure is a dynamic process, and that collaborations create a variety of frameworks depending on their situation and goals at any given time.

The National Minority AIDS Council [NMAC] (1996) produced a technical assistance manual that viewed collaboration as a continuum of relationships ranging from less formal to more formal or from less interdependent to more interdependent. Relationships on the less interdependent end of the spectrum involved sharing of information, distributing brochures, and referrals; somewhat interdependent relationships pooled resources and coordinated programming; and more interdependent relationships were joint ventures in hiring, fundraising, and influencing public policy (pp. 5-6). Gajda (2004) also presented a continuum of strategic alliances that moved from cooperation, with a low level of formal integration, through coordination and collaboration, to what she termed coadunation, with the highest level of formal integration.

Much of the literature on library programming considers community relationships to be a form of *cooperation* (often called *partnership*), and definitions range from knowing about resources to talking with providers to working with groups to provide services (Johnson & Soule, 1987, p. 13). Collaborations often start as stakeholders identify potential partners, engage in cooperative activities, and plan coordinated actions, which may or may not lead to a fully-committed, formally-structured collaboration.

In this paper, *collaboration* will refer to the oft-cited definition developed by Wood and Gray (1991): “Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain” (p. 146). It is important to note, however, that this definition includes the necessary steps to achieve this interactive process, namely *cooperation (partnership)* and *coordination*.

In the literature cited above, it is unclear whether the members of the illustrative collaborations delineate between the terms in the same way that the researchers do. It is possible that the researchers have used an external label to define the interorganizational relationship they are studying. In order to accurately link the definitions in the literature to this study, it is important to consider how the participants define or use these terms in relation to the types of relationships in which they engage.

Reasons for Collaboration

Trist (1983) was one of the first researchers to write about the role of collaboration in solving what he coined “a domain” problem. A domain is an area of concern to members of society, previously called a *problématique* or meta-problem by Chevalier (as cited in Trist, 1983, p. 270) and defined as a large, societal problem such as energy, health-care, or literacy. Trist argued that a new kind of turbulent environment emerged with the industrialization of the United States. The turbulent field is shaped by the large number of different organizations working in one domain, creating dissonance by their independent and diverse actions. He concluded that this turbulence often

produced a problem domain whose solution was resolved only by collaboration. His discussion of collaboration is remarkably similar to recent research on the role of members, structure, and other formative factors in designing collaborations. Trist's article will be compared to more recent work in the *Goals of Collaboration, Advantages and Challenges*, and *Forming Collaborations* sections below.

The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science published two special issues on collaborative alliances in which Gray and Wood's (1991) overview recognized that "collaboration shows promise for solving organizational and societal problems" (p. 3). By the second issue, Wood and Gray (1991) stated that collaboration can accomplish outcomes that would not be possible by one single organization. It is often suggested that interorganizational collaboration can do more than each organization working independently, particularly when the organizations are working on complex societal issues (Gajda, 2004; Mattessich, et al., 2001; Rodger, Jørgensen, & D'Elia, 2005; Trist, 1983).

Libraries often describe themselves as poised to aid in the solution of society's large scale problems. This attitude has evolved over the last 30 years as libraries have had to adapt to urban decay, the evolution of technology, and a redefinition of their place in community. Libraries no longer concentrate only on reading books and keeping information; they also seek to expand their role in the community by promoting information and reaching out to isolated members of society. Croneberger (1990) described an energetic library, one that does not wait for clients to come to it, but

instead goes out into the community and proactively seeks opportunities through collaboration. Because the clients who are often not seen at the library are those being served by community-based organizations, the library's collaboration with CBOs can help to engage and better serve the clients the library wants to reach. In addition, through collaboration, the library creates new advocates for the library and infuses "energy into an otherwise static information source" (p. 4).

Other reasons for a library to collaborate with its community include positive public relations, establishing the library's relevance, increasing community involvement, establishing new constituencies, widening support for the library, and promoting the library as central to the community. Many authors believe that the library is more effective in the community when it collaborates with other organizations (Brown, 2003; Cooper, 2004; Costello, et al., 2001; Croneberger, 1990; Dowlin & Shapiro, 1996; Hilyard, 2004; Holt, 1999; Hovius, 2006; Kranich, 2005; "Libraries and Literacy," 1995; Long, 2001; Marcum, 1996; McCook, 2000; Milam, 2001; Milam, 2008; Willingham, 2008).

In general, the collaboration literature supports collaboration as a solution to societal problems. Only Huxham (2003), in a possible shifting of opinion, advised against collaboration unless it is very clear that there is potential for collaborative advantage. However, he did mention that collaboration may have unforeseen rewards, arising from new relationships and the process of collaboration as opposed to the original goal of the collaboration. The library literature also mentioned the unforeseen benefits of

collaboration, such as the community supporting the library and perceiving the library as a potential partner and active member of the community (Brown, 2003; Hilyard, 2004; Szabo & Gres, 2001).

Interestingly, seven years prior, Huxham said that “the really important problem issues facing society – poverty, conflict, crime and so on – cannot be tackled by any single organization acting alone . . . they are inherently multi-organizational (as cited in Mattessich, et al., 2001, p. 2). But in 2003, Huxham reported on years of action research in developing a theory of collaborative advantage, and wary of what he termed “collaborative inertia,” he claimed that his theory’s intent was to raise awareness of the difficulties inherent in collaboration and the amount of attention and nurturing that it takes to maintain a successful collaboration.

By writing about the challenges to collaboration, Huxham and Vaugen (2000) and Huxham (2003) elaborated on the notion that the literature and advice surrounding collaboration is deceptively simple. The common wisdom inherent in identifying common goals, involving all the stakeholders, sharing resources, showing respect, and maintaining open channels of communication is easier said than done. Though simply stated, the actions necessary to maintain a working, productive, and nurturing environment can be time-consuming and difficult. As Marcum (1996) stated in her article about building community through public library involvement, “partnerships, like other relationships, are never easy” (p. 198). However, most authors, and many practitioners, endorse collaborations as a better alternative to working individually on

large-scale, societal problems, and they credit case-study research in helping define “what collaboration looks and feels like” (Gajda, 2004, p. 66; see also Austin, 2000; Gray & Wood, 1991; Hardy, et al., 2003).

Case studies have helped identify the differences between what might be considered common wisdom and the realities in which this wisdom is applied. Theory development has also led researchers to describe other, less salient factors that contribute to collaboration, although these factors are often difficult to measure and questions remain as to how to account for critical features, such as feelings of duty and responsibility (Butterfield, Reed, & Lemak, 2004) or different power dynamics (Hardy & Phillips, 1998). Case studies specific to the domain, the organizations involved, and the environment can help inform contextually similar collaborations.

Although libraries are often cited as collaborators or partners in health and generally in the community, there is limited literature available on the specific challenges and advantages a public library faces when attempting to partner with CBOs in adult literacy programming. In addition, case studies often focus on the operation of collaboration, even though awareness and planning in the formative phase can only aid in the development and function of a successful collaboration. The variables in collaboration are many, and it is primarily through context-specific case-studies that the details of a collaborative alliance can be valuable to similar organizations seeking to work together.

Goals of Collaboration

Collaborations are formed for a variety of reasons, including strategic effects, knowledge-creation, shared understanding, combined resources, and value creation. In general, the literature focuses on collaboration as a strategic alliance, but some studies also recognize that collaboration can lead to other outcomes. Austin (2000) identified value creation as the process of creating new domain-level values, such as the combining of resources and competencies to produce an innovative program or opportunity. Phillips, Lawrence, and Hardy (2000) focused on the role of collaboration in the reproduction and innovation of institutional rules (p. 23). Trist (1983) identified the need for sharing information and thus reducing turbulence in the problem domain. Butterfield, et al. (2004) recognized that learning and maintaining a community dialogue was a positive outcome of collaboration.

Hardy et al. (2003) studied the collaborative activities of a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Palestine and looked at three different outcomes of their collaborations and the features of the relationships that led to these outcomes. They defined strategic effects as the sharing and transfer of ideas, resources, and personnel; knowledge creation effects as the generation of new knowledge; and political effects as the place of the organization within the domain, or the establishment of relationships to organizations outside the domain. Based on exploratory visits and interviews, systematic coding and cross-case comparison, and the constant comparative method, the authors rated each collaboration as low, medium, or high on two broad dimensions:

involvement and embeddedness. Involvement was defined as the depth of interaction, the level of partnering, and the direction of the flow of information between organizations within the domain. Embeddedness was defined as interacting with and representing one another to third parties, as well as a multi-directional flow of information within and without the domain.

High involvement was associated with strategic effects, or the acquisition of distinctive resources; high embeddedness was associated with political effects, or increases in influence; and high involvement along with high embeddedness was associated with the creation of new knowledge. The authors remarked that their study provides insight into the structure of a successful collaboration, depending on the goals of the relationship, and that different collaborations may well have different goals. The Hardy et al. study supports the idea that specific types of collaborations can be formed for specific purposes.

The literature that describes libraries in relationship to their communities often includes a discussion of the benefits of collaboration. Libraries are collaborating in order to increase public involvement and access to information, establish new constituencies, widen support, and diversify funding (Kranich, 2005; "Libraries and Literacy," 1995; Marcum, 1996; Milam, 2008). Much of the collaboration literature, as well as the literature on libraries and literacy, focuses on collaborating to fill a need or a lack.

However, many libraries also see collaboration as a generative process, enabling the library to adapt to modern society, and helping build social capital. Putnam

described social capital as the strength of a community based on its civic engagement, and stated that American society is becoming increasingly isolated and less involved (as cited in Marcum, 1996; as cited in Kranich, 2005). When public libraries are successfully collaborating, they “rekindle civic engagement, promote greater citizen participation, and encourage increased involvement in community problem-solving and decision-making, while garnering greater community support and positioning libraries as even more essential community-based institutions” (Kranich, 2005, p. 91).

The collaborative goals between a library and its community can be defined in terms of Hardy et al.’s (2003) framework of strategic effects, knowledge creation effects, and political effects. Strategic effects relate to the notion that collaboration fills a lack, and allows libraries to participate in providing services even though there is a perceived or real lack of resources, staff, and time. Library staff who seek to create energy and therefore, transformation of the community, may be pursuing the knowledge creation effects of collaboration. Dowlin and Shapiro (1996) argued that “community support will increase the talent and skill level of the institution” (p. 185), contributing to the knowledge and expertise that the library brings to its programming. Libraries may also want to create political effects through collaboration. Political effects enable libraries to enhance their credibility and visibility, contribute to local economic development, and gain support through raising the expectations of the community and making libraries essential community institutions (Dowlin & Shapiro, 1996; Durrance & Schneider, 1996; Kranich, 2005; Milam, 2008). These collaborative goals reflect the

library's point of view, but it is also necessary to understand how the community perceives the library's role in collaborations, and whether or not community-based service providers think of the library as a valuable partner or a central player in addressing societal problems.

Advantages and Challenges

The advantages and challenges to collaboration are difficult to quantify, and they often depend on the goals of the collaborative alliance. The collaboration literature concentrates on what makes collaboration work, often listing factors of success (Butterfield, et al., 2004; Gray & Wood, 1991; Mattessich, et al., 2001). Many of the benefits of collaboration are generalized throughout the literature as relieving the burden of a lack of resources. With social services in particular, another benefit is to make services more accessible and effective, and to overcome obstacles through innovation (Mattessich, et al., 2001, pp. 3-4).

In recent years, the collaboration literature also has focused on the difficulties and tensions inherent in collaboration and how best to overcome these challenges in order to achieve a successful collaboration. Wood and Gray (1991) reported on the nine articles chosen for the two special issues of *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* and noted that collaborations can cause new dependencies, transaction costs, and an increase in complexity and uncertainty. However, they also reminded the reader that Trist believed that "environmental turbulence is reduced because stakeholders no longer create uncertainty for one another by acting privately and unilaterally with

respect to the domain. Instead, information . . . is exchanged” (Wood & Gray, 1991, p. 159). Even if a collaboration is trading one set of dependencies for another, Wood and Gray, as well as Trist, would see this level of complexity as more of a resource than a hindrance.

The library literature also addresses the challenges and frustrations that can develop in a collaborative relationship. Like their counterparts in the collaboration literature, the authors confirm that most difficulties encountered in the process are worth the outcome (Brown, 2003; Costello, et al., 2001; Holt, 1999; Long, 2001; Lynch, 1999; Szaba & Gres, 2001). In a survey of public library directors, in which 300 libraries responded, the results indicated that “public libraries have identified partnerships as a proven way, despite all the uncertainties and risks, to begin the journey into the next century” (Marcum, 1996, p. 198).

Much of the library literature focuses on the idea of collaboration as a solution to problems of funding, staffing, and resources, a method of engaging with hard-to-reach populations, and an approach to solving domain-level problems. Through discussions of successful collaborations, authors offer general information about how they formed collaborations and the results of these collaborations. However, limited information is available on the specific interactions that were necessary to forming a particular collaboration. Because articles are often written after a collaboration has finished, the nuances of each step are overlooked, giving the reader a framework but not the details of the interactions that took place. In addition, unsuccessful

collaborations and factors that hindered the collaborative process are often missing in the library literature.

It is with both awareness of the challenges to collaboration and the ability to manage and nurture these challenges that a collaboration can succeed (Huxham & Vaugen, 2000). This is another reason why it is important to use case studies to identify the challenges created by a specific domain, its individual organizations, and its environment. For example, are some of the challenges to collaboration specific to libraries or specific to a library collaborating with its community? Does the culture of the library or the community affect the manner in which they engage in collaboration?

Forming Collaborations

Researchers usually address collaboration as a three stage process: formation, operation, and outcomes. Gray and Wood (1991) asked three questions about the nine articles in the two special issues of *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* in order to expand on existing organizational theories. They asked what they termed “domain-level” questions about the preconditions, processes, and outcomes of collaboration. Because MCL is just beginning the collaborative process, I will concentrate on the formative phase here. There are many lists of factors and conditions related to formation, but important to those just setting out, it is necessary to describe what these factors and conditions look and feel like. How exactly does one align with other organizations, forge personal connections, or decide what the goals of the collaboration will be?

Gray and Wood (1991) identified several motivating factors in their search for what gives rise to collaborative alliances. Most of the nine articles that they summarized listed the desire for strategic advantage as a precondition to collaboration.

Environmental factors were also considered, and one of the articles indicated the need for shared understanding in order to build a collective response to a problem. Trist (1983) listed five aspects of domain formation: making a shared appreciation of the problem (understanding the nuances of the domain), acquiring an acceptable identity for the domain, setting an agreed-upon direction, shaping the membership structure, and creating an internal structure (based on the stakeholders). This formal, internal structure is what differentiates collaboration from cooperation and partnership in the literature.

Austin (2000) observed the dynamics of alliances and considered alliance drivers, alliance enablers, and the alliance marketplace in his study of what contributes to the strength of a collaboration. The alliance drivers were the alignment of strategy, mission, and values; personal connection and relationships; value generation and shared visioning; and continual learning. The alignment of strategy is a common theme in collaboration, and must be considered not only in the formative phase but also throughout the process as members and the environment shift over time. Value generation is the continual process of ensuring that the collaborating members feel as if they are receiving value from the course of action, and continual learning represents the sustained desire and ability to generate value and engage effectively.

Mattessich, et al. (2001) identified twenty factors of success in their second edition of *Collaboration: What Makes It Work*. In both editions of the book, they identified all the research relating to collaboration and then screened out studies that were not relevant and valid. They reviewed the remaining literature and blended the findings into first 19 and then 20 (the same 19 plus one factor dealing with the pace of development) factors that influenced successful collaboration. Their factors can be sorted into six categories: environment, membership characteristics, process and structure, communication, purpose, and resources.

The Mattessich et al. factors corroborate many of the findings discussed in this literature review. However, it also includes some factors that are not frequently discussed elsewhere, such as the need for an engagement in the process as well as the outcome, the establishment of informal relationships and communication as well as those more formal, and "mutual respect, understanding, and trust" (p. 8), the factor identified by the largest number of studies as important to the success of collaboration. Coleman (1988) also argued that "a group within which there is extensive trustworthiness and extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without that trustworthiness and trust" (p. 101).

Although immensely helpful in terms of creating awareness of what collaboration entails, there are many questions that go unanswered in the Mattessich et al. review. As acknowledged by the authors in their section on further research, collaborators are also interested in how to cultivate factors necessary for success, which

factors are phase-specific, and important to MCL's project, "what factors influence whether people will come together at all" (p. 33). Although the need for collaboration between libraries and the community is common in the literature, there is little research that describes the factors involved in initiating a collaborative relationship.

Butterfield et al. (2004) used interviews and an inductive methodology to create a model for collaboration among non-profits. They interviewed collaborating members from different geographical areas who were all tackling a nuclear waste cleanup problem. Their analysis consisted of dividing the data into thought units, categorizing all of the thought units into emergent categories, and then grouping the categories into emergent themes. They found four phases, a motivating and formative phase, which most researchers lump together, an operations phase, and an outcomes phase. They also found moderating variables interacting with the formation and outcomes of the collaboration. The majority of the thought units discussed the operations phase.

The authors noted that their findings generally corresponded to the collaboration literature, but they also discovered some exceptions. The motivating phase consisted of well-known collective factors, also known as the desire for strategic alliances in order to solve a domain problem; individual factors (see *Individual Factors* below); and the power that is created by multiple organizations working together. They also noted that feelings of duty and responsibility motivated people to act, an idea that is implicit in the literature, but not well-documented. It is possible that these feelings

are more prevalent in non-profit work where organizations are dealing with societal-level problems.

In the formative stage, the interviewees discussed their roles, partnerships, networks, and resources. Moderating variables at this stage were largely interpersonal. Although physical proximity was also a factor, interpersonal characteristics were the largest category, and leadership as well as power and politics rounded out the moderating variables.

One of the common themes in the literature about library involvement in the community is the need for more proactive librarians. Croneberger (1990) stated that passivity leads to missed opportunities. He described librarians as waiting for the client to come to them and argued that it is not enough to say that the doors are open to all. Instead, librarians must go out into the community. The library must play a role in fostering relationships with the community, moving beyond the four walls of the building and expanding their reach (Burnham & Peterson, 2005; Cooper, 2004; Hovius, 2006; Kranich, 2005; Long, 2001; Willingham, 2008). Although much of the literature addresses the role of libraries in forming collaborations, it is unclear whether or not CBOs perceive libraries as partners. In order for libraries to effectively collaborate with CBOs, it is necessary to understand whether the CBOs' perception of the library is dependent on the library taking a proactive role in engaging with the community.

Individual Factors

Even though collaboration focuses on organizations and groups, individual factors as well as the role of the individual are significant to the literature. Individuals are an important player in collaborative relationships primarily because collaborations and thus organizations are made up of individuals who have differing views on the problem domain, the possible solutions, the role of collaboration, the structure, and any number of other things associated with human interaction.

As Eden and Huxham (2001) noted, a collaboration must acknowledge that individuals may be representing themselves, their organizations, or the collaborative group, and that who they represent may change according to the topic or over time. One of these roles is not better than another, and it has been noted that an individual can help propel an organization because of motivating personal reasons (Austin, 2001; Butterfield, et al., 2004). Personal relationships also help bind organizations together. Austin found that personal relationships helped build trust, and trust was the factor most commonly associated with collaborative success in the Mattessich et al. (2001) study. Both Austin (2001) and Butterfield, et al. (2004) concluded that although good personal relationships could not guarantee success, problematic personality issues could derail a collaboration.

There is often a leadership role absorbed by an individual who is trusted and respected by members of the collaboration. In fact, skilled leadership is one of the twenty factors defined in Mattessich, et al. (2001). In Butterfield, et al. (2004),

leadership emerged as one of the moderators of outcomes. Wood and Gray (1991) found that the role of the convener was an important element in developing their theory of collaboration, but noted that the convener could be an individual or an organization. Huxham (2003) recognized two perspectives on leadership. One describes a leader who works from the spirit of collaboration and empowers, involves, and mobilizes members, and the second facilitates action through “collaborative thuggery,” or manipulating the agenda and playing the politics (pp. 416-418).

The library literature also gives examples of successful partnership that start with a personal contact or relationship between two individuals where either individual is or both individuals are pursuing an idea. The idea leads to action and the formation of a partnership. (Brown, 2003; Holt, 1999; Petruzzi & Burns, 2006). The literature doesn't explicitly state that the role of the individual is pivotal in forming these partnerships, but through detailed descriptions of examples of collaboration, it is apparent that many collaborations are formed because of interactions between two individuals.

Trist (1983) discussed the role of some individuals as innovators who help initiate networks. Networks were an important part of Trist's theory because [they] provide channels of communication which are fluid and rapid. They travel through the social ground rather than between institutional figures. They cross levels and cover the range from private to public. They bring the most unexpected people into relevant contact so that nodes and temporary systems are formed which become levers of change. (p. 280)

Trist believed that innovators, or boundary crossers, were essential to the timeliness and depth of a collaboration. Olney (2005), in the context of outreach, also discussed the idea of the innovator, or the person at the boundaries, and noted that it is through these people that new ideas can spread. Although it may be necessary to collaboration to have an innovative leader, there are questions as to what type of person normally fills this role, why the person is motivated to lead, and where this type of person is found. Do (or can) library staff fill the role of innovator? Do CBOs perceive libraries as innovators?

Libraries which are successful in partnering with the community often have specific staff members who focus on establishing relationships. For example, outreach librarians use certain networking skills in their work to involve isolated communities. A literacy coordinator often devotes much of his/her time to building community relationships. In fact, the task force for Multnomah County Library recommended that the Adult Literacy Coordinator make contact with at least 36 literacy programs (Oregon Literacy, n.d., p. 2) in the first year of her employment. The role of this one person is crucial to the establishment of partnerships, because she is not only a supplier of information about library services, but she is also a single person seeking to motivate, bond, and stimulate creative and manageable goals for literacy programming across the community. More research is needed to understand the factors that will contribute to the ALC's success and the role she fills in establishing partnerships.

Libraries and Community

Libraries are in a unique position to support adult literacy. As permanent institutions who support adult literacy through many free services, public libraries have a history of encouraging lifelong learning and helping immigrants adapt to the United States (Bourke, 2007; Comings & Cuban, 2000; Cuban, 2007; Humes, 1996; McCook, 2000). Libraries are often easily accessible to those in need of adult literacy services because of their central location, their extended and weekend hours, free services, and their ability to create a safe and welcoming atmosphere. Unlike many community organizations, libraries are often not required to achieve specific numbers of successful learners in order to keep their funding, and so their programming is often more sustainable. However, some libraries have had to drastically reduce their hours of operation, thus creating difficulty in access. In addition, funding can be problematic for libraries, and they might be unable to provide long term literacy programming.

The library is often described by librarians as a civic place that builds capacity through a strong sense of community (Cooper, 2004; Marcum, 1996; Milam, 2008). Dowlin and Shapiro (1996) argued that the library is in the best position of any public institution to help tackle broad social issues (p. 189). They also recognized that the library must build awareness in order to be perceived as a community asset and as an institution that can connect isolated communities.

Feldstein (1996) noted that public libraries are at the center of a community, thus enabling integration of the community, and McCook (2000) concurred that libraries

build community, a trait that is essential to their effectiveness. Charbonneau, Marks, Healy, and Croatt-Moore (2007) indicated that their academic library's collaboration with CBOs who already served their target population "was essential in building community trust" (p. 352) and helped them gain access to and knowledge about their potential clients. However, McCook (2000) also observed that libraries are rarely included in the literature on community building despite their history and their centrality. Her book, *A Place at the Table: Participating in Community Building*, focused on how librarians and frequently citizens identified the important role of libraries, but community visionaries and planners did not often include the library in community building.

Libraries and Literacy

Johnson and Soule (1987) identified three ways in which libraries can be involved in adult literacy programming: materials, services at the library, and cooperative efforts. Johnson, Robbins, and Zweizig (1990) operationally defined library involvement in literacy as materials, instruction, and support services. These definitions are elaborated so that materials include literacy print and audiovisual materials for both learners and tutors; instruction includes recruiting and placing tutors and learners as well as conducting these services jointly with another literacy provider; and support services include referrals, jointly publicizing community services, and participating in a literacy coalition. These studies observed that successful library literacy programs are not always of the direct instruction type. As noted above, direct instruction is not the

present goal of Multnomah County Library, but materials and support services fit well within the library's current capabilities.

MCL has taken the first steps for implementing a library literacy program by conducting a community needs assessment; surveying, interviewing and convening focus groups with stakeholders; assessing the level of readiness at MCL; and facilitating a focus group of community and library personnel who narrowed down the broad goal of literacy to three main recommendations. Included in the recommendations are logic models for implementation, which describe the ways in which MCL can network and "facilitate literacy classes, tutoring connections and opportunities . . . through partnerships with other organizations" (Oregon Literacy, n.d., p. 1). Collaboration in a library setting is often "seen as vital to improving both program quality and access to lifelong learning opportunities" (Humes, 1996, p. 21).

In Johnson and Soule's (1987) planning manual for libraries and literacy, they stated that "understanding the need for cooperation is the first step in developing a library literacy program" (p. 13). They also listed the benefits and barriers to cooperation, many of which are common in the literature on interorganizational collaboration. The benefits typically include sharing of resources, increased publicity, mutual referrals, and the ability to reach a larger, potentially more diverse population. Interestingly, Johnson and Soule also acknowledged the knowledge-creation aspect of cooperation, which does not occur in the collaboration literature until the next decade. Knowledge creation occurs not from sharing information with each other, but from

innovations and new knowledge that are generated by the collaborative relationship (Hardy, et al., 2003). For example, new knowledge can build from the collaborative groups researching or gathering information, developing new practices, or altering policy based on their new experiences as a collaboration.

Humes (1996) reported on the proceedings of a conference on postsecondary education, libraries, and lifelong learning, where libraries and CBOs met together for the first time in this context. One of the themes of this conference was "Collaboration Among Community-Based Education Providers" (p. 21), in which participants explored the issue of collaboration. Participants saw collaboration "as vital to improving both program quality and access to lifelong learning opportunities," (p. 21), but they agreed that significant barriers existed to forming and maintaining successful collaborations. Participants wanted specific information about effective models of collaboration, both in providing services but also in disseminating information to the target population. They also wanted to understand the roles they should play, the strategies they should use, and the level of coordination that is needed to enhance lifelong learning (p. 22).

Although the literature does look at unsuccessful interactions, it is mostly through successful collaborations that it specifies "what works." However, it is also through what doesn't work that information is gathered that can help inform collaborative development. The library literature often includes case studies or examples of successful partnerships, but lacks the nuance of the collaboration literature in addressing the specific factors that lead to an effective partnership. There are often

sections of lessons learned, but reports that refer to the beginning stages of partnership are often vague, describing a sequence of events with statements such as "soon another collaborator surfaced" (Petruzzi & Burns, 2006, p. 193) In order to understand which strategies are most successful for beginning a collaboration, the literature needs to outline the exact steps that led to a relationship between individuals or organizations.

For example, what kind of conversations took place before collaboration was achieved? How were the collaborators found or what led them to "surface"? Who initiated the process and how did the relationship evolve? The context of collaboration will also generate and restrict the dynamics of the relationships in very specific ways. This is why case studies have been successful in helping develop the literature (Gray & Wood, 1991). By describing and analyzing the specific relationships in Multnomah County, I hope to describe the "barriers to and facilitators of collaborative efforts" (Humes, 1996, p. 22) among the library and CBOs as they look to collaborate in adult literacy programming.

Attitudes Toward Libraries' Involvement in Literacy

It is apparent that many librarians believe in collaboration as a key to their future as community builders, permanent institutions, and providers of services. However, it is unclear whether or not providers in the community perceive libraries in the same way that libraries perceive themselves. In addition, all library staff may not share the view of those who author texts about community building and collaboration. If collaboration requires nurturing, then the participants must have a compassionate and positive

outlook toward the other members of the collaboration as well as the collaboration itself.

Marcum (1996) recognized that many librarians do not view their library as a community center, but rather as an information source. Boaden (2005) also stated that librarians may not see it as their role to enhance the library's place as a community center, much the way that Croneberger (1990) described librarians as passively waiting for the clients, and the community, to come to them. Cooper (2004) stated that "the main limitation for libraries and their communities in developing and managing adult literacy services is negative attitudes" (p. 156). She mentioned that the staff may not believe that adults with low literacy use the library. Cooper argued that the problem of adult literacy is often hidden, partly because of the stigma associated with low literacy skills. However, she mentioned that it can be seen in requests for help filling out forms or choosing materials.

Adult literacy providers were interviewed or surveyed for a report to the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training in Australia. Of the forty who completed the survey, twenty-four said they used libraries to support their programs. Those who did not use the library cited lack of time, clients' lack of interest, and inaccessibility of resources ("Libraries and Literacy," 1995, p. 6) as reasons for not using the library. Learners in the programs didn't always know how the library functioned, that it was open to everyone, or that it was relevant and available to them.

One of the major barriers to collaboration between libraries and CBOs is the lack of knowledge about what the library can do for adult literacy providers and learners. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation hired Lake Research to do a public opinion survey of the role of public libraries. The public generally supported the expansion and maintenance of public libraries, and the poll confirmed that libraries are respected in their communities. However, it became “dramatically apparent . . . that the public sees the public library first and foremost as an institution that benefits children” (Marcum, 1996, p. 200). Twelve years later, Milam (2008) noted that research and increased public awareness have contributed to successful library and community collaborations in early education. As communities become more aware of the societal benefits of improving adult literacy, libraries may be better able to secure funding for such programs and their role in providing services will be better supported.

Libraries must work to build awareness of their ability to contribute to adult literacy services, but they must also believe that they have those skills in place. If the library shares the values of its community, and vice versa, then an environment is created for the two groups to convene and work together toward a solution. Although libraries often believe they play a role in providing adult literacy services, it is necessary for community-based organizations to also see the library in that role.

Institutional Factors in Collaboration

An institution has an inherent culture or set of patterns which shape and constrain the rules and resources that structure the behavior of its members (Phillips, et

al., 2000, p. 27). An institutional field, or domain, can also maintain specific ways of organizing that have been socially constructed and that inform the way in which the domain problem is addressed. These patterns can give some members an advantage over others. Phillips, et al. (2000) claimed that institutionalized rules and resources affect the collaborative process in defining the problem, the membership, and the solutions (p. 31). One might argue that this claim offers support for the inclusion of a diverse cross-section of members (Mattessich, et al., 2001) that represents all of the stakeholders in the domain. In addition, if organizations that exist outside the domain are invited into the collaborative process, new ideas, patterns, and structures may emerge. Phillips, et al. (2000) also noted that a collaboration has the potential to change a domain's characteristics through an increase in partnerships and innovation.

Rodger, et al. (2005) surveyed public libraries, museums, public television stations, and public radio stations to determine their opinions of and participation in collaboration in the provision of lifelong learning opportunities. The initial survey was sent to the CEOs of these four institutions, and the data focused on the forces driving collaboration, institutional assets, and "the institutions' organizational characteristics that affect their ability to collaborate successfully" (p. 47). The authors found that these institutions identified community needs and their mission as the main forces driving collaboration, which Rodger, et al. thought fitting for public service institutions. A slightly ironic result was that a perceived lack of resources was the top reason to not collaborate, but this same lack was rated fourth in the reasons to collaborate. This

finding is similar to a trend found in both the collaboration and library literature that a lack of time, staff, and resources keeps people from wanting to collaborate. However, the proponents of collaboration state that these types of deficits are filled by the collaborative partner.

Rodger, et al. also surveyed the CEOs about their organizational characteristics and asked them to rate their own institution as well as the other institutions on five characteristics: strategic direction, focus of attention, responsiveness, entrepreneurship, and decision making. Libraries had the lowest ratings both by their own CEOs and the CEOs of the other three institutions. The authors stated that libraries may be at a disadvantage when collaborating, at least with these types of institutions. Although this study is helpful because of its unique research questions and choice of participants, the reader must remember that the authors were only looking at collaboration among these four types of institutions, and the data they used were self-reports.

It may be that an individual can alter the general library trend found in Rodger, et al.'s study. For example, Marcum (1996) found that a library director's vision can be an important factor in innovation and partnership. The Council on Library Resources surveyed 3200 public library directors and asked them to describe how they were using technology in innovative ways (Marcum, 1996, p. 193). Of the 300 who responded, the Council picked the twelve most vibrant sites for case study research. They found that the directors of these twelve libraries shared "an important characteristic: they possess

a vision and know precisely how to articulate it” (p. 196). In addition, these twelve libraries looked to partner with organizations in the community, seeking resources and relationships with other agencies as they searched for new and innovative ways to use technology.

Although the culture of a library differs from library system to library system and even from branch to branch, as do the cultures of CBOs with different missions, it is important to consider an organization’s institutional characteristics and other potential member’s views of that organization when developing a collaboration. A library's culture may depend on several factors such as type of funding, support, and history that are unique to its community. However, a detailed description of the library's and community's philosophy of collaboration can help other communities to compare and contrast their situation with the one addressed in this exploratory study.

Research Questions

The literature illustrates that the nature of forming, maintaining, and succeeding in collaboration is a complex, ambiguous, and dynamic process (Huxham & Vaugen, 2000). One must take into account individual factors, institutional characteristics, the problem domain, and the structure and specific goals of the collaboration, while also acknowledging that all of these variables develop and shift in an unpredictable manner. As awareness of context-specific challenges grows through case study research, individuals and institutions will be better able to prepare for and address the problems that arise.

Case studies have allowed collaboration theory to develop, but there is still a lack of research exploring the factors that relate to public libraries, particularly in the formative stages of adult literacy programming. A library's perception of its role in adult literacy affects whether or not it includes adult literacy as a goal within the institution. Once the goal is adopted, the library's culture can help or hinder the process of incorporating the adult learner into the library. The community's perception of the need for adult literacy services plays a role in its support of new programming, both financially and through its actions and words. In addition, a general community awareness of the benefits of adult literacy programming is necessary for continued support and recognition of its place in the community. A CBO's perception of the library's ability to serve adult learners affects its willingness to collaborate with the library. In addition to these community and institutional factors, individual factors also contribute to the success of the library's collaboration with CBOs.

This study seeks to identify the attitudes and perceptions held by Multnomah County Library and the community toward each other and toward the provision of adult literacy services. Does MCL see itself as a community builder? Do the CBOs in Multnomah County see the library as poised to tackle adult literacy? As the library seeks to establish relationships with community-based organizations, it is important to identify the factors that will lead to success, as well as the factors that may inhibit the process. Awareness of their respective opinions and goals can help guide the

collaborative endeavors of the library and the community as they seek to build relationships around adult literacy.

Specifically, this thesis is a case study of the notions of collaboration held by the Multnomah County Library and the community-based organizations that provide adult literacy services in the same geographic area. This study seeks to answer the following questions, in which *libraries* refers to the 17 branches in the Multnomah County Library system and *CBOs* refers to community-based organizations that will be chosen based on criteria described in the following chapter.

1. How do libraries and CBOs envision and enact collaboration?
2. How do libraries perceive and engage with CBOs as a partner or collaborator?
3. How do CBOs perceive and engage with the library as a partner or collaborator?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The literature clearly states that collaboration can be used to successfully contribute to a solution for a domain level problem such as adult literacy. Although there is extensive research on factors involved in successful collaboration, there is limited information available about *how* libraries form collaborations with community-based organizations. As Humes (1996) noted, librarians and staff of CBOs would like more information about roles they should play and strategies they should use to engage in successful models of collaboration.

Because Multnomah County Library was beginning the process of working to meet their strategic goals for adult literacy in the community, and because these goals included building relationships with the community, the opportunity was available to study the collaborative process in action. This thesis seeks to understand the perceptions of collaboration held by the library and its community through a case study of the library's adult literacy program and relevant community organizations. Case studies provide detailed and context-specific information that can help identify barriers to and facilitators of collaboration that may be present in similar library and community contexts.

This chapter includes an explanation of the research methodology, a detailed description of the participants, the instruments, the materials, and the data collection and analysis procedures used in this study.

Description of Research Methodology

This descriptive case study used purposeful sampling to select participants and sites that represented multiple perspectives on adult literacy and collaboration in the library and community (Creswell, 2007, pp. 125-129). Data collection consisted primarily of in-depth interviews with individuals and was supplemented by additional materials and information about the organizations. The data was organized using a coding system based on both information in the literature and emergent themes, while analysis used pattern-matching strategies to compare the results with existing theory and across participants (Yin, 1994).

By conducting semi-structured, open-ended interviews, I allowed the participants to elaborate on their perceptions and beliefs about collaboration and their relationship to the other organizations in this study. Interviews help elicit in-depth responses that can provide rich descriptions of the collaborative process (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Although the guiding interview questions were based on the library and collaboration literature, they were designed to obtain information about the individual experience of the participant, permitting the interviewees to speak freely about their encounters with and opinions of collaboration and partnership. Through data analysis, I

was able to confirm whether or not the responses from the participants in my study matched the factors in the literature.

This case study included thirteen participants from three different employment agencies, two library branches, and library administration. Employment agencies were chosen to represent the community perspective in this study because their goals include helping clients gain skills and qualifications, such as literacy, that are necessary for increasing clients' employability. Because the employment agencies shared an implicit goal of literacy with the library's explicit goal of literacy, and because the alignment of mission and values is an important element in forming a successful collaboration (Austin, 2000; Gray & Wood, 1991; Mattessich, et al., 2001; NMAC, 1996), these employment agencies were identified as relevant participants for this study (see also *Analytic Strategy* below).

The data analysis included coding, descriptive matrices, organizational spreadsheets, *Interview Notes*, *Transcription Notes*, *Coding Notes*, *Theoretical Notes*, and *Research Notes*. The process of analysis was iterative and ongoing and evolved into a study of five prominent themes: the importance of the individual, the effort required for partnership, the library's ideal partner, the library as a resource, and the library responding to community needs. The results of the analysis are discussed in the next chapter.

Setting and Participants

This exploratory study took place in Portland, Oregon during the first year in which Multnomah County Library (MCL) instituted an adult literacy program. Multnomah County Library served a population of 710,025 for the 2007-2008 fiscal year (Oregon State Library, 2009). There were seventeen library branches, and most residents of the county were within two miles of a library branch. MCL is consistently recognized as one of the top three libraries in the country for high circulation, and it is also nationally recognized for its role in children's literacy and family literacy. In 2005, it made adult literacy one of its long-term goals. Because the library was just beginning its adult literacy program and following recommendations to partner with the community, I chose to study the challenges and advantages to building partnerships between this library and its community.

There were thirteen participants in this study, six from the library and seven from three employment agencies. All participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and pseudonyms are used at all times in this thesis for all of the participants except one, who chose to use his real name. Participants were also asked to verify the accuracy of the conclusions in this study in order to validate the findings.

Analytic Strategy

The criteria for choosing the community based organizations were theoretically driven. Because the focus of this study was collaboration around adult literacy, I sought to include organizations that named adult literacy or adult basic education as one of

their goals and whose target audience included residents of Multnomah County who were English Language Learners or Adult Basic Education students or both. Because many organizations that specifically included adult literacy/education as one of their goals did not have consistent programming or a sufficient number of staff, I had to adjust the criteria. The amended criteria allowed for organizations whose formal or informal mission included skill building, education, or support for adults who were working toward overcoming barriers and fulfilling their personal goals. In order to gather views on partnership that were not influenced by a previous relationship with the library and to more clearly understand the initial stages of collaboration, I sought participants at organizations that were not currently identified by the ALC as partners. The ALC was midway through her first year at the library and had already begun to form relationships with certain organizations in the community. By including her in the process of identifying potential organizations for this study, I was able to isolate the organizations with whom she had no prior relationship.

The organizations also needed to have a sufficient number of staff so that I could interview employees at three different levels of the organization. By including participants from a variety of positions, I hoped to elicit a broader, more complete description of collaboration within a particular organization and to account for any relationship between position and perception of partnership. For example, I wanted to know if choices and opinions about partnership were similar across position, or if organizations which had similar missions had similar views of partnership. It was also

important to understand any differences between employees in a supervisory position and those who worked directly with the clients.

After reviewing the data, however, there were many reasons not to group the data by position or organization. Because participants had been at their positions for varying lengths of time, and organizational missions varied due to funding and eligibility requirements, the commonalities I had prepared for did not exist. In addition, there were not enough similarities in job descriptions to compare by type of position. For example, one instructor was part-time (six hours), the second was a half-time instructor who focused on job readiness, and the third was full-time and focused on building language skills. In addition, I was only able to interview one participant from Organization C, so this organization did not have all three positions represented in the data. Because of these reasons, I chose to analyze the data by individual and then by type of organization: the library and the community agencies.

Using the list of organizations that the ALC intended to contact in her first year at MCL, lists of organizations involved in adult literacy from Oregon Literacy and Portland Literacy Council, and information from the internet, I initially researched organizations by obtaining information about their mission and programming. As stated earlier, one of the criteria for choosing organizations was the alignment of their mission or values with those of the library. I also telephoned representatives of the organization to ask follow-up questions. I searched for organizations that listed partnerships or collaborations as part of their philosophy and that included an educational component in their work.

Several organizations were eliminated from the study due to small staff, disinterest, or lack of time for the interview process. I narrowed down the choices to Organizations A and B, both employment agencies, and started my interviews while still investigating a potential Organization C. Organizations A and B were chosen because of their mission or philosophy and their size. The current economic recession also helped support the inclusion of employment agencies, which were providing relevant and timely assistance to adults, many of whom had limited education.

In order to compare results from similar organizations, I sought to include employees from a third employment agency in the data collection process. However, it was difficult to find a third employment organization that fit the criteria of this study. I adjusted the criteria to include Organization C, which was ultimately chosen as a contrast to Organization A and B, because the ALC already considered herself to be in partnership with Organization C. It is important to note that the ALC considered herself to be in partnership with a specific person from Organization C. This person was Isabella, the Literacy Services Coordinator, who confirmed that any relationship, questions, or concerns that her fellow employees had about the library were usually communicated through her to the ALC at the library.

I chose the two library branches based on three criteria: location in a population in need of adult literacy services as determined by the ALC and a prior needs assessment conducted by the library; willingness to be interviewed for this study; and level of involvement in adult literacy as determined by the ALC. Branch A was less interested or

involved in adult literacy, and Branch B was very interested and involved in adult literacy. Branch A was also conveniently located close to Organization B, which allowed me to investigate the possibility that geographic proximity was associated with partnership.

I interviewed two employees at each branch in order to represent perspectives from different positions. The two positions were the supervisor or manager of the branch and one employee whose job description included adult outreach. The library differentiates between neighborhood library branches and regional library branches. The regional branch has a manager and a supervisor with the supervisor working under the manager. The neighborhood libraries have a stand-alone supervisor. Branch A is a regional branch, and so I interviewed the manager at Branch A. Branch B is a neighborhood branch, and so I interviewed the supervisor at Branch B.

Community Participants

The community participants listed in Table 1 included three staff from two employment organizations: the supervisor or director of a program; an English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), or General Educational Development (GED) Instructor; and an employee who worked with clients to provide them with the assistance and/or resources to achieve their goals. I was only able to interview one staff from the third employment organization because the Instructor declined to be interviewed and the Executive Director was not available to be interviewed during the data collection process. The community participants will be

referred to as employment agency employees in the following chapters in order to reflect the specific goals of the organizations.

Table 1: Community Participants

NAME	POSITION	ORGANIZATION
Carrie	Job Search Skills Instructor	Organization A
Ali	ESL Instructor	Organization A
Moose	Deputy Director	Organization A
Lucas	Instructor, NET (Non-native Employment Training)	Organization B
Susan	Part-time Instructor ABE/GED	Organization B
Marie	Director, Economic and Workforce Development	Organization B
Isabella	Literacy Services Coordinator	Organization C

Organization A was a non-profit organization that was self-funded through revenues generated by their retail program, and whose mission was to provide opportunities to people with barriers to employment. Within this organization, there was a department that focused on connecting clients to jobs. This department consisted of Employment Specialists, Job Search Skills Instructors, and ESL Instructors. The services were free to clients who entered the program, they could use the services for up to six months, and there was a possibility for them to renew their participation in the program a second time.

I interviewed three employees of this organization: Carrie, Ali, and Moose. I first interviewed Ali, an ESL instructor, who had taught at the organization for five years. The ESL program started as a support program for employees within the organization, but then expanded to serve members of the public in addition to clients of the job program. Ali described the other employees in the organization to me, and based on her

description of Carrie's work as a connector of clients to resources, I sought to interview Carrie, the Job Search Skills Instructor.

Carrie was chosen because she worked to support clients in a Resource Room of four computers. The computers were for clients in the program to search for jobs, write resumes and cover letters, and learn job search skills. Based on Ali's description of Carrie's job, I felt that Carrie was an appropriate choice for this study because she was in a position to provide the clients with resources and tell them about other opportunities available to them for increasing their employability. I also wanted to know what kinds of referrals or help she gave clients who wanted or needed to increase their skill set. Carrie had only been at her position for five weeks, so there were several organizational questions that she could not answer. I followed up on those questions with Moose, the Deputy Director of the job search program, who was the last person that I interviewed from this organization. He was chosen because he was the supervisor of the program.

Organization B is a government funded organization that provides support services for their clients in order to help them become more employable, earn a higher income, and gain life skills. It is also located one block away from Branch A, so I sought to understand if location would make a difference in whether Organization B did or did not collaborate with Branch A. I first spoke with Marie, the Director of Economic and Workforce Development, and asked her about the organization and its employees in order to determine which people to interview. I also interviewed her since she was in a supervisory role.

She gave me the contact information for Susan and one other instructor, who wanted to be interviewed together. I thought it would be interesting to record the opinions of two people who worked in the same position within the same organization. However, when I came to the interview and explained my study, only Susan wished to continue. Susan is a part-time ABE/GED Instructor who has worked for the organization for 25 years. At the beginning of her tenure, she had been part of a team of 16 instructors, and she was now part of a team of two instructors who each worked six hours per week.

The third person I interviewed from Organization B was Lucas, who worked half-time as an NET (Non-native Employment Training) Instructor and half-time in the computer lab, where clients and members of the public are welcome to come in and use the computers for job-search related activities. He was chosen because he is an ESL Instructor and because his job parallels Carrie's job in that he works with clients who are using the computer as a resource to build skills and find employment.

I first interviewed Isabella, the Literacy Services Coordinator, from Organization C. Isabella developed the volunteer literacy program at her organization for job seekers who needed to build their English language skills. She was chosen because of her role in ESL, as well as the relationship she had already developed with the ALC from the library.

Library Participants

The six library employees listed in Table 2 included the ALC, the sole employee who focuses on adult literacy, the Supervisor of Library Outreach, and two library employees at two different branches.

Table 2: Library Participants

NAME	POSITION	ORGANIZATION
Shannon	Supervisor of Library Outreach	Library
ALC	Adult Literacy Coordinator	Library
Javier	Manager	Branch A, Library
Sarah	Temporary Librarian	Branch A, Library
Daniel	Interim Neighborhood Libraries Manager (Usually Branch B Supervisor)	Branch B, Library
Ryan	Bilingual Library Assistant	Branch B, Library

The ALC was interviewed for this study because she was the cornerstone of the Adult Literacy Department, she supported this research, and she had been given the responsibility of building relationships with the adult literacy community. She is the main person involved in this study as many of the partnerships involved her and another person or organization.

After interviewing both the manager of Branch A, Javier, and the Supervisor of Branch B, Daniel, I asked each of them to recommend a branch employee who was involved in adult outreach. It was because of their recommendations that I interviewed Ryan, a Bilingual Library Assistant at Branch B, and Sarah, a Temporary Librarian at Branch A. Ryan's job no longer focused on adult outreach, but he had previously worked

in that capacity. Sarah had just finished a temporary, four month position as a librarian in which approximately 40% of her time was spent focusing on adult outreach.

However, after speaking with the ALC and Daniel, the Interim Neighborhood Libraries Manager, I realized that the library links outreach with partnership. Therefore, I added the Supervisor of Library Outreach to the list of participants, because I felt that she would contribute pertinent information to the study. She also supervised the ALC and held a central role in developing the adult literacy program at the library. In addition, the Supervisor of Library Outreach had been with the library for 25 years in various roles. She held several positions that focused on specific collaborations and was knowledgeable about the history of the library.

Instruments

The primary source of data was individual interviews. Interviews were open-ended and semi-structured. Questions that guided the interviews with library staff and staff of the employment agencies can be found in Appendix A.

In-depth interviews were used as data in order to obtain rich and detailed information on participants' point of view. Because the collaboration literature is lacking with regard to specific information on roles of libraries and community groups in collaboration, it was important to gather data on how these institutions worked together or why they didn't work together. Although much of the library literature offers strategies for partnering with the community, the translation and effect of these deceptively simple strategies into real-life situations is often missing from the

recommendations. Interviews were used to ascertain how one library and three employment agencies perceived and engaged in collaboration, whether their ideas of collaboration matched the literature, and how collaborations actually developed or why they didn't develop between these agencies.

Using Rubin and Rubin (1995) as a guide, interview questions were designed in order to obtain data that corresponded to the three research questions. In addition, interview questions were reviewed by a member of my thesis committee and subsequently revised. The questions elicited information about personal experience and perception of collaboration as well as both real and potential examples of collaboration from the participants.

The open-ended questions allowed for elaboration on the part of the interviewee, and salient themes emerged from the participants instead of being pre-defined by the researcher or the literature. Through subsequent analysis, the themes were coded and classified and then compared to themes found in the literature. In order to accurately compare the results of this study with the literature, the analysis considered the language and labels that the participants used to describe their view of and experience with collaboration as well as their actual engagement in collaborative relationships.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews with staff of libraries and the employment agencies were recorded on a digital audio recorder and later transcribed. When participants strayed into subjects

irrelevant to the thesis, such as an interviewee's daughter's choice of college, I did not transcribe that section of the interview. The transcripts did include fillers such as "like" and "you know," repetition of words, and pauses, but did not include length of pauses or hesitations in speech unless it was of a significant length. In this thesis, repetition of words and fillers are eliminated from interviewee's quotations for ease of legibility.

The interview was structured around the guiding interview questions listed in Appendix A. Questions were followed up with probes that clarified, expanded, and confirmed participant's responses. Occasionally, prompts were used to ensure that participants addressed certain topics, such as referring clients to resources or reasons for using or not using the library in the professional realm. Interview questions were also adjusted throughout the interview process to ensure that emergent themes were addressed.

Directly after I interviewed a participant, I wrote *Interview Notes* documenting the experience of visiting the organization, the feeling and perception I had of the interviewee, my own level of comfort, my interpretation of the interview, and any prior perceptions I had had of the agency or interviewee. These *Interview Notes* were intended to identify any researcher's bias as well as any noteworthy thoughts, actions, or ideas that pertained to the study. In addition, I reflected on the interview questions, possible similarities between interviews, possible adjustments to the interview questions to address emergent themes, and any missing information. If needed, I followed up the interview with an email to clarify or gather information.

Transcription occurred immediately after the interview in order to clarify or develop concepts or themes and identify areas that should be examined in more detail (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Based on recommendations from Yin (1994), Rubin & Rubin (1995), and Kvale (1995), I kept *Transcription Notes* which documented the time, date, length, and location of the interview as well as the reason the participant was chosen. They also included main points related to the research questions, concepts or themes, interesting or illustrative quotes, and possible links to previous studies.

Materials

I used materials from a variety of sources to supplement the data I collected in the interviews. I reviewed the recommendations from the Library Services and Technology Act grant which was used to make recommendations for the implementation of adult literacy services at MCL. It included a list of objectives and logic models for attaining those objectives. These recommendations were guiding the work of the ALC. Some participants gave me brochures, flyers, and other papers with information about their organization, branch, or programming. I followed up with several of the participants via email and used their responses to help clarify and supplement the data from the interviews. I also reviewed the organizations' and library's websites to gather information about mission statements, purpose, and context.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was an iterative and ongoing process that included coding, organizing data through data displays, pattern-matching, and developing a descriptive

framework. Coding was chosen as the primary method of analysis because it offered a "systematic overview of the scope of the data," aided in extracting themes, and helped make comparisons and connections between data (Spencer, Ritchie, & O'Connor, 2003, p. 203). Codes were then organized in preliminary descriptive displays in order to determine how the categories related to one another and the literature. Transcription data were revisited and subsequent iterations of data organization led to a final descriptive framework for the themes that had emerged from the interview process.

An initial list of codes was developed based on the literature as well as the concepts and themes identified in the *Transcription Notes*. Coding labels were modeled after examples found in Miles and Huberman (1994). Other codes emerged while rereading the transcripts and during the coding process. Many of the emergent codes were subcategories of the initial codes. I defined each code operationally, and this definition was occasionally adjusted to include a narrower or broader set of statements (see Appendix B).

Transcripts were coded using code abbreviations in the left margin. Information pertaining to the context of the individual or the organization were noted as "Context: Ind" and "Context: Org" in the right margin. Examples of context included job descriptions, number of years at the organization, work schedules, and personal or professional history. Brief *Coding Notes* were also written in the right margin. *Coding Notes* recorded the researcher's thoughts on the relationship between themes and participants and between participants. *Coding Notes* also marked passages or quotes

that related to emergent or repetitive themes, or examples that supported or contradicted the majority.

During the coding process, I also wrote *Theoretical Notes*, which consisted of my thoughts and ideas concerning prominent themes, possible patterns, and areas of focus. *Theoretical Notes* were continuously written and adapted throughout the process of analysis.

Once most of the transcripts were coded, I developed descriptive matrices that described the data using a variety of methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Initially, I designed visual representations of the data by research question. I organized the data into broad categories with contributing factors, and drew lines and arrows to represent how these factors and categories interacted with one another. These initial diagrams helped develop two prominent features of the data, the role of the individual and of the library as a unique collaborator.

An initial outline was developed of the themes found in the coding and visual representation process, including the current state of adult literacy programming and history of collaboration between the organizations in the study, the role of the individual in collaboration, and descriptions of what the library and the employment agencies wanted and were able to do in collaboration.

In order to better organize the data, I copied each transcript onto a different color of paper so that each statement's speaker could be instantly identified. The colored transcripts were cut up into slips of paper by code. The codes were then filed

together by category: context, individual, organization, collaboration, outreach, and perception. Using the grouping categories, I created spreadsheets that organized the data by participant and included quotes and *Theoretical Notes*. The seven spreadsheets depicted the following information:

1. Definition of collaboration, helpful and unhelpful factors
2. Ideal and real perceptions of what each participant can offer to and receive from a collaboration
3. Definitions and examples of collaboration in process and the snowball effect
4. Ideal and existing examples of proactive and reactive collaboration
5. Ideal and existing examples of collaboration
6. Individual factors, including goals, belief in collaboration, freedom to collaborate, and effort
7. Perception of the library, perception of employment agencies, and belief about the role of the library

In order to define the context for the reader and contain the study within the parameters of this particular case, two additional sections were developed. These sections described the prominent use of the word partnership instead of collaboration and the definition of outreach and its similarities to partnership. During the analysis process, I also kept *Research Notes* that linked any data to previous studies, noted implications of the data, and described possible avenues for further research. *Research Notes* helped inform the Discussion chapter of this study.

Summary

This case study relied on in-depth interviews to gather detailed information from thirteen participants regarding their perceptions of and role in collaboration. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using codes and iterative processes of organization,

visual displays of information, and descriptive frameworks of how categories related.

The results of the analysis and the discussion of the findings are presented in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter starts by addressing the first research question, which focuses on how the participants envisioned and enacted collaboration. A necessary component of how the participants viewed collaboration involves a discussion of the terminology used in this study as defined by the library and employment agency employees, who frequently used the words collaboration and partnership interchangeably. I will also explain how the responses from the participants differed from the collaboration literature. Related to research question one is the tendency for library staff in this study to use the term outreach as synonymous with partnership, which will also be discussed. Next, I will present the library's view of outreach/partnership/collaboration and the employment agencies' view of partnership/collaboration. The element of partnership/collaboration most frequently mentioned by the participants, the role of the individual, will be addressed in the following section and divided into two categories: the personal connection or relationship and the effort required for partnership to take place.

Several themes emerged from the interviews with regard to research questions two and three, which focus on how the participants perceive their own role as well as the role of the other organization in partnership or collaboration, particularly with regard to adult literacy programming. Framed by the factors that shape the library's

philosophy of outreach, or partnering, the final three sections of this chapter include the point of view of both the library employees and the employment agency employees. These three sections address the library's definition of an ideal partner, the library as a resource, and the library's goal of addressing community needs. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

Terminology In Use

Collaboration versus Partnership

It is important to note the distinction between collaboration and partnership. Collaboration is referred to as the formally structured interactive process in which stakeholders engage (Wood & Gray, 1991; see also *Definitions*, p. 6). Collaboration can include the prior steps of cooperation, informal relationships that share information but maintain separate resources and rewards, and coordination, formal relationships with some established planning and communication in which resources and rewards can be shared (Mattessich, et al., 2001).

During the interviews, I reminded the participants that I was interested in collaboration and asked participants to describe what collaboration meant to them. In their responses, two of the participants used the word collaboration as a label for interorganizational relationships while the remaining participants used the word partnership. Several of the participants used both terms interchangeably. Even though the participants described different levels of interactions between organizations that corresponded to all three categories in the literature, the participants did not delineate

which label corresponded to which type of interaction. In other words, the participants did not assign meaning to the terms in the same way as the literature.

Instead, the participants in this study used the terms partnership and collaboration to include the range of interactions available to two organizations working together. For example, when asked how they defined collaboration or partnership, twelve of the thirteen participants described a process of working together toward a shared goal or a process which is of mutual benefit to the two partnering agencies. This definition can cover a broad range of interactions between two organizations, including what the literature defines as cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. Table 3 organizes the terms in this study in relation to the meaning assigned to them by the literature and by the participants.

In general, the thirteen participants in this study discussed and were involved in partnerships rather than collaborations, as defined by the collaboration literature. They all gave illustrations of working relationships and out of the 86 examples given, 34 were referrals to another organization, 19 were one-time events, 20 were other types of partnerships, 8 were examples of coordination, and 5 were examples of collaboration, using these terms as they are defined in the collaboration literature.

Table 3: Terms Used to Define Relationships Between Organizations

TERM	As used in the library literature	As used in the collaboration literature	As used by the participants
Partnership	Includes full range of interactions between two organizations.	Not used.	Includes full range of interactions between two organizations.
Cooperation	Used infrequently; refers to the full range of interactions between two organizations.	Informal relationships that share information but maintain independence.	Not used.
Coordination	Not used.	Some formal methods of communication and shared resources, but independence maintained.	Not used.
Collaboration	Includes full range of interactions between two organizations.	Formally structured group that is formed with representatives from different organizations who engage in a long-term, committed process.	Used infrequently; refers to the full range of interactions between two organizations.
Outreach	Used rarely to refer to initial interactions between the library and community groups that do not know about the library.	Not used.	Includes full range of interactions between two organizations. Used only by library participants.

Of the collaborations, three were mentioned by Shannon, the Supervisor of Library Outreach, who had been at the library the longest; one was described by the ALC; and one was given by Isabella, the Literacy Services Coordinator, who confirmed a recent merge with another state organization. Because the details of this recent amalgamation were not given, I listed it as a collaboration, but it is possible that it was a mandated merger of the two organizations.

Library employees often referred to what the literature calls cooperation and coordination as partnership, and the majority of their examples would be considered cooperation in the collaboration literature. Library employees also considered collaboration (as defined in the collaboration literature) to be a form of partnership. The library employees' use of the word partnership corresponded with the library literature, including Johnson and Soule (1987), who stated that many libraries participate in a form of cooperation, or what they called partnership, different from the more rigidly defined collaboration which involves a structured relationship between organizations who shared responsibility.

The library's philosophy was expressed through examples of both real and ideal relationships, and the relationships they described included the following, which ranged from referrals, or partnerships, to formally-structured collaborations.

1. The library refers to a community group.
2. The library presents information about library services to a community group.
3. A community group uses a meeting room in the library.
4. The library is present at community events or meetings.

5. A community group presents their program at the library, using the library's space. The event is often publicized by both organizations.
6. A community group and the library present joint programming at the library (or rarely in the community).
7. A community group refers their clients to the library.
8. A community group and the library develop a formal, long-lasting partnership or what the literature called a collaboration.

Shannon, a library employee who has participated in a wide range of different types of partnerships, expressed a preference for less formal partnerships. She believed that a more structured partnership (considered collaboration in the collaboration literature) presented more difficulties, because it often entailed a long-term, formal relationship, involving many people that led to results only late in the process. Moose, the Deputy Director of Organization A, discussed how it would be easy to partner with the library because it was just a referral and there was no bureaucracy involved. Ali, an ESL instructor at Organization A, mentioned that short-term projects were better because there was a clear end date after which the organizations could reassess the value of the partnership. This preference for informal or smaller partnerships will be explored in *The Role of the Individual* below. Another factor in the various terminology used to describe a relationship between two organizations is the library's tendency to use the word outreach as synonymous with partnership. This will be described below in the section labeled *Outreach*.

This thesis will reflect the majority of participants' choice to use the word partnership to include the range of possible interorganizational relationships by adopting partnership to refer to what the collaboration literature identifies as

cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. If there is a need to distinguish a partnership or idea by identifying it as specifically a cooperation, coordination, or collaboration, then italics will be used in order to remind the reader that this term is being used as the collaboration literature defined it as opposed to how the participants defined it.

Table 4: Definition of Terms as Used in Thesis

TERM	As used in this thesis
Outreach	Includes full range of interactions between two organizations. Used only from the perspective of library employees.
Partnership	Includes full range of interactions between two organizations.
Collaboration	Includes full range of interactions between two organizations.
<i>Partnership</i>	Informal relationships that share information but maintain independence.
<i>Cooperation</i>	Informal relationships that share information but maintain independence.
<i>Coordination</i>	Some formal methods of communication and shared resources, but independence maintained.
<i>Collaboration</i>	Formally structured group that is formed with representatives from different organizations who engage in a long-term, committed process.

Outreach

Five of the six library employees in this study used the term outreach as symbolic of or interchangeable with partnership. The sixth library employee, the ALC, didn't use the term outreach, but instead used the words partnership and collaboration interchangeably. Because her background is in education, this is the first time the ALC has worked in a library, and she had been employed at MCL for one year at the time of this study.

Although outreach had several connotations, it embodied an outward gaze, a look to the community for information, and a method of performing recruitment and

increasing patronage. Shannon, the Supervisor of Library Outreach, said that the traditional definition of outreach was to bring “the library to people who can’t get to the library,” including the elderly, homebound patrons, and those in jails. Historically, the library also went to rural areas with their services. The Outreach Department at MCL performed these services, delivering books to patrons outside the library. In other words, they performed outreach in the traditional manner, serving those who were unable to access the library on their own.

However, Shannon also indicated that there was another way library staff thought about outreach. She suggested that branch librarians often thought of outreach as marketing, “reaching out to their neighborhood and their community to get people to use, to come in to the library.” This idea was confirmed by the staff at Branch A and Branch B, who said that outreach entailed an introduction to library services to people who did not already use the library. They often attended neighborhood association meetings and community events such as fairs and open houses where they presented library services to the public. Outreach also included partnering with community groups and providing story times or talks outside of the library as well as offering space and publicity for an organization’s events in the library. Outreach and partnership reflected the library’s goal of increasing patronage and improving the relevance and attendance of their programming, a seemingly never-ending goal even in a system as well-used as MCL.

Five library participants discussed outreach when responding to my questions about partnership, because outreach was how they initiated partnerships with their community. Outreach was how the library reached out to its community through a presence at community events, one-on-one meetings with community members, or fliers sent to community organizations. The goals of outreach were to alert people to the presence of the library, introduce them to library services, and increase the number of people using the library. The library sought community partners for similar reasons, believing that partnerships brought increased exposure to the library. Partnerships included referrals, community groups using space in the library, the library participating in community events, or the library sharing responsibility with a community group to produce a series of events.

I initially coded statements on outreach separately from those on partnership but found they were so closely related that they could be grouped together. Because outreach and partnership were so strongly tied, defined by similar goals and mentioned interchangeably by the library participants when describing the library's relationships with the community, this thesis will include library outreach in the idea of partnership.

The following section summarizes the view of outreach or partnership held by the participants in this study. First, I will discuss the role of outreach or partnership from the perspective of the library employees, and then I will discuss the role of partnership from the perspective of the employment agency employees.

Library View of Outreach/Partnership

MCL's mission and philosophy stated that the library will “anticipate and respond to community interests and needs,” including a regular review of the community profile, seeking and responding to public input, investigating and suggesting services and programs, and representing the library at community events and organizations (MCL, 2009, para. IV). Although the library philosophy reflected its desire to be present at community events and seek public input, it is not clear what the official library stance was on outreach or partnership. Daniel, a branch supervisor, thought that there was a system-wide commitment to outreach but not a structured plan. Javier, the Manager at Branch A, and Shannon, the Supervisor of Library Outreach, agreed that there was no overall philosophy about outreach. Even without an official library policy, all of the library participants discussed the importance of outreach and partnering with the community. Some of the library staff described other branch managers and supervisors who did not prioritize outreach usually because other job duties took up most of their time. However, all of the library employees in this study emphasized the importance of partnering with the community even when other job responsibilities demanded all of their work time.

Depending on the individual, the goal of outreach varied. At Branch A, the Manager wanted to find organizations that were working with underserved populations and connect to them in order to see how they could work together. By partnering with organizations that were already working with a specific population, he believed he

would be able to reach out to that population more quickly and easily. His goal was to bring hard-to-reach populations into the library and to increase programming in house. At Branch B, the supervisor wanted to increase services outside the branch through contact with the community. Three of the four library employees who worked at the branches also identified the added benefit to outreach of gathering information about community needs in order to better serve the public.

The ALC described her outreach goals slightly differently. She believed that the library wanted her to “support programs in the community so they [the community] would feel like the library was a partner instead of just a place to go.” When asked to elaborate on what it would look like if the library were a partner, the ALC described the knowledge creation aspect of partnership (described in *Goals of Collaboration*, p. 13). In other words, she was interested in crafting something that was less about the creators and more about the creation. She wanted her partners to help her enrich the program, help her make good decisions, and to participate in strengthening the community in order to increase literacy levels. She hoped to be able to call and ask for information, assistance, and suggestions from her partners. For her, partnership was a way of giving and receiving information and ideas.

In addition, she hoped to determine what the needs in the community were by engaging with the public and asking for feedback and information. Her original goal was to meet people, but then it shifted to a combined goal of meeting people and bringing them knowledge of library resources and materials. Her goal shifted again to building

bridges between the library and the community. She defined the term "building bridges" as the creation of a relationship that connected the library to the community. She wanted this partnership to foster other relationships between the library and the community as well as between different community groups. In this way, the library was connected to the community but was also a connector for other organizations in the community.

The library employees that I interviewed linked the idea of outreach with forming partnerships. When asked about outreach, they discussed community partners, presentations that they gave to the community, and programs in the library that were led by community groups. They described themselves as the hub of a wheel with spokes to different parts of the community, the builder of bridges, or the weaver of a web, and they sometimes referred to building partnerships as a personal connection to one community member that snowballed into connections with other community members.

Although the library employees each explained the purpose of the library slightly differently, when asked about partnerships or outreach, they all described the process of reaching out to those who did not already know about the library. Shannon confirmed that MCL is a broad service organization that "enriches lives by fostering diverse opportunities for all people to read, learn and connect" (MCL, 2009, Introduction), but some of the library participants described the library's mission as helping potential patrons learn to love reading, linking patrons with services, or serving as a community space.

However, all of the library staff mentioned that the goal of the library was to reach out to those who did not already know about the library. According to the library participants, this was the true mission of the library and as such, it was a mission that could never be completed. It was an ongoing process, even though “you couldn’t really ask for a whole lot more than we have in terms of public [interest], but we are always asking for more . . . because . . . there’s a whole group of people who don’t think of the library.” Even though daily operations consumed most or all of the work hours in a day, all of the library participants argued that outreach was important because of the existence of people in the community who did not know about or use the services the library provided. The goal was to reach the people who didn’t already use or think of the library as a resource, and the library committed to this goal by seeking partnerships with the community.

Employment Agencies View of Partnership

The employment agency staff all believed in the benefits of collaboration, and most of them described ways in which their organization partnered with another agency, mostly as a referral. None of them expressed an organizational philosophy about partnering. Many of the partnership examples they gave corresponded with linking clients to employment, which is connected to the mission of their organizations. In some cases, partnerships were a method of recruiting additional clients for their organization.

These agencies did not look to the library for help with the educational goals of their clients, and they did not send their clients to the library to practice or improve their job search skills. They were guided by the mission of their organization, which was to find their clients employment, and the library was not a likely potential employer for their clients. In addition, the employment agencies did not need a partner to duplicate the services the agencies already provided, such as providing assistance with job search.

For example, neither Marie, the Director of Economic and Workforce Development of Organization B, nor Moose, the Deputy Director of Organization A, considered the library a partner for building job skills in their clients, primarily because their own agency's focus was improving these skills in their clients. Both of these employees mentioned that maximizing resources was the goal of partnership, explaining that this meant not duplicating what they were already doing. When I asked Marie about how her organization approaches work with clients who may want or need their GED to obtain a job, she explained that services like ABE or GED were secondary services and therefore, not prioritized as much as activities that helped build job or life skills. Moose, the Deputy Director of Organization A, told me that if clients wanted or needed to obtain their GED, they would refer them to a partnering agency, and he named several local agencies but did not include the library.

Continuing clients' education or helping them obtain a GED was considered a secondary need of their clients. The need for improving a client's education was not a common area of discussion within the employment agency staff. Most of the discussion

that centered around continuing education resulted from a prompt from me during the interview. Some of the employment agency staff believed that improving education was important, but they explained to me that the organization did not see it as a priority, the client did not see it as a priority, or that they believed education was secondary to finding employment.

At Organization B, the three employees that participated in this study listed partnerships with subcontractors as their primary form of interorganizational collaboration. Another prominent partnership was described as a mutually beneficial arrangement with an organization that needed to complete a specific task. The clients at Organization B would complete this task as a method of learning about job skills. Susan Brown, the part-time ABE/GED Instructor, mentioned that when she was working more than six hours per week, she would take her students to the library or partner with her colleagues in a skills exchange. However, now that she and one other instructor split a twelve-hour work week, she no longer has multiple colleagues with whom she can partner, and she did not feel as if she had time to take her students to the library.

At Organization A, partnerships included presentations at other institutions with the goals of job-skills training or recruiting more clients as well as referrals to organizations such as staffing agencies that provided jobs to clients. Ali, the ESL Instructor, referred her students to the library and to other literacy organizations and ESL classes. Carrie and Moose often used 211, a community referral service, for referring clients to other resources.

Isabella, the Literacy Services Coordinator at Organization C, referred her clients to other resources in the community and also mentioned a variety of grants and contracts as forms of partnerships. Because she had already been in contact with the ALC, she also used the ALC as a source of information for her clients.

Employment agency staff recognized the potential benefits of partnership such as maximizing resources, creating new knowledge, and working together to benefit the client. However, many of them also described the challenges to partnership. Limited staffing and funds was listed as a barrier to partnership by Lucas, Ali, and Marie. Moose and Ali described how important it was that the partnership be "a good fit," meaning that it corresponded with the goals and operation of their organization.

When asked what they would like to receive from a potential partnership with the library, two employment agency staff mentioned guaranteed attendees at a presentation and computers they could use for a class or training. Employment agency staff also offered the following ideas for partnership:

- help with the administration of a class
- help training clients
- information about how to overcome the barriers to navigating the library
- access to library curricula
- one-on-one tutoring
- a place to post the organization's brochure

The above list does not include examples of partnership in which the library already engaged such as giving presentations at an organization or offering tours.

It is important to explain that most of the proposals listed above were given in response to an interview question specifically seeking this information and were not initiated by the participants. Partnering with the library was not part of their experience (except for Isabella) and envisioning a partnership with the library was not prevalent in their discussions of partnership.

Role of the Individual

Before addressing the challenges and advantages of partnerships with the library, I will describe two factors that emerged from the participants' responses as prominent aspects of partnership: personal connection or relationship and the effort required for partnership. Because participants frequently referred to these two themes, it was clear that they would play a role in how the library partnered with the community. Both of these themes correspond to the role that an individual plays in a partnership.

The participants in this study were asked to describe how partnerships started, the factors involved in partnership, and their definition of partnership. I also asked participants to describe the challenges and advantages of partnership, as well as what they would like from a partnership and what they could offer to it. Participants often described past experiences with partnership, both personal and work-related, as a way of relating their ideas about partnership. They discussed many different types of partnerships, including formal *collaborations*, short-term projects, sharing of resources, referrals, and contractual relationships. Through these examples of partnerships that

did and did not include the library as well as generic definitions of partnerships, participants described factors that were extremely similar to the factors included in Mattessich, et al. (2001). These factors included common goals that benefit the client, sharing resources, working together, supporting one another, and open communication and flexibility.

However, nine of the thirteen participants also referred to the role of the individual when they described a partnership in which they had participated. Though participants did not mention the role of the individual when directly asked to define the elements of partnership, they initiated discussion of this topic during other parts of the interview. For example, these nine participants often referred to partnerships as a discussion or series of interactions with person X from Organization Y instead of a discussion with Organization Y. Their choice of words signified that they thought of the relationship as a partnership they had with one person, possibly as a representative of the organization, instead of with the organization.

For Ali, an ESL Instructor at Organization A, partnership was something she pursued as an individual because of her belief in it and not because her organization wanted her to seek out partnerships. Susan, a part-time ABE/GED Instructor at Organization B, engaged extensively in partnership with her co-worker and occasionally with friends, but did not seek out partnership at an organizational level. The ALC and the other library employees described partnerships that evolved because of a relationship between themselves and one other person at another institution. Although the two

individuals were partnering as representatives of their institutions, the process was often a series of communication between two people.

Ryan, the Library Assistant at Branch B, described what he thought was possibly his most successful partnership as a series of ten family nights at the library that stemmed from a smaller program he had developed with three members of the community organization. Even the preliminary smaller program had arisen from an initial introduction and awareness of each other, which then led to a series of meetings that culminated with a jointly presented event. Daniel and Sarah confirmed that once a community group had a contact person at the library, or an individual with whom they had some kind of relationship, that group would think to ask the individual about potential partnerships or programming. The library's analogy of building a web of contacts is congruent with this idea of starting small, as one contact led to another or as one contact evolved into a partnership.

Particularly for *partnerships*, as opposed to *collaborations*, the role of the individual held great importance as many participants described their personal relationship with one other individual as the reason for a partnership or as the partnership itself. When participants talked about *collaborations*, even though they might have used the term partnership to refer to these organizational *collaborations*, the role of the individual was less pronounced. For example, when Shannon, the Supervisor of Library Outreach, described a *collaboration* she was involved in which included the library and a downtown agency that helped the homeless, she referred to

it as a partnership with the organization, not with an individual from that organization. Similarly, Javier and Daniel, both library supervisors, told me about *collaborations* with organizations that involved multiple events, and they did not refer to specific individuals at those organizations.

The next two sections explore the two dimensions of the role the individual played in partnership as described by the participants in this study: the personal connection and the effort required for partnership.

Personal Connection or Relationship

The personal connection was mentioned by both library and employment agency employees, and the context of their remarks will be described in this section. Five of the six library staff discussed the importance of giving members of the community a face and a name that they could associate with the library. They believed that other referrals, participation in community events, and increased use of the library could develop from a connection with an individual who worked outside of the library. In addition, two of the employment agency employees specifically asked about the possibility of a personal contact at the library in order to find out about library resources and identify any potential for partnership.

Sarah, a Library Assistant (LA) working temporarily in outreach, noted that personal contact was an important aspect of her job, introducing herself to people in the community and giving them a face and a name to access when they needed information. Daniel, the Supervisor of Branch B, described why he attended community

meetings, observing that “if they [the community group] need me for something or if they need the branch for something, they have a face and a name recognition” and therefore, are more apt to approach the library with their needs and ideas. The ALC called her partnership with Organization C successful because of her ability to call up her contact person and exchange information.

Both the ALC and Ryan spoke about the connection they had with individuals in partnering organizations. In addition, Lucas, a Non Native Employment Training Instructor at Organization B, believed that some of the partnerships that existed in his department were because of personal connections that his colleagues brought with them to the workplace.

The ALC described one of her successful partnerships as making this initial “connection and a partnership develops just like a friendship, a relationship, you know, a collegiality between people who work together, and it builds, and you do each other favors.” Isabella, the Literacy Services Coordinator at Organization C, increased her organization's use of the library as a resource based on interactions with the ALC, and when asked about her partnership with the library, she consistently referred to her relationship with the ALC instead of with the library.

Ryan also told me about a personal relationship he had forged with some of his contacts at a partnering community group, explaining that their relationship had developed into a friendship outside of work as well. He named this particular

partnership as one of his most successful, and when asked how big a role the personal relationship played, Ryan responded that

As long as you're interacting with somebody who is dedicated, the interpersonal stuff I think is great and it might be somewhat serendipitous. I think you can definitely reach heights that you wouldn't. That said, I think you can still do a great job with people who are just dedicated to their work.

The ALC identified the risk in developing a partnership based primarily on a relationship between two people. When questioned about how much her successful partnerships were based on the relationship she had with another individual, the ALC responded that she worried about that quite a bit. She said:

I think that a lot of what's happened this year has been on personal connection, but one of my goals for next year would be to get the systems in place so that they're [the partnerships and the results of the partnerships] so valuable, they're no longer associated with [me].

The ALC said she is cautious about injecting too much of herself into a partnership, because she wants the relationship or program to last beyond her involvement in it.

Susan, a part-time ABE/GED Instructor at Organization B, acknowledged the support she received from her partnership with her co-worker. She explained that "it's nice because you have someone who understands what you're saying, who's coming from the same place and then kind of understands, and it just keeps us so there's more continuity in the program." Their partnership seemed to help them perform better, as

Susan mentioned that she and her partner discussed their work on a daily basis in order to communicate about their students. Their partnership consisted of talking on the phone for one hour per day four times per week when they worked only three hours per day two times per week. When asked whether it felt like extra work, Susan replied, "It's not really a burden. Well, for one thing, we like each other."

The Supervisor of Library Outreach also mentioned that she preferred smaller, more manageable partnerships, stating that "small is beautiful" in referring to the size of a partnership. She believed that building a web of connections one person at a time was much more timely and effective than building a large, multi-person, expensive partnership that took years to come to fruition. She explained that the reason the smaller partnerships worked better was because of a sense of relationship and connection. Moose, the Deputy Director of Organization A, also preferred simpler, less complicated relationships that he described as referrals. Referrals could happen between individuals or between organizations.

Carrie, a Job Search Skills Instructor at Organization A, said that she wanted a contact person at the library so that she knew where to get the information she needed. Even though the library posted its resources and classes on the web, it was important for her to have someone to contact in order to clarify any questions she had. She also defined partnership as involving face to face contact on a regular basis, although she did not specify whether that would be with one individual or many. Marie, the Director of Economic and Workforce Development, also mentioned that she would love to have

someone from the library come to her organization and give a presentation about what the library provided.

Some of the participants explicitly described how personal contact or a personal connection was part of the process of building partnerships. Shannon interpreted the process as grassroots, visiting one agency today and another agency tomorrow, making personal contact with potential partners who then communicated with their colleagues and other potential partners, and in this way, the information spread. Some employment agency employees felt that smaller, successful partnerships often lead to larger, more complicated partnerships if the initial interaction was positive. This was confirmed by several participants who had experienced a successful partnership that evolved from a smaller, more personal, initial contact. For example, Ali's meeting with one person at another organization developed into a collaborative effort to provide ESL classes at that organization. For Organization A, successful partnerships with one correctional facility led them to seek out partnerships with other correctional facilities.

The ALC admitted that one area in which she did not have a set plan was in connecting the library with the community, and that "in lieu of having a really good idea or goal of that is really going out almost one by one." In a follow-up email, the ALC noted that the one-on-one process brought about better results than some other methods such as sending out an electronic flier. Isabella, the Literacy Services Coordinator at Organization C, was asked what she thought about the difference between marketing by speaking to one person at a time and marketing on a broad scale.

She answered with a metaphor, describing the difference between dropping a hook and casting a net. She believed it was much more effective and appropriate to drop a hook, using “targeted communication with people that have the most interaction with people needing [literacy] assistance.” Her response implied a process that existed between specific individuals.

The role of personal connection or relationships was mentioned by the majority of the participants in this study when discussing partnerships. Several participants believed that individual relationships could lead to other connections, referrals, extended partnerships, or access to information. Two of the participants stated that a personal connection was easier to manage and more effective than a more complicated partnership that involved numerous people. Four of the participants described how they used a personal contact to quickly obtain information that they needed, and they called this type of interaction a partnership. The personal connection is one aspect of the role the individual plays in partnership. Next, I will discuss how an individual's effort relates to his/her participation in partnership.

Effort Required for Partnership

After conducting the first four interviews, I was struck by the additional effort that three of these four participants suggested they put toward building partnerships and how that effort translated into an ability to initiate and maintain a partnership. An individual's effort, which I defined as performing work-related actions outside of working hours or as seeking additions and alternatives to what was already present in

order to benefit the client, was mentioned by eight of the participants in this study, who discussed how effort was required for pursuing partnerships.

An individual was often the initiator of a partnership, as an individual can look for, identify, or be presented with a need in the community, and one of the ways that an individual can respond to that need is through partnership. How individuals responded to a need often depended on how much effort they were willing to put toward their response to that need. For example, many participants mentioned the need for partnerships or additional resources, but stated that there was not sufficient time, staffing, or resources to pursue these methods of meeting a need. Some of the participants also identified other factors which helped or hindered the building of partnerships, such as organizational goals, funding, and position at the organization, but eight of the participants mentioned that some type of additional effort was necessary for partnerships, and they added that a personal interest or passion often contributed to that effort.

As Lucas, a Non Native Employment Training Instructor, stated, people go “out of their way to do something with another agency,” and being involved in another organization takes “a level of commitment that’s really pretty high.” He added that people who work with other organizations probably want to get some personal satisfaction out of their work, and their personal interest is an important factor in their motivation to expend the extra effort that it takes to make and maintain connections.

Ali, an ESL Instructor at Organization A, seemed to be constantly seeking ways to better serve her clients and the community. She stated that "as an ESL teacher, you want to see people served and you want to see them served well," and her process reflected her philosophy. Ali spent extra time and effort trying to meet the needs she saw in the community, and not just in the clients at her own organization. Recognizing that the effort required to meet those needs would have to be in addition to her regular work week and that it may add stress to her job, Ali still felt as if it didn't hurt to do more.

For example, she volunteered to teach at a housing development after they approached her organization about a possible partnership. Initially, the partnership was not feasible between the two organizations, but Ali went to a meeting at the housing development several months later because of her personal interest in helping them. She realized that they needed an ESL instructor to teach a class once per week, and she decided that she could fill the role of instructor. After revisiting the idea with her organization, she was able to perform the duties of instructor as a representative of her organization. However, teaching this class was an added responsibility to her job.

Susan believed in the role of education in helping people overcome poverty and expended effort to meet the educational needs of her clients. Susan's job could be very straightforward if she worked only the two hours per day that she was scheduled, but she and her colleague believed that continuity in their program was maintained by spending one hour each work day speaking to each other on the phone and sharing

information about their students. Although Susan did not see this extra time as a burden because she perceived it as useful, and she appreciated that she could talk to someone who understood her work, it still required effort that she expended to better serve her clients.

Daniel, the Supervisor of Branch B, believed that outreach was about marketing to potential patrons and bringing people into the library who were previously unaware of library services. Similar to other library employees, Daniel linked outreach to an implicit component of the mission of the library and then linked outreach to partnerships. He believed that although partnerships took more time at the beginning of the process, they could help in saving time later. He explained that

I see outreach as getting the people in who don't know about the library. But it does add to our use and our use is skyrocketing and we can hardly control it as it is so it's sort of a hard thing. Maybe partnerships could actually help us too, though.

Daniel acknowledged that it did take more time to do outreach and that the amount of effort one spent on outreach depended on one's personal interest in it. He argued that there was always more that could be done. However, he also observed that people could be very dedicated to their job and the services the library provided, but they might not think that they needed to perform outreach.

Shannon, the Supervisor of Library Outreach, believed that most people who worked in the library had a passion for their work, and they received satisfaction from

fulfilling what she labeled "a great mission." She thought that personal investment in the library philosophy might translate into effort spent on community partnerships. As with the other library staff, Shannon admitted that outreach could be difficult sometimes, particularly because MCL was already serving so many people, but that it was part of the library's mission to serve as many people as possible.

Sarah, a Temporary Librarian at Branch A, also believed in the purpose of the library and the importance of what the library did as a service organization. She declared that she talked up the library anytime she could, whether she was on the clock or not. A large part of what the library did as a partner was refer patrons to other organizations and resources, and Sarah discussed the challenge of resource management. She described how she had to take extra time to familiarize herself with new resources or she wouldn't remember what they were when the time came to refer to them.

Ryan, a Bilingual Library Assistant, was a convert to the library, and he revealed that it was not for a love of reading. Ryan worked at Branch B where the staff had developed personal relationships with many of the patrons. He believed that outreach was "pretty fundamental," but mentioned that it was difficult because he felt his branch was understaffed. He explained to me that they had to be selective about the type of outreach or partnership in which they engaged, because it was important to not waste time and resources. The library staff liked to have a guaranteed number of participants at an outreach event or know that the outreach would lead to increased patronage or

other partnerships. One way in which Ryan expended effort in his job was by calling specific families and urging them to attend events that he thought would benefit them. He also mentioned that the library had opened after hours in order to help people improve their computer skills, assistance that was not possible when the library was open, because Branch B did not have a dedicated computer lab.

The ALC presented a slightly different view of the effort that she expended to reach out to members of the community and create partnerships. She emphasized that her job was the perfect fit for her because it was meaningful for her to be able to serve people. She explained that she enjoyed meeting new people as part of the goals for her new job, working to create relationships with people and organizations in the community. Similar to Susan, she said that the effort she spent on building partnerships did not feel like a burden because of her belief in her work and because she was used to forming relationships with others in order to reach her professional goals. In addition, part of the ALC's job was to meet with community organizations, so she was able to pursue partnerships within the context of her work and presumably, within working hours.

The ALC remarked that her job description at MCL was so extensive that she knew she would not be able to accomplish all of it alone. However, because of her prior experience, she also knew that she could "figure out how to get it all done, which means that [she didn't] do all of it." The relationships that she formed were part of a web she built to support her as she continued in her job. She said that she spent some time and

energy maintaining these relationships and helping her partners as needed, but she explained that it didn't feel like effort because of her belief in her job. She said "I'm here because I believe in the work, so if I work with an organization and they need something and I can bend, it's really easy for me to bend." Bending was an example of effort needed to maintain a relationship, but the ALC looked at it as similar to making a deposit into a bank account. Once she had invested effort into giving time, materials, or knowledge to a partner, she had essentially made a deposit to their partnership, and she could then depend on that partner to reciprocate the effort at a later time, withdrawing his or her help as needed.

The ALC gave an example of what it was like to make use of her bank account when she described a more formal relationship that she was in the process of developing. She said that it was successful because

We've worked well together in the past, and it's kind of, it's sticky, because she has to go through all kinds of approval, not only to be a GED tester, which she's already done, but beyond that, she has to go to her department heads, and she's working with a [specific department], which is I think more difficult in some ways, to get things passed through, so it has to be really clear on paper. And I'm not sure that we would have, either one of us, considered spending the time on it if we hadn't had some collaborations before that were easy and helpful.

The ALC used words such as "sticky," "difficult," and "spending the time" to describe the effort required for this more formally structured partnership. She observed that prior

successes were a key factor in their willingness to expend effort on this more complicated partnership.

Interviewees listed several motivators that led them to expend effort on partnerships. Lucas felt that personal satisfaction in meeting the needs of the client was an important motivator in applying effort. Ali wanted to serve the community as well as the clients at her job and spent time beyond her working hours developing partnerships with community organizations. Susan felt that her work benefitted from the extra time she spent communicating with her colleague, and therefore, this extra time did not feel like a burden. Daniel believed that outreach was important but time-consuming. He also confirmed that, in his experience, a personal interest in outreach contributed to one spending effort on outreach. Shannon believed that many library employees exceeded their job requirements out of a belief in the mission of the organization.

Sarah spent extra time talking about the library and familiarizing herself with resources so that she could refer patrons to them later. Ryan felt that outreach was important but difficult because of challenges such as a lack of staff, time, or resources. However, he performed outreach, or the building of partnerships, when he could target it to a specific purpose or organization that he knew was effective. The ALC described the effort she put into partnerships as similar to depositing money into a bank account. Because of her personal belief in the mission of her department and organization, she was able to bend in order to help out some of her partners. However, she also knew

that her actions would enable her to ask for help or effort from her counterparts at a later time, essentially withdrawing effort after having made deposits to the partnership.

The previous section discussed the two aspects of the role of the individual in forming partnerships: the personal connection/relationship and effort. Nine of the thirteen participants in this study acknowledged the personal connection or relationship either by their choice of words when referring to another individual instead of an organization with whom they were in partnership or by their description of the personal connection as useful or essential to building partnerships. In addition, eight of the participants discussed the effort that they expended or thought necessary to expend in order to create and maintain partnerships.

The next three sections of this chapter correspond to the three factors that shaped the process of partnering with the library. Analysis of the library as a partner was initially divided into two categories: the library's role and perceptions, and the employment agencies' role and perceptions. However, it was clear that the library and the employment agencies discussed the same themes but from different sides of the coin. Therefore, the analysis was restructured into the themes that arose during the data analysis process, and each theme was explored from the perspective of the library and the employment agency employees. These themes were the library's ideal partner, the library as a resource, and the library responding to community needs.

The Library's Ideal Partner

The nature of the library's informal mission, to be a presence in the community, to learn about the community's needs, and "to serve everyone as much as we possibly can," created an environment in which the library valued outreach and partnering with the community. It was part of the library's mission to engage with the community since so many of their new patrons come from partnerships with community groups. The library employees in this study stated that they had independence in their choice of partners, because they didn't have to receive permission to serve a particular group or patron or to partner with a particular group or patron. Shannon described her outreach department as "fairly independent and if we see a group that we want to serve . . . we just make those decisions," and this philosophy was reflected by Javier and Daniel, managers of Branch A and Branch B.

When asked what they could offer to a partnership, five of the six library employees that I interviewed responded with the following items: space, materials, publicity, accessibility, skilled staff, and a connection to patrons. The sixth library employee, the ALC, said that she could offer information about the library and about resources that would be helpful to community organizations. The five library employees' goals in partnership included promoting library programming, bringing people to the library, and engaging with a target population through an organization that already served that group. Because the library was not tied to accountability measures such as testing or ensuring that their patrons fulfilled specific goals, and because the library's

informal mission included partnering, the library employees experienced a lack of restrictions that was different from what the employment agency employees experienced with regard to seeking partnerships. The employment agency employees were often constrained by their budget, ensuring that a certain number of their clients were employed by a certain date, or by a required accountability to their related or funding organizations.

Although the library initially appeared to the researcher to be able to offer a great deal to a partnership and expect little in return, this study found that five of the library employees in this study had potentially restrictive opinions about the types of partnerships they wanted. As with many organizations, the easier the partnership, the more likely the library was to engage with the community partner. In terms of potential community partners, the library employees wanted consistency, reliable and established programs, established constituents, and they wanted to know a fair bit about the resource, group, or program in order to put their name behind it. Ali, an ESL Instructor, similarly described the goals of her own organization (A), "We need to make sure an idea's going to fly before we invest a lot of human power into it." In addition, four of the six library employees expressed a preference for smaller *partnerships* instead of more formal *collaborations*. They argued that smaller partnerships began more smoothly, came to fruition more quickly, and were managed more simply.

I will first discuss what the library employees reported they could offer to a partnership, and then I will describe their definitions of an ideal partner. The library

staff's preference for smaller partnerships will also be addressed. This section will end with a discussion of how the ALC differed from other library participants in terms of her goals for partnership.

All of the library employees in this study responded quickly to my question about what the library can offer to a partnership with a community group. Sarah, a Temporary Librarian in charge of adult outreach, talked about the variety of ways in which the library can serve a community group, including promotion of the group's goals or programming as well as tours to new patrons, concluding that "there isn't much we can't do." Sarah had only been at her position for four months, so she was new to outreach and mentioned that she hadn't had time "to get a sense of what else is out there. I was mostly responding to, let's try this and this and contact these people or these people."

Ryan, a Bilingual Library Assistant with experience in adult outreach, discussed a unique offering available at Branch B, which was a personal connection to families that their staff had developed, allowing them to personally recruit attendees for community programming at the library. Daniel, the Supervisor of Branch B, and the ALC mentioned that the library could offer resources, skilled staff, knowledge of the library system, and an ability to find resources in the community. Shannon, the Supervisor of Library Outreach, listed space and materials as offerings the library could provide, and Javier, the Manager of Branch A, stated that the library could offer a partnership

Space, a commitment to promotion, we can create fliers, we have a PR department that's great, we can get their name out with ours, reliability, they know that we're going to be there. Also, if they need equipment . . . we could provide equipment. At times, we could provide library involvement, say if they want to do their tour. If they want to get set up in that way, we're there for that. If they need an aid, if we need more involvement, like the Vietnamese classes for the first six months, I made sure my Vietnamese librarian was available in there and now it's to the point that they're so used to coming that it's pretty much, but yeah, staff, part of my staff involved. So they have that commitment.

Reading the above statements about the library reinforced my initial impression that the library was an ideal partner because of its ability to offer so much and ask only for increased participation in the library in return. However, I found that the data illuminated more limitations than freedoms with regard to the type of partner or partnership that the library wanted. Sarah's description of "there isn't much we can't do" was contradicted by the ALC, Daniel, and Shannon. As the ALC revealed, "we can't actually do a lot of things that people want." Daniel also mentioned that one of the challenges to partnering with the community is that "they don't understand what we can't do." Even though Shannon stated that everyone wanted to partner with the library, she also admitted that there could be a gulf between what the community wanted and what the library was able to do.

Javier's lengthy description of all the offerings that the library could provide was tempered by the statement "at times, we could provide library involvement," indicating that the involvement of his staff was not something he could consistently offer. He first listed several items that already existed at the library, such as space, fliers, and equipment that the library owned. It seemed that an additional offering could include the involvement of his staff, but it was not the first thing that he mentioned. He explained that there was no cost to his branch to have organizations in the space, and the organization brought people into the library, something the library wanted.

Daniel confirmed that providing space and making a flier for a community group was not "a huge logistical problem." Both Javier and Daniel indicated that a partnership became more difficult and complicated when a community partner wanted more from the library than just space and publicity. A common example of partnership given by the library staff in this study was a partnership where a community group brought an established constituency and program into the library while the library provided the space, materials, and publicity for the program.

Four of the library employees agreed that it was important to work with a consistent and reliable organization. The ALC, who is not a librarian by trade, mentioned that the library was concerned with sustainable programming, which sometimes took more time to develop and required an extensive commitment from all parties involved. Sustainable programming meant that a program would endure over time. In order to

provide successful, sustainable programming, the library needed program providers (partners) to be reliable and consistent.

Three of the library employees gave examples of the types of partners that were not as consistent or reliable as they would like. Javier found it difficult to work with non-profits because of high turnover of staff, which he believed led to difficult communication, unstable funding, and a tendency to try to do more than they could handle. Ryan concurred that some organizations are hard to work with because they have funding only at certain times. Shannon also mentioned that partnerships often stop because funding stops. Marie, from Organization B, mirrored these opinions when she discussed the difficulty of collaborating with a small business, because even though they have "all good intention and effort . . . and maybe they start out doing great . . . then there'll be staff changes, management changes, budget reductions . . . and they're not able to comply with what we need."

Ryan and Javier also sought established programs or organizations so that the joint effort was more likely to succeed. Given the library's limited staff and resources, Ryan suggested that it was important to know that the community partner or event would attract enough participants to make the event worthwhile. Similarly, the library was sometimes invited to an event that was poorly attended, rendering the return not worth the library's effort. He argued that experience and a prior relationship with the community group helped the library to make better choices about outreach.

Javier wanted to know that the group was reliable so there would be no doubts about their holding up their end of the partnership (usually the administration of a program). He stated that "I think we're looking for organizations to partner with that are already doing the services in those communities and bringing them into the library." He believed that one way to obtain good programming was to engage with a community group that was already trained to offer that type of programming. Javier also mentioned that it was important to partner with reliable organizations because he was putting the library's name behind it. He believed that if "people are coming into the library expecting a program, and if they're not getting it, they're not going to look at that program or that group, they're going to look at the library saying what's going on."

Another of the library staff's goals in partnering with the community involved the constituents of the partnering organization. Three of the library employees mentioned that they wanted the partnering organization to bring people to the library, particularly people that did not normally use the library. As mentioned previously, the goal that permeated the library's actions was to increase the number of people who knew about and used the library. Javier emphasized that it's hard to break into new communities, and the task was made easier by working with organizations that already engaged with the target community. He explained that when he and his staff worked with organizations that already had an audience, they didn't have to work to recruit the audience, they had to work only on the partnership with the organization.

Sarah realized that one benefit of connecting to neighborhood associations or community organizations was that the library then had a set, relevant group to whom they could advertise their services and programs. Ryan remarked that if a community group already had a target audience, then it could help the library develop "a really close and substantial relationship with [that] community." He described how beneficial it was to partner with social service and education providers in the community, because they brought people to the library.

Ali, Moose, and Carrie, all employees of Organization A, described similar desires with regard to potential partnering organizations in the community. They discussed reliability, established programs, and links to a target population. They did not mention these factors with regard to the library, because a partnership with the library was not part of what they did. For example, Ali, an ESL Instructor, discussed her wish for a partnering organization to guarantee students, because she could then concentrate on contributing the resources she already had, namely her expertise in teaching. Carrie, a Job Search Skills Instructor, needed a potential job fair or partnership to be credible and to appeal to her clients. Moose mentioned that outreach for his program often included presentations in the community, but it was important that the community group guaranteed an audience of at least twelve people in order to make it worth his while.

Four of the six library employees also felt that simpler, smaller relationships were more effective because they could develop these partnerships with more autonomy. They didn't have to go to the next level of management to seek approval or

guidelines, and they didn't have to follow the formalities of writing and signing contracts. In many ways, the library branches were free to determine their own priorities and seek out the type of partnerships they thought were most important for their particular community. Although outreach was important at a system-wide level, individual branches had the independence to determine their own goals for outreach. These four library employees felt it was easier and more effective to develop partnerships at the branch or department level. Shannon described more complicated partnerships as formal and structured, and she said that "when things get a lot of layers and a lot of people's ideals involved in what it ought to be, it becomes, it just becomes this slowed down, confusing, lumbering thing. And stuff doesn't happen."

The Adult Literacy Department, which consisted only of the ALC, functioned slightly differently from the branches in terms of outreach and setting goals for community partnerships. Similar to other library staff, the ALC also mentioned that her "charge was to . . . reach out to the populations that might not come to us." However, the ALC did not explicitly mention that she wanted established, reliable, and consistent partners, although she did mention that she wanted to operate stable programs, an idea that was similar to Javier's notion of sustainable programming. She explained:

What I am trying to do is create a program that would go on, with its reverberations long past the time I'm gone, so it doesn't mean that the models would still be the exact same models, but that the value of the connection

between the library and the community would be so established that it wouldn't be lost.

As discussed in *Outreach* above, the ALC's goals in partnering consisted of meeting people, bringing them knowledge of library resources, and making connections between the community and the library. She remarked that "when I think of partnership, I think of people and organizations I can genuinely collaborate with to enrich the program." Her examples of partnerships that helped enrich the program included: obtaining information about classes in the community or theories behind tutoring choices; help making a good decision; the exchange of information; receiving feedback; contractual partnerships; and the use of an advisory committee. She used the advisory committee to help reach her goals and "establish programs that would bridge the gap between the library and the community." The ALC acknowledged that there was a gap between the library and the community, and that even though "people love the library . . . they don't really understand what it can offer." She emphasized that she visited over forty organizations and not one thought of the library as a partner.

The ALC, who was new at her job one year ago, claimed that the library's goal for the Adult Literacy Department was to join "all the elements that were already existing and figure out what we could add to support programs in the community so they would feel like the library was a partner instead of just, sort of a place to go." However, when she began to visit organizations in the community, she realized that they "don't see the library playing any role in their organization" and "that all the organizations that I've

gone to don't know about the library. And they don't see it as a partner." The employment agency employees in this study rarely saw the library as a partner and when they did, they had their own explanation for how challenging it was to partner with the library. This will be discussed below in *Library as a Resource*.

The six library employees in this study prioritized outreach, and some of them felt that the library could offer a lot to its partners. Five of the six library employees expressed the desire for consistent, reliable, and established programs and organizations with whom to partner. These library employees performed outreach, or sought partnerships, in order to increase programming, welcome new patrons, and connect to specific populations in the community, while the ALC viewed partnerships as a way to help enrich the adult literacy program. The ALC also found that the community organizations she visited did not think of the library as a partner. In the next section, I will discuss how the employment agency employees also didn't think of the library as a resource.

Library as a Resource

The public library has long been known as a source of information and a provider of resources to the community, and this service is free and open to everyone. As Sarah, a Temporary Librarian at Branch A, confirmed, the library exists to help people make connections to information they need and to help link them to materials, services, and technology. Daniel, the Supervisor of Branch B, agreed that the library acts as a clearing house for information and services. The ALC pointed out that the library offered a

unique feature that is not available on the internet in that it verifies its resources. The websites and resources that the library used for its referrals are carefully reviewed for clarity and relevance so that a patron receives a pre-screened choice of quality information.

However, Daniel also noted that many members of the public look to the internet for information, and Organization A used another community organization called 211 to help locate the resources that clients needed. Even with the two employment agency participants who were most aware of what the library had to offer, their first inclination was to do a search on the internet for additional information or resources. One of these two participants, Isabella, knew about the library resources, but the only one she used was her personal contact, the ALC.

In the following section, I will discuss the reasons that employment agency employees gave for not using the library as a resource in their work. These included not knowing what was available, difficulty in navigating the library's website and resources, and a lack of personal help in the library to address their own questions as well as those of their clients. In addition, two of the library employees viewed the library as a place for self-motivated learning to take place, and one of the employment agency employees discussed how difficult this was for her students.

At the time of this study, MCL offered several relevant resources to the adult literacy and employment agency community. For example, MCL offered an open computer lab as well as classes in citizenship, English conversation, computer skills, and

computer programming, sometimes with a target language speaker available for assistance. The target languages, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, and Chinese, were the languages that MCL sought to represent in their libraries through the presence of bilingual staff and programming. MCL had done a needs assessment and found that these languages were the most prevalent languages in the community. The library also had materials available for teachers and tutors as well as for students who wanted to study English, GED, or citizenship. The library offered web resources that were free to card holders but normally required a subscription from members of the public. These included GED skill-building and practice tests and English-learning websites. In addition, the library had very recently added a "Life Skills and Literacy" website geared toward immigrants, new readers, and lifelong learners.

Although all of the employment agencies employees used the library for a variety of personal applications and had occasionally used the library for work-related purposes, this did not appear to be a factor in partnering with the library. Of the seven participants from the employment agencies, one had taken her students to the library in the past, two had referred clients to the library in the past, and Isabella was already in a partnership with the ALC. Isabella, the Literacy Services Coordinator at Organization C, was the only one who knew about all the existing library resources available to her students and her organization. The remaining six participants did not know about the variety of resources available for their professional use even though they had used the

library for personal reasons and/or had used the library for work-related purposes in the past.

When I asked participants what an ideal partnership with the library would entail, several of the employment agency employees mentioned resources that already existed at the library. These ideal partnerships (that already existed) included computer classes for basic skills, a contact person at the library, DVDs for learning English, a speaker of a language that was spoken in the community who taught computer skills classes, and a library presentation at their organization. Maybe these participants had not thought of these potential uses for the library before being directly asked, or maybe they had not searched the library for these potential resources and partnerships.

The ALC observed that "most of the organizations I've gone to don't see the library playing any role in their organization. . . . Most of them don't even know how to get on the library website." She mentioned that she thought "part of it is that people get into their routines and unless [they're] really looking" they don't think of the library as a resource. As the ALC further explained, "part of it is awareness and part of it is forcing yourself to use it," a sentiment that was echoed by Sarah, who confirmed that she didn't remember a resource unless she made herself use it. The ALC also noted that in order for an organization to use the library as a resource, they had to know that the resource would make their job easier or understand how it would help them do their job. Isabella and Moose, the Deputy Director at Organization A, reiterated that the resource had to be worthwhile in order to use it.

However, even before an organization's employees understood how potentially useful a resource might be, they had to know that the resource existed. Many of the participants in this study indicated that one of the ways they received information was through colleagues. For example, Daniel explained that knowledge about resources usually arose from working with people, a concept that was confirmed by Sarah, Javier, Shannon, Ryan, and Isabella. Carrie, the Job Search Skills Instructor from Organization A, started referring her clients to resources at the library after she was put in contact with the ALC by the researcher. If these participants didn't make the connection between the library resources and how they applied to their particular situation, it was unlikely that they would remember to use the resources at a later date.

Through her meetings with community groups, the ALC realized that people didn't know about the library, so she started bringing library materials and asking questions about what they needed. As mentioned above in *The Role of the Individual*, it was clear that the personal contact she offered to the community increased their use of the library. Isabella "had stayed away from the library" because of barriers to second language users, but her use of the library had increased because she was able to directly contact the ALC with questions about specific materials. Carrie expressly asked for a contact person at the library and was put in touch with the ALC through her participation in this study. Lucas and Susan seemed primed to include the library in their work if they could speak with someone about exactly what the library had to offer them.

A history of contact between the community and Branch B had resulted in members of the public using Branch B as a place to obtain information about library and community resources. As Shannon, the Supervisor of Library Outreach, explained, "It's really dependent on some sense of relationship and connection, and that's why [Branch B] is full of people now because they've made a connection with many, many people who live in that neighborhood." Ryan, a Bilingual Library Assistant at Branch B, confirmed that this history of partnership had built community trust in the library as well as knowledge among patrons and potential patrons that the library was a place to obtain information about services.

Although a lack of awareness was one reason that the employment agency employees did not use library resources, another reason was that these participants perceived several barriers to using the library as a resource. The most frequently mentioned barrier was that the library was difficult to navigate, both in terms of finding resources and using resources, particularly for the adult in need of literacy help. As indicated by the literature on adult literacy, several of the participants in this study mentioned that their clients probably found the library intimidating, and reported that the library website and catalog were difficult to navigate. Although this study did not seek to confirm how adult literacy participants used the library, it found that employees in a position of referring clients to the library did not actually refer them partly because of their perception that their clients would not have a successful experience.

Lucas, a Non Native Employment Training Instructor at Organization B, discussed the mistrust that some of his clients had of institutions, systems, and authority. Carrie, Susan, and Isabella mentioned that people who were unfamiliar with the library might find it intimidating. Isabella explained why she had mostly avoided the library prior to her partnership with the ALC.

I would refer students to Talk Time and some of the events at the library that might be appropriate for some of our ESL students, but for the most part I had stayed away from the library. Largely because, as a second language speaker, trying to go in and navigate a resource that's hard for someone who speaks English fluently, I thought it would be a little intimidating, especially after having done that with a few people and they being so confused and overwhelmed that it just didn't really work.

Since she had begun a partnership with the ALC, Isabella was still referring her students to events like Talk Time, but she also used her connection with the ALC to obtain information about materials that were appropriate for her students. She found it "a lot easier for students to take the initiative" if she could give them specific titles to look for in the library. She explained that giving them specific titles "doesn't seem as daunting as 'go to the library and ask for some intermediate level books.'" She mentioned that even the ALC told her that "you have to type in specific words to get the kind of books that you want so those might not naturally be your first instinct." Lucas confirmed that the library system created difficulties for his clients. He stated that "the majority of people

who would use the library are not at a level [of English] where they could use the library."

The primary obstacle that contributed to clients' difficulty in navigating the library was a lack of basic computer skills. Ryan confirmed that he "cannot even mention some of these great resources we have online because people don't know how to use a mouse . . . [and] they so frequently need some pretty substantial instruction on how to get from page to page." Daniel acknowledged that computer literacy is an issue for the patrons that Branch B served, and they often required additional help. Isabella found that the library website wasn't the easiest to navigate, for herself or her clients. One of Ali's (ESL Instructor, Organization A) primary concerns was with teaching basic computer skills to English learners in the community. Javier, Manager of Branch A, explained that many of the patrons who come to the library to search for jobs didn't have basic computer skills. Lucas, who worked primarily with clients learning English, estimated that "the level of computer literacy in our clients is about 1%, until just recently." Susan, a part-time ABE/GED Instructor at Organization B, also mentioned that her students "computer skills aren't polished."

Another factor in the employment agencies employees' decision not to send their clients to the library was the lack of one-on-one help. Carrie remarked that she had informed her clients that the library had computers they could use on the weekend or during times that her organization was closed. She reported that her clients told her that they weren't given enough time on the computers at the library, and that there was

nobody there to help them. Moose reiterated that clients might be more comfortable in his organization's resource room (a room with eight computers where Carrie aids clients in job search related tasks) because they received one-on-one help. Sarah mentioned that she didn't often refer patrons to library resources such as the databases available on the computer, but instead referred patrons to the computer labs because it was difficult to offer them one-on-one assistance when she was also staffing the reference desk.

A more subtle barrier to linking potential clients to library resources was a philosophy expressed by two library employees that the library tended to want to help people who wanted to help themselves. When Shannon spoke of the unique nature of the library, she emphasized that "the people who come to you are coming voluntarily and out of their own interest or need, and it's just a very satisfying thing to help people who come from that place of self motivation." This idea is tied to the more abstract goal of the library to create a better educated and engaged community. As Ryan explained it, "The library is such a tool in terms of empowering people to protect themselves and be the best that they can be or the best that they want to be." One might consider that although many potential library patrons could benefit from the self-directed learning that these library employees promoted, the adult literacy population might need more guidance than the traditional patron.

Isabella emphasized that one of the goals at Organization C was to "encourage students to be self-sufficient and independent," but that, in her experience, sending

them to the library did not lead to success. Instead, she said that they came back discouraged, having found it difficult to use. Moose mentioned that it was easy to refer to the library because there was no bureaucracy involved with that type of partnership, implying that he could refer his clients to the library and then it would be the clients' responsibility to go to the library and use it themselves.

The employment agency employees gave several reasons for not using or referring to the library as a resource in their professional capacity. Most of them did not know what resources were available at the library, and they suggested that several barriers existed to their clients' use of the library, including a difficulty in navigating the library and a lack of personal help with resources and computers.

In the next section, I will present the library's goal of identifying and responding to community needs. I will also discuss how the employment agency employees did not know that the library was willing to meet their needs, did not know what the library could do for them or their clients, and did not think to ask the library for help in meeting their needs.

Responding to Community Needs

A principal component of the library's mission was that it sought community input on what was needed and worked to respond to those needs. As reported in *Outreach* above, the library mission and philosophy stated that the library would “anticipate and respond to community interests and needs (MCL, 2009, para. IV). Sarah,

Daniel, Javier, Ryan, and Melissa all mentioned that part of outreach was gathering information about what the community wanted and needed from the library.

The ALC praised the library's awareness and response to the community. She believed that

The library is constantly and consistently concerned with the community in ways I am just in awe of . . . [and] this library is one of the best I've ever seen at responding to community needs, especially the big needs of the economy. . . . I think the library as a whole is really committed to matching the needs of the community.

Shannon confirmed that "the library is always there trying to adapt to meet" the present need in the community. Lucas recalled that when Branch A saw an increase in the Russian population in the neighborhood, they came to ask his organization what the library could do to help support his organization's efforts to aid this community. He was impressed with their effort to reach out and observed that "even if they don't get a lot of usage from the community, they're there for the community." It was interesting to note that although Lucas thought the library excelled in their efforts to meet the community needs, the community still wasn't using the library.

This study found several barriers to the deceptively simple process of the community conveying to the library what it needed and the library meeting those needs. Community members did not always realize that the library wanted to know about their needs. Furthermore, if they didn't know the potential that the library held for them or

that the library could be useful to them, they did not think to express their needs to the library. In addition, community members didn't know what they needed from the library, because they didn't know what the library provided or could provide. The ALC found that

As I'd go to different groups, I'd say what can the library do to help you? And what I found most commonly was that people didn't even know. . . . It's like the person who needs the help doesn't really even know what kind of help they need.

This study also found that the employment agencies staff often believed that they were already meeting the needs of their clients. Five of them explained that their priority was to find their clients a job, not to further their education, and the library's resources pertained mostly to improving one's skills or education. Although many of them believed in the long-term benefits of education and skill-building, their client, their organization, or their assessment of the current economic climate led them to prioritize employment over education. I had to prompt the interviewees to discuss how they would respond if their client asked for additional help in obtaining a GED, improving their English language skills, or for advice in finding resources. The employment agency employees responded that they would refer them to community colleges, 211 (a local resource directory), a similar organization to their own, or they would search the internet. However, these participants also implied that their clients did not often directly ask for these kinds of resources.

Even if the library was able to identify the community's needs, it faced challenges in meeting those needs. The ALC realized that the library needed to plan their events and programming months in advance, and in their effort to create sustainable programming, the library often spent many months in the formative stages. Shannon mentioned that "even for a simple program that doesn't involve grants or big organizations, we've been working on it for months." Daniel described the implementation of an idea as a process of adjusting the original notion so that it fit the context of the library.

The participants in this study explained that partnerships, or referrals, often stemmed from an expressed need from one of their clients or another organization. For example, the library employees mentioned that people often called them to ask for certain services or extra help in providing services. In addition, a general need could be expressed in the community at large. For example, the recent economic downturn prompted the library to implement computer lab times for job search and increase their job search resources. Some of the employment agency employees gave examples of partnerships they had started based on a request from another organization. However, the employment agencies in this study did not give any examples of asking the library to partner or provide a resource.

Since the adult literacy department at MCL is new, the ALC had some freedom in how she gathered information from the community and attempted to meet their needs. Her process, based on the recommendations of the task force, involved one-on-one

meetings with members of different community organizations to determine what they needed from the library. She had the freedom to propose ideas, and she found that she often had to show members of the community what was possible in order for them to understand how the library could help them. Another method that she used to gather information from the community was the formation of the Literacy Advisory Committee. This committee served as a group of representatives who helped initiate, develop, and maintain goals and programming for the Adult Literacy Department.

Although the library wanted information about community needs in order to help inform its process of engaging with the community, the employment agency employees had no experience with communicating their needs to the library. They were not aware that the library wanted this information, they did not know what they could ask of the library, and as described in *The Library as a Resource*, they did not know what the library provided or could provide.

Summary

This chapter discussed the results of the analysis as they related to the three research questions. First, the definitions of partnership, collaboration, and outreach were presented from the point of view of the participants in this study. A discussion of the participants' description of the parameters of partnership followed. A separate section was devoted to the most prominent factor of partnership mentioned by the participants, the role of the individual, and how that influenced the formation and

maintenance of partnership. The role of the individual consisted of a personal connection/relationship and effort.

The chapter concluded with three sections representing the themes that emerged from the library employees' perceptions of partnership with community groups and the employment agency staff's views of these same themes. The three categories were the library's definition of an ideal partner, the library as a resource, and the library's goal of addressing community needs. In the following chapter, I will discuss the implications of these findings as well as the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This final chapter summarizes the findings for research question one by discussing the role of terminology as well as the role of the individual, followed by the implications of these findings. The findings for research questions two and three are summarized in the section labeled *Library and Community Agencies Perceptions of Their Roles in Partnership*, followed by a discussion of the implications for the library in three areas: as a partner, as a resource, and in meeting the community needs. Implications for community agencies are also addressed. Ending the chapter is a presentation of the limitations of the study as well as suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings

Terminology In Use

This section reviews the findings for research question one about how participants define collaboration, specifically addressing the participants' choice of the word partnership over collaboration and how that relates to the literature. The data from this study included many factors of partnership that corresponded with the literature on *collaboration*, but one factor was more prominent in this study than it was in other research on *collaboration*: the role of the individual, which includes the personal connection or relationship between two people and the effort necessary to begin and maintain collaboration. After discussing the participants' terms of discourse, I

will consider why the role of the individual is so important in partnerships as well as how it relates to the terminology used in this study. Finally, I will discuss the implications of these findings.

The first research question asked how the community agencies and the library envisioned and enacted *collaboration*. However, eleven of the thirteen participants used the word partnership instead of collaboration to answer this question. Only two of the participants expressed a preference for the term collaboration, and one of those participants used partnership and collaboration interchangeably. In addition, five of the six library employees also used the term outreach when asked about partnership, leading the researcher to link these two terms in the data analysis. Interestingly, the one library employee who did not use the term outreach was the ALC, who is not a librarian by trade and who had been employed by the library for only one year at the time of this study.

All of the participants used their choice of term to refer to the entire range of possible relationships between individuals or organizations. In the collaboration literature, this range begins with the least formal, smallest *partnership*, or *cooperation*, moves to *coordination*, where organizations share resources and risk but function relatively independently of each other, and ends with the most formal and structured relationship, *collaboration* (Mattessich, et al., 2001). The collaboration literature reviews factors that influence successful *collaboration*, defined as "a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common

goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards" (Mattessich, et al., 2001, p. 4). If we follow their definition, only three of the participants in this study discussed *collaboration*, and these *collaborations* comprised only five of the 86 examples of partnership mentioned in the interviews. It is clear that participants in this study rarely spoke of *collaboration*.

Similar to the responses of participants in this study, the library literature also uses the terms partnership and collaboration interchangeably. For example, when Brown (2003) discussed what a "powerful partner" looked like, she wrote, "When two creative minds come together, the collaboration can sometimes be even better than either originally envisioned" (p. 53), implying that two individuals came together in collaboration even though her article addressed powerful partnerships. In the collaboration literature, a relationship between individuals would be called a *partnership* or *cooperation*.

This raises some difficulties for connecting the results of studies on collaboration with the results of studies on partnerships. Brown used the factors for successful collaboration described in Mattessich, et al. (2000) to support her recommendations for partnership, but her argument was weakened by the lack of continuity in her terminology, particularly because Mattessich, et al. clearly defined collaboration as a

relationship between more than one organization while Brown continued to use the term collaboration and partnership to refer to a wide variety of working relationships.

The Role of the Individual

One of the most important factors described by the participants in this study was the role of the individual. This study provided support for considering the role of the individual in building *partnerships*, including the personal connection and effort required to initiate *partnership*. Since 73 out of the 86 examples described by the participants were illustrations of *partnership* and usually involved only the participation of one individual from each organization, it is not surprising that the role of the individual played an important role. In addition, of the 16 potential or ideal partnerships that participants described, only one of them broached a *collaboration*, and the rest would be achievable with one other individual from the partnering organization.

Twelve of the thirteen participants discussed the role of the individual, including the importance of having a personal contact, the desire for a partnership that is smaller in size, the similarities to a friendship or relationship between two people, and the snowball effect of starting a relationship with one other individual that leads to other relationships or possibly the formation of a larger and more complicated partnership. Some of the participants also believed that the one-on-one process was more effective for the library than broad-scale publicity about the library services. Isabella compared it to dropping a hook, targeting specific individuals, as opposed to casting a net. Shannon described the process as grassroots, and the ALC believed that forming individual

relationships was a successful method of partnering. Susan also had a very extensive partnership with one other individual that she felt benefitted her students and her work.

The personal connection did have some drawbacks. The ALC was concerned that the personal connection could lead to an unsustainable partnership. She worried that if she were the only person with whom someone spoke about using the library, and she left her job, the partner would be left with no other access to her organization, and the relationship would then be lost. This was avoided when a personal relationship snowballed into a partnership that included other representatives, or the partner no longer needed to use the contact person because he/she now knew how to get the information that he/she needed.

Some of the collaboration literature also discussed the role of personal relationships as related to *collaboration*. Both Austin (2001) and Butterfield et al. (2004) noted that good personal relationships did not necessarily guarantee success, but if a personal relationship was problematic, then it could hinder the collaborative process. Austin also found that personal relationships helped build trust, and trust was the factor most commonly associated with collaborative success in the Mattessich et al. (2001) study. Coleman (1988) argued that strong ties between individuals increased trust, made exchanges easier, and ensured reciprocity through a system of obligations and expectations.

Of the twenty success factors listed in Mattessich et al. (2001) the only factor that corresponded to an individual role was the factor labeled "Skilled Leadership," which referred to "the individual who provides leadership for the collaborative group . . . carries out the role with fairness . . . [and is] granted respect of 'legitimacy' by the collaborative partners" (p. 10). Leadership was also mentioned as a factor of *collaboration* in other studies (Butterfield, et al., 2004; Huxham, 2003; Wood & Gray, 1991). Although leadership was not mentioned by the participants in this study, it is possible that it correlates with effort, as an individual who puts in extra effort may be seen as a leader.

In addition to the personal connection, effort was also related to the role of the individual in partnership. According to the participants, some of the challenges or barriers to partnership included a lack of time, staff, or resources, a theme that is commonly found in both the collaboration and library literature. However, the data indicated that one of the underlying factors related to overcoming the lack of time, staff, or resources is effort, defined as performing work-related actions outside of working hours or as seeking additions and alternatives to what is already present in order to benefit the client. In addition, effort defined whether or not an individual pursued partnership.

For example, in this study, three of seven employment agency staff and five of the six library employees discussed the effort necessary for partnership to take place. These participants were guided by and influenced by a belief in the mission of their own

organization and a belief in the benefits of partnership. Participants' personal goals as well as their perception of need in their clients and the community affected whether or not they looked for outside opportunities, including partnerships. It took awareness and desire to identify needs in the population being served, and it took effort to attempt to meet those needs. Coleman (1988) also mentioned that individuals can be motivated to invest in society because they value the public good. He observed that individuals who generate public good, or contribute to social capital, often experience only a small part of the benefits of their actions, which can often lead to a problem of underinvestment, or lack of effort.

Ali, who worked extra hours to meet the needs she saw in the community, confirmed what Austin (2001) and Butterfield, et al. (2004) stated when they concluded that an individual can help drive a collaboration because of motivating personal reasons. Lucas also stated that he thought people's personal interest helped motivate them to invest in partnership. The ALC and Shannon agreed that a personal belief in the mission of the library motivated library employees to exceed their job requirements.

The effort factor was not explicitly mentioned in the collaboration literature, although several researchers referred to the difficulties involved in forming and maintaining *collaborations*, implying that effort was necessary to succeed (Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vaugen, 2000; Wood & Gray, 1991). The collaboration literature tends to focus on the factors necessary for success instead of the factors that make it difficult to succeed. As Huxham and Vaugen (2000) and Huxham (2003) stated, the advice

around *collaboration* is deceptively simple, and Huxham's goal was to describe the difficulties involved in *collaboration*, ultimately ending in his advice of "don't do it unless you have to" (p. 421).

Most of the library literature also acknowledges the effort required for partnership, but it clearly states that partnership is worth pursuing even with the initial effort that is required. (Brown, 2003; Caywood, 2004; Costello, Whalen, Spielberger, & Winje, 2001; Holt, 1999; Hovius, 2006; Leeds, 2004; Long, 2001; Petruzzi & Burns, 2006; Shelkrot, 2004; Szaba & Gres, 2001).

The role of the individual played an important role in forming and maintaining partnerships, based on the fact that nine of the thirteen participants either described their partnerships as a relationship between two people or described the benefits of a personal connection to partnership. In addition, an individual's effort was mentioned by eight of the thirteen participants as a necessary element to initiating and maintaining partnership.

Since this study primarily discussed *partnerships*, the role of the individual is given more importance in this study than in studies on *collaboration*, and the role of the collaboration literature in corroborating the findings of this study are minimized. However, the library literature does address the role of the individual, the effort necessary for partnership, and the importance of personal contact.

Implications

In order for the library to successfully engage in partnership, it must recognize the importance of the role of the individual, and it should define the type of partnership that it seeks and the goals of that partnership. A well-defined and focused approach to *partnerships and collaborations* can help the library to achieve the results it desires. Knowing that a personal connection or relationship is an integral part of forming a partnership can help guide librarians in their decisions and expectations. Positive personal relationships help build trust, which corresponds to successful partnerships (Brown, 2003; Coleman, 1988; Mattessich, et al., 2001). In addition, the amount of effort required to form a partnership as well as the knowledge that initial effort will eventually be worth the return is important information for helping employees understand the goals and reasons for their effort.

The library staff in this study tended to prefer *partnerships*, or relationships between individuals, and they discussed the importance of giving the community a face and a name to contact for future questions. This study supports the notion of a contact person at the library with whom a member of the community can talk about potential partnerships or relevant library programming and resources. The question remains, however, of how to link that contact person with community members.

The ALC has started the adult literacy program through a process of going into the community and meeting with people or organizations one by one, attempting to identify and address their specific needs. This fits the grassroots process that Shannon

preferred and simulates the "dropping the hook" method of publicizing the library that Isabella thought was most effective. It also matches the data found in this study that personally connecting to individuals in the community can lead to those individuals using the library or becoming partners, as well as the possibility of that contact leading to another contact or series of partnerships.

However, this study also found that an individual must expend effort in order to recognize the need for partnership or to engage in partnership. In order for a community group to seek out partnership with the library, that group needs staff members who will put extra effort into thinking and acting outside the boundaries of their job. Effort was often found in individuals who were passionate about the mission of their organization or their position at the organization. These individuals often spent time assessing their clients' needs and finding a way to meet those needs. Similarly, it takes time above and beyond the normal job requirements for a library employee to perform outreach. All of the library employees in this study said that outreach was a priority for them and therefore, they spent the extra time and effort necessary to reach out to their respective communities. The library literature also mentioned that personal passion or vision was present in individuals who started the process of partnership (Brown, 2003; Holt, 1999; Hovius, 2006; Long, 2001; Marcum, 1996).

A library or employment agency employee might ask why he or she should partner if it requires so much effort. The participants in this study argued that partnerships helped meet clients' needs, and if one is personally invested in meeting

those needs, then one would want to spend the effort necessary to accomplish that goal. More important, however, is the argument from both the collaboration and the library literature that partnership ultimately *reduces* effort. The ALC touched on this concept when she referred to a partnership as a type of bank account into which she made deposits of effort by helping her partner and from which she could later withdraw effort from her partner. Daniel also believed that initial effort would eventually translate into reduced effort. However, both Isabella and Ryan argued that they had to know the partnership would be worthwhile. Because of the challenge of expending effort on partnership, it must be very clear how the partnership will minimize that effort over time, rendering the effort worthwhile.

Six of the seven employment agency staff, though supportive of the philosophy of partnership, did not give any examples of partnerships in which they were what I coded as "proactive," meaning that they had initiated the partnership. On the other hand, all six library employees gave examples of the proactive roles they had played in beginning a partnership. This is likely due to the differences in missions of the organizations. Outreach, or connecting to the community, is clearly an integral part of the mission of the library but not of the employment agencies. This means that the employment agency staff would have to expend more effort than a library employee in order to create a partnership.

Since the library's mission is "to serve everyone as much as we possibly can," and the employment agencies do not play a proactive role in partnership, it is up to the

library to take a leadership position. Recent library literature supports the notion of the library as a leader or innovator and argues that in order for the library to play a central role in the community, it must "fill the leadership role that so many people feel is missing in our public life" (Willingham, 2008, p. 104). Willingham continued:

Libraries can become indispensable by actively seeking opportunities to use their unique positions of trust and credibility to solve community problems. Not just passive sources of information or partners on short-term projects, libraries can be the lead agency in tackling pervasive social problems. (p. 99)

Hovius (2006) gave examples of partnerships that show "what can happen when the Library provides the vision for its community" and noted that her library "actively [seeks] out ways in which we can partner with the City for various initiatives to strengthen the relationship and build trust and credibility" (pp. 220-221). McCook (2000) made a strong case for the library as a leader or innovator in the community, and this proposition is backed by several other authors (Croneberger, 1990; Holt, 1999; Long, 2001).

Based on the information gathered in this study, I propose that the library as leader starts with motivated individuals who have a vision and personal passion for meeting needs in the community. These individuals must expend effort to reach out to the community and build trust. Once these individuals have established personal relationships with other members of the community, ideas are shared, goals are formed, and partnerships are created. However, the library cannot wait for these steps

to unfold. Instead, the library must specifically define its goals for partnership and pursue these goals under the guidance of passionate and motivated individuals. General goals such as increasing patronage or reaching out to the community may build trust and establish some personal connections that can evolve into partnerships but which do not necessarily lead to effective partnerships. This study supports the literature in its claim that in order for the library to be an effective community partner, it must envision and lead the process.

Similar to the notion that initial effort in a partnership eventually results in reduced effort, the likely outcome of the library's initial effort as leader in the partnership process is that it will "no longer always [take] the initiative in looking for partnership opportunities" (Hovius, 2006, p. 214). After establishing itself as a community leader, the library will probably receive more requests for partnership than it can accommodate, allowing the library to reduce the effort it expends in the leadership role. Again, it is the specification of goals that will help the library as it decides which of these partnerships to select.

In order to specifically define its goals, the library should consider any differences that exist between outreach, *partnership*, and *collaboration*. This study found that the library employees used these three terms interchangeably, but it is possible that these terms have different connotations and should be considered separate endeavors. An important factor of both *partnership* and *collaboration* is the establishment of shared goals that are unique to that relationship. If the goal of the

library is only to increase the number of patrons who use the library, they don't really need to form partnerships; instead, they need only for more people to know that they exist and about the resources they provide. In addition, the library might consider whether the goals of partnership are the same as the goals of outreach. Do library employees seek different outcomes from *partnership* than from outreach or *collaboration*? Consideration of distinct goals also helps to understand the amount of effort required, and if presented accordingly, may help individuals recognize the time and energy required for each type of relationship.

The library should also consider whether their goals for a particular partnership include strategic effects, knowledge creation effects, political effects, or a combination (Hardy et al., 2003). Strategic effects maximize resources, helping the library provide services with less effort even though there is a perceived lack of time, staff, and resources. Knowledge creation effects help increase the knowledge and skill level of the institution, possibly enabling the library to transform how the community approaches and serves the adult literacy community. Political effects would increase the credibility and visibility of the library, helping it become a viable partner and community institution.

The library may prefer a different classification system offered by Holt (1999), who divided library partnerships into several typologies: training partnerships; funding partnerships; information dissemination/development partnerships; program development partnerships; partnerships to build and share audiences; research and

product development partnerships; and political alliances. Specifying the library's goals should help inform what kind of partnership to pursue, which potential partnering individuals or organizations should participate, and how to measure the success of that partnership. Some of the library's present goals around partnership emerged from the data and will be discussed further in the following sections.

It may not be necessary for library staff to differentiate among the terms they use, but rather to understand what meaning and action they associate with these terms. Through an awareness of the range of relationships on the collaboration continuum (NMAC, 1996) and a careful consideration of their goals for working with other individuals or organizations, the library can connect its purpose to a specific type of relationship. The library staff can make choices about which type of relationship to engage in based on their objectives, whether the relationship is between individuals or organizations, informal or formal, or less interdependent or more interdependent. Depending on whether the library seeks publicity, additional patrons, the solution to a community need or domain-level problem, or the building of social capital, a *partnership* or *collaboration* may be more appropriate. Of course, it may be through the process of developing relationships with other individuals and community agencies that these goals are defined, but it is important for the library to clearly envision what it seeks to accomplish.

Library and Community Agencies Perceptions of Their Roles in Partnership

This section reviews the findings for research questions two and three, which asked how the libraries and the employment agencies perceive the role of the other organization in partnership or collaboration. I will first summarize the findings and then discuss the implications for the library with regard to the library as a partner, the library as a resource, and the library responding to community needs. I will then address the implications for community agencies.

On the surface, the library was the ideal partner, able to provide space, resources, time, and publicity for little or no cost to the partnering group. The library did not ask for much in return except to be utilized. The library did expend more effort on partnerships than the employment agencies, but the library had a slight advantage in that their mission incorporated outreach or partnerships. The data also revealed that the library wanted a specific type of partner, so if the partnering agency filled that role then partnership with the library was relatively free of challenges. If the partnering agency did not fill that role or requested more from the library than space, materials, and publicity, the partnership required more work.

None of the employment agency staff in this study expressed an organizational philosophy about partnering. Although all of the employment agency staff mentioned partnerships in which their organization took part, the majority of these partnerships were referrals, arrangements with other employment agencies, or contracted partners

who were paid for their services to the agency. Organization A also partnered with several different correctional facilities where they offered programs and trainings.

The library also believed that it could provide resources to community agencies. This study found that all but one of the employment agency participants did not know what resources the library had that applied to them and therefore looked elsewhere when seeking additional information. In addition to not knowing what was available at the library, these six employment agency staff found that the library's systems were difficult to navigate, and they believed that a lack of personal help in the library was a barrier to their clients and themselves. Similar barriers to using the library are described in "Libraries and Literacy" (1995) and Marcum (1996).

When asked what kind of services they would like the library to offer to a partnership, some of the participants unknowingly described current library services, confirming that the first barrier to using the library as a resource was not knowing what the library had to offer. The ALC, Isabella, Sarah, and Moose also noted that the resource had to be worthwhile to the organization. A worthwhile resource was one that made their job easier or helped them do their job. The library's challenge was to understand how their resources linked to the goals or daily tasks of specific organizations in their community, ultimately making it easier for these organizations to reach their goals.

The library also sought to meet the needs of the community. However, employment agency staff did not realize that the library wanted to play a role in

meeting their needs. They also didn't know what the library provided or could provide and therefore, only two of the seven employment agency staff had ever looked to the library to fill a need: Isabella and Ali. Isabella used the library to meet very specific needs after forming a relationship with the ALC, who could direct her to the appropriate resource. Ali, who expended effort to meet the needs of her clients, looked to the library for solutions but often discovered that she could not find the information or resource that she needed.

Implications for the Library

Library as Partner

The library needs to carefully define what kind of role it wants to play in outreach, *partnership*, and *collaboration* through a careful assessment of its own goals and abilities, its ideal role in the community, and the potential for unforeseen benefits from partnership. The library needs to be clear about how it wants to be perceived in the community. Does it want people to see it as a partner, and if so, what kind of partner? Does it simply want people to use the library, as was so often stated in this study, or does it want to actively engage with members of the community in partnerships? What are the goals of these partnerships? What kind of role does the library play in these partnerships? These are important questions for the library to consider as a guide to partnering with the community.

The recent library literature promotes the idea of the library playing an active role in the community and helping to build social capital. In order to accomplish this

goal, the library has to become a civic leader, expend effort, and actively pursue partnership with community groups (Boaden, 2005; Costello, et al., 2001; Hovius, 2006; Kranich, 2005; Marcum, 1996; Willingham, 2008). Although authors do not distinguish between *partnership* and *collaboration* in the library literature, the examples they give tend toward *collaboration*, albeit with a beginning in *partnership* between individuals. If the library's goals do not include becoming a civic leader and are primarily to market its services and increase patronage, it may not need to expend as much effort or pursue *collaboration*. Rather, it could build strong personal relationships with select individuals or community groups that may result in smaller relationships, or *partnerships*.

The data in this study indicated that many of the library employees sought a partnering organization that was reliable, consistent, and established. Along with a clarification of partnership goals, it may be necessary to delineate which type of partnering organization best matches these partnership goals. With this delineation in mind, the library might consider different types of organizations for different types of partnerships. For example, it may be that the reliable, consistent, established organization is the best kind of partner to whom the library could offer space, publicity, and materials in exchange for quality programming. The less reliable, consistent, and established organization could be targeted for advertisement and recruitment. However, as Ryan said, some less well-known organizations may still be capable of great work.

If the library does want to become a civic leader, the library may want to experiment with partnerships that involve organizations with whom it is less familiar in order to allow for the unforeseen benefits of partnership. As Szabo and Gres (2001) stated, "[Partnerships] plant seeds that benefit our libraries in ways we may never have imagined" (p. 1). Hilyard (2004) explained that the benefits may come "long after the specific project is over" when community members, who have gained an increased appreciation of the library through partnership, remember the library "not only when their clients need library resources but also when the library needs their support" (p. 147).

These authors support the notion of considering partnerships with organizations that are slightly unusual, such as Anheuser-Busch, accounting firms, or City Hall (Holt, 1999); the local aquarium (Lawrence, 2004); or a local sports league (Hovius, 2006). Many of these relationships started with a conversation between two individuals that led to an alignment of goals that fit the mission of both organizations and resulted in the library playing an active role in the community. Of course, the library must establish how much risk it is willing to take and may limit its partnerships with organizations that don't fit into a pre-determined library goal.

Because the library is not seen as a partner in the community, even though the public, particularly here in Portland, "loves the library," the library will have to take a leadership role if it wants to form *partnerships* or *collaborations* with the community. The data in this study indicated that the library should consider its long-term goals and

its ability to engage in partnership. The library should clearly define the types of organization with whom it wants to partner, the type of services and amount of effort required, and the goals for that partnership. If library employees clarify with whom they want to partner, they will save time and energy by limiting their efforts to working with these type of groups. However, the library may also want to remain open to the potential for partnership with a variety of organizations in order to allow for any unplanned benefits of partnership.

Library as a Resource

Another theme that revealed a disconnection between how the library perceived itself and how the employment agencies perceived the library concerned the library as a resource. The library saw itself as a source of information and a provider of resources, but the employment agency staff did not perceive of or use the library as a resource. They also perceived several barriers to using the library as a resource, including a lack of awareness of library resources, difficulties navigating the library system, and the lack of personal help available at the library.

Another factor that may influence how the library is perceived as a provider of resources is the library philosophy of how these resources are used. For example, two of the library employees mentioned how the library helped self-motivated individuals or people who wanted to achieve some level of self-empowerment. This view could be problematic in relation to the adult literacy community, who may need more assistance in understanding why and how to further their own education. Although many potential

library patrons might benefit from the self-directed learning that the library promoted, the adult literacy population would probably need more assistance than the traditional patron.

Community members may prefer a personal contact at the library so that information about resources and navigating the library can be quickly disseminated to directly address their specific purpose. One example of a partnership that was viewed as successful by both the ALC and her partner included the use of a personal contact to meet a specific need. Isabella, the Literacy Services Coordinator of Organization C, used her relationship with the ALC to request help filling a need. In turn, the ALC described which resource would help with the need and subsequently explained how to access that resource. With this information, Isabella was able to overcome the barriers of a lack of knowledge as well as any difficulties in navigation. Isabella then felt more comfortable sending her clients to the library for a very specific resource which she could also tell them how to find. In addition, the resource was filling Isabella's exact requirements. The successful partnership between the ALC and Isabella consisted of a personal relationship that involved an exchange of information about a specific resource tailored to meet a specific need.

The ALC thought that people didn't see the library as a resource because they developed a routine, and unless they were "really looking," they wouldn't think or know to look for resources at the library. She explained, and Sarah agreed, that the process of using resources started with awareness and then involved "forcing yourself to use it" in

order to familiarize yourself with the resource and its purpose. This notion of "really looking" illustrated the effort an individual expended when they sought additional resources or potential partnerships. Also, making or forcing oneself to use or refer others to resources implied that effort was required. It is possible that people would more willingly produce this effort if they understood how the potential resource directly related to their needs, and if they knew they could contact someone at the library to answer questions about both the use of the resource and the navigation of it.

Identifying that a need exists for the clients or in the community is not an easy process. Occasionally, one is presented with a need, but often, it takes a desire to better serve the client in order to identify a need and then attempt to meet that need. If an organization is already full, swamped with clients and needs, the individual may not look for opportunities to fulfill the needs of the clients because of a lack of time. This is similar to a problem cited in the collaboration literature where a lack of resources and staffing is a reason to partner but also a reason not to partner. This reinforces the idea that individual effort is necessary to overcome the challenges of a lack of resources, staffing, and time in order to partner with another person or organization.

If the library wants to meet community needs and provide them with resources, the library must seek to contact as many people as possible in the community and inform them about the resources that are available to them. In many ways, the library did this through outreach and building partnerships. However, the library must also work to link the resource directly to a perceived need in the partnering organization. It

would also be helpful to offer the organization a personal contact at the library who could help answer questions about the resource and the navigation of the library system. Three of the methods that enable a resource to become part of an individual's repertoire include an individual contact who can answer questions and give information about the resource; an understanding of what is needed or wanted; and an assurance that the resource meets that specific need.

Library Meeting Community Needs

The library wanted to respond to community input and needs, but this study found that most of the employment agency staff did not know that the library could help them and did not think to ask the library to help them meet their needs. In addition, the employment agency staff considered continuing education secondary to the more pressing need of finding employment for their clients whereas the library's adult literacy resources tended to focus on an individual's educational goals. Based on the results of this study, employment agencies may not be the best place for the library to put in effort, and so the question remains as to how the library can best support organizations in the community.

Once again, the results of this study point to the library assuming a proactive role in the community. If the library wants to meet the needs of the community, it needs to actively seek out community needs and match its resources or aid to that specific need. However, the library may even have to determine what those needs are. As the ALC found, many of her contacts in the community didn't even know what help

they needed. This will require additional effort on the part of the library to determine the need, tailor its response or resource to meet that need, and then communicate that information to the target organization.

Although this would require initial effort, it is possible that once the library establishes itself as an institution that actively seeks answers to community problems, the community would begin to see the library in that role. Another possibility is for the library to enter into partnership with an organization and work together to determine the needs of the community as well as the solutions to those needs. As Willingham (2008) queried, "What if libraries stepped up and called upon the public to engage with each other to solve problems?" (p. 104). In this type of leadership position, the library is assuming a central role in the community, which may or may not be their goal. Instead, the library may want to limit its effort to community members that seek out the library or respond only with resources that it already has available.

Implications for Community Agencies

The implications for community agencies are less clear as most of the evidence from this study relates to the library taking a proactive role in partnering and engaging with its community. However, employment agencies should recognize that the library wants to partner with the community and use that to their advantage. Even though the initial steps require effort, such as finding the appropriate person with whom to speak and taking the time to develop a relationship and conversation, organizations could help themselves and their community by seeking out the library as a partner.

To aid in the process of partnering with the library, the community agency will want to communicate with the library about the potential benefits of partnership. For example, the library will become more of a community presence and could be seen as a leader; the library will develop supporters through the community agency; and the library may be able to help solve a domain level problem. A community agency can help attract the library to a partnership by approaching the library with specific information about what the library can do and what the agency will do. Utilizing common language and well-defined parameters and goals will aid in the process of joining with the library to meet both the agency's needs as well as the community needs. In addition, the community agency can set realistic expectations by better understanding the type of partner the library wants, the specific goals of library partnerships, and the abilities and restrictions of the library as an institution.

Limitations

The limitations to this study include a limited community perspective and the possibility that a different researcher could formulate different conclusions based on the same data. However, strategies to ensure validation included detailed descriptions, clarifying researcher bias, establishing the chain of evidence, and member checking (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 1994). Detailed descriptions of the coding and analysis process as well as the results of the analysis allow the reader to determine the credibility of my conclusions. In addition, the participants verified the accuracy of the results of this study.

Even though this study was specific to adult literacy, the analysis process revealed that many of the participants spoke of partnership in general terms and did not specifically address the role of partnership within the context of adult literacy. I believe this occurred because participants identified with the idea of partnership more than the idea of adult literacy. Furthermore, the employment agency staff focus was on preparing their clients for work and linking them to potential employment. Although many of their clients had literacy needs, the employment agency staff did not discuss these needs; instead, they discussed the economy, the barriers to employment that their clients faced (some of which related to adult literacy), and the resources they provided to their clients. In the interviews with employment agency staff, I prompted any discussion about partnership as a method of addressing literacy needs because the participants did not initially volunteer this information. Also, many of the employment agency participants had limited experience with partnership, or it wasn't something they thought about in relation to their work, so they talked about partnership in terms of any associations they had with it, both real and ideal. Because of the qualitative nature of this case study, a representational generalization to other contexts is not possible. However, through analytical generalization, or the generalization of these results to a theory of partnership with libraries (Yin, 1994), it is possible to infer some general principles of how a community group might collaborate or partner with a public library. For example, the theory developed here about the potential differences

between outreach, *partnership*, and *collaboration* and the way in which these terms are used by participants may inform other studies on library partnerships.

It is also important to consider whether the information about the employment agencies in this study can be generalized to other community groups. It may be that other types of community organizations perceive their own role and the library's role in partnership differently from the employment agency staff who participated in this study. Differences in missions, priorities, and resources will all play a role in how a community agency compares to the employment agencies described in this study. A comparable study may also want to consider community agencies which are presently involved in a relationship with the library in order to expand the boundaries of this work. In addition, a larger sample of both community participants and library participants would help make the results more reliable.

However, because this thesis details the context of this study and links the results to present collaboration and library theory, it is possible to connect the results of this study to other settings in which similar conditions exist. By describing the nuances of partnership in this specific community, this study can be used as a comparison for other researchers or libraries who are exploring the possibility of partnerships within their own communities.

Future Research

There are several areas of research that can add to the results of this study, to the literature on collaboration, and to the library's building of partnerships. Although

library partnerships and their benefits are well documented, it is rare to find library studies that discuss partnerships that were not successful. A comparison of successful and unsuccessful library partnerships and the factors that contributed to them would help clarify what type of partnerships a library should pursue.

Another path of further research should investigate the factors that contribute to an individual considering the library as a potential partner. In this study, every employment agency employee used the library and six of the seven "loved the library." However, only one of them thought of the library as a partner or resource, and that is because she had already been approached by the ALC. This study did not find any connection between an individual's personal relationship with the library and their professional relationship with the library. Are there other formative experiences that factor into an individual's perception of the library as a partner?

The role of the individual was also very important in this study. Similar to descriptions in the library literature, most of the participants who were involved in previous partnerships described a process that started with contact between two people. However, the literature is missing specific information about these initial interactions between individuals. In order to better understand the process of partnering, it is necessary to provide detailed, specific information about how the process originated. If it started with an individual, questions to consider include: what type of person was he or she, what kind of backing did this person have, how much effort did it take, how did this person initiate the process, and how did the initial steps

evolve into partnership? Is it possible to develop a typology of a person who would tend more toward partnership in general? Are there certain types of people who seek out partnership? It is possible that one's personality, position at the organization, motivation, and history help define whether or not one expends effort seeking out partnership.

A very important area of further research involves linking the collaboration literature to the library literature. In order to compare the two types of sources and draw information from both, libraries must delineate between outreach, *partnership*, and *collaboration*. Factors that are well studied in the collaboration literature can be applied to *collaboration* in a library setting, and libraries, who tend toward *partnership*, can help research the factors necessary for successful *partnership*. In addition, clarification of these terms will help libraries in determining what type of partnership is best for their organization.

With regard to adult literacy programming, there are several areas of interest that should be included in future research. This study identified several trends that need to be explored, such as the need for basic computer skills and how that affects the type of resources that a low-literate adult can use. In fact, the adult literacy population was not present in this study at all, and their needs are clearly an important factor in a potential relationship between the library and the community who work to serve them. This study also found that two of the library employees considered the library a place for autonomous learning to take place. It would be interesting to discover how or

whether the adult literacy population fits this notion. Finally, a driving question remains of how the library can best reach and assist the adult literacy population in its community.

Summary

This thesis has attempted to establish the challenges and advantages to partnerships with public libraries by interviewing participants from the library and three employment agencies in Portland, Oregon. It is clear that a discrepancy exists between how the library and the employment agencies perceive the role of the library in community partnerships. Through an understanding of the barriers to partnership perceived by the employment agencies and a clarification of its own goals, the library can specify the purpose of its relationships with the community, seeking smaller *partnerships* or larger *collaborations* depending on the needs of the community. By making personal connections with members of the adult literacy community, the ALC and other library staff have begun the process of trust, communication, and history that is vital to forming long-lasting and successful partnerships. However, the library still has to meet the challenge of clearly specifying what it seeks to accomplish with the partnerships it wants to develop.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTION GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS

1. Please describe a little bit about your personal history. For example, describe your position at this organization and how long you have been here. Describe how long you have been doing this kind of work, and in what context.
2. What is your work schedule? What is a typical work week for you?
3. Please describe the goals of your organization.
4. Please describe the work that your organization does.
5. I am interested in understanding how funding affects an organization's decision-making process. Could you explain to me how your organization receives funding?
6. What do you think the current needs are in adult literacy programming? What does your organization think the current needs are in adult literacy programming?
7. What are your current goals for adult literacy programming?
8. As you know, I am interested in collaboration. Some people also call it partnership or cooperation. Can you tell me which word you prefer to use and what that word means to you?
9. Do you see yourself as a collaborator (or use the word that the subject associates with collaboration – partner, cooperater, etc.)?
10. How do you think that your organization thinks of collaboration? How would they explain or define it?
11. What kind of personal or professional experience have you had in partnering with other agencies, including the library?
12. If you have experience, what were the challenges to and advantages of this collaboration?
13. If you don't have experience, how do you imagine a partnership could work? What would make it difficult?
14. Who do you see as potential collaborators in the community either for you or your organization? Why?
15. If you think about working with other agencies or the library, in what areas would you like their assistance?
16. What organizational resources do you have to offer a partnership?
17. How would you describe your personal and professional relationship to the library?
18. What kind of role do you think the library plays in the community?
19. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX B: OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF CODES

Code	Abbreviation	Operational Definition
PERCEPTION OF OTHER ORG	PER OTH	Participants' general perception/opinion of the other organization
PERCEPTION OF OWN ORG	PER OWN	Participants' perception/opinion of their own organization
PERCEPTION: LIBRARY	PER: LIB	Participants' general perception of the library's role
INDIVIDUAL	IND	
IND: GOALS	IND: GLS	Participants' personal goals related to their work
IND: BELIEF/ATTITUDE	IND: BLV	Participants' belief system
IND: BLV (LIBRARY)	IND: BLV (LIB)	Participants' belief about the role the library should or does play in the community or in their work
IND: BLV (COLLABORATION)	IND: BLV (COLL)	Participants' belief about collaboration or partnership (includes how and why to collaborate or partner)
IND: BLV (MISSION)	IND: BLV (MIS)	Participants' belief about the mission of their organization or about what the work they perform
IND: EFFORT	IND: EFRT	Participants' perception, belief, or desire to perform work-related actions outside of working hours or to seek additions and alternatives to what is already present. This can also be a negative (i.e. expressed as a lack of desire to expend effort)
IND: ABILITY TO INITIATE/EXPLORE COLLABORATION	IND: ABLE	Participants' ability to initiate or explore collaboration or partnership for work (i.e. do they have the freedom to do this of their own volition?)
IND: LIBRARY USE	IND: LIB USE	Participants' use of the library

Code	Abbreviation	Operational Definition
IND: LIB USE (PERSONAL)	IND: LIB USE (PRS)	Participants' personal use of the library (non-work related)
IND: LIB USE (WORK-REAL)	IND: LIB USE (WK-RL)	Participants' use of the library for work, either in the past or present
IND: LIB USE (WORK-IDEAL)	IND: LIB USE (WK-IDL)	An idea of how the participant could or would use the library for work (has not yet occurred)
ORGANIZATION	ORG	
ORG: GOALS/PRIORITIES	ORG: GLS	An organization's mission or goals (employment, education, skill building, adult literacy, collaboration, partnership, etc.)
ORG: ABILITY TO INITIATE/EXPLORE COLLABORATION	ORG: ABLE	An organization's ability to initiate or explore collaboration or partnership (part of mission, encouraged, discouraged, etc.)
ORG: FUNDING	ORG: FUND	How an organization is funded
COLLABORATION	COLL	
COLL: DEFINITION	COLL: DEF	Participants' definition of collaboration. This code includes the participants' choice of word (partnership, collaboration, cooperation, etc.)
COLL: EXAMPLE	COLL: EX	Examples of past and current collaborations or partnerships
COLL: EX (REAL)	COLL: EX (REAL)	Examples of collaborations, partnerships, etc. that an individual has participated in or is participating in
COLL: EX (IDEAL)	COLL: EX (IDL)	An example of a potential collaboration or partnership
COLL: PROCESS	COLL: PROC	How a collaboration or partnership forms and is maintained
COLL: FACTOR HELPFUL	COLL: FACH	Factors helpful to forming and maintaining collaboration or partnership

Code	Abbreviation	Operational Definition
COLL: FACTOR UNHELPFUL	COLL: FACU	Factors unhelpful to forming and maintaining collaboration or partnership
COLL: OFFER	COLL: OFR	Examples or ideas of what a participant or an organization can offer to a collaboration or partnership
COLL: RECEIVE	COLL: RCV	Examples or ideas of what a participant or an organization would like to receive from a collaboration or partnership
COLL: PROACTIVE	COLL: PROACT	Examples of an individual or organization initiating a collaboration or partnership
COLL: REACTIVE	COLL: REACT	Examples of an individual or organization reacting to a request for collaboration or partnership
COLL: SNOWBALL	COLL: SNWBL	The effect of one relationship or phone call or idea leading to another
COLL: SNOWBALL (RESEARCHER) (RES)	COLL: SNWBL	The effect of the researcher interviewing participants about collaboration or partnership and initiating a relationship, idea, collaboration or partnership
COLL: INDIVIDUAL	COLL: IND	The role of the individual in collaboration
OUTREACH	OUTRCH	
OUTRCH: DEFINITION	OUTRCH: DEF	Participants' definition of outreach
OUTRCH: GOALS	OUTRCH: GLS	Participants' explanation of the goals of outreach
OUTRCH: EXAMPLE	OUTRCH: EX	Examples of outreach past and present
OUTRCH: PROCESS	OUTRCH: PROC	The process of initiating or maintaining outreach
ADULT LITERACY	AD LIT	
AD LIT: PROGRAMMING	AD LIT: PRG	Examples of adult literacy programming
AD LIT: RESOURCES	AD LIT: RSC	Examples of adult literacy resources