Communities in Conflict: Resolving Differences Through Collaborative Efforts in Environmental Planning and Human Service Delivery

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Increasingly, public administrators and managers in the fields of human service and environmental planning have been exploring new avenues to resolve complex and seemingly intractable public problems. Confronting such controversial issues as land management plans, common-pool resources, endangered species, welfare reform, health care and immigration are requiring new and more innovative ways of doing business—ways in which problem-solving and leadership is a shared pursuit of governmental agencies and concerned citizens.

Since collaborative efforts in these arenas have recently reemerged as one avenue to resolve complex policy disputes, it is premature to give an accurate assessment of their long term viability. This research contributes to the emerging data base on collaboration by analyzing two successful case studies within the fields of environmental planning and human service delivery: The Clark County Habitat Conservation Plan for the Desert Tortoise and The Family Preservation and Family Support Program.

Both groups demonstrate how affected parties can craft solutions through collaboration, dialogue and engagement. The collaborative planning of these two groups succeeded where many other groups dealing with the same or similar issues have failed. Given the right mixture of urgency, lack of better options, and committed and dynamic participants, solutions are possible. Through both qualitative and quantitative techniques, this study focuses on factors contributing to their success, limitations of these efforts, and possibilities for improving this method of handling, and ultimately resolving complex community issues.

Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, September, 1998, Volume XXV, Number 3

Introduction

Increasingly, social work administrators and environmental planners have been exploring new avenues to resolve complex and seemingly intractable public problems (i.e., policy disputes or controversies that are highly resisted to resolution by reasoned argument or fact). Managers, particularly in the fields of human services and environmental planning, are faced with a volatile social and political environment, economic interdependencies, and increased legal action by special interest groups. New arrangements are being crafted to effectively monitor and resolve these evolving human and environmental resource issues.

The rapid explosion in the number of collaborative ventures in these two fields is truly remarkable. The vertically integrated organizations that have dominated institutional arrangements for the past century are being replaced more and more frequently with various forms of collaboration, partnerships and consensus-making models (see for example, Bean, Fitzgerald & O'Connell, 1991; Bryson & Crosby, 1992; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; John, 1994; and Porter & Salvesen, 1995).

Public officials are coming to the realization that some problems are so complex, so far-reaching, so long-term, with so many competing sides, it is becoming increasingly difficult to encapsulate in a "51 percent-beats-up-49 percent" kind of proceeding. Confronting such controversial issues as land management plans, common-pool resources, the Endangered Species Act, welfare reform, health care, race relations, and immigration requires new and more innovative ways of doing business—ways in which problem-solving and leadership are shared pursuits of governmental agencies and concerned citizens.

Government's role in the implementation of various community-based cooperative endeavors is critical. Collaboration is resource intensive. Government's willingness to engage concerned stakeholders, provide funding and coordination, and offer the necessary legitimacy can be essential components for successful resolution of complex community problems (Berman, 1996; Weschler & McIntosh, 1996).

Frameworks for collective action

While the terms collaboration and consensus-building have become the most recent buzzwords of the late 1990's, few studies

have explored how different forms of collaborative ventures have emerged and been sustained. Most of what we know about collaborative undertakings is based on anecdotal reports of successful partnerships in various fields and "how-to-guides" that discuss the common and highly predictable developmental stages through which collaboratives seem to pass. Missing is information about particular collective actions that have promoted various forms of collaboration, how and why these structures evolved, and what happened as a result of the collaboration. This is precisely what public managers and social work administrators need as they work to resolve the numerous complex problems facing them.

Kirlin (1996) argues that the role of government is to establish frameworks and opportunities that encourage collective action among individuals, groups, and organizations. This includes the effective use of resources and structures found outside formal governmental institutions.

In Nevada, a diverse coalition of individuals and groups are attempting to create effective frameworks for collective engagement to resolve complex issues. The purpose of this article is to describe and analyze two successful collaborative efforts currently taking place within the different arenas of environmental planning and human service delivery: The Clark County Habitat Conservation Plan for the Desert Tortoise and The Family Preservation and Family Support Program.

Background

What is collaboration and what makes it work?

In practice, collaboration is commonly interchanged with terms such as cooperation and coordination. However, the scholarly literature distinguishes among the terms (see Hard, 1986; Kagan, 1991; Melaville & Blank, 1991). Collaborative groups have recently re-emerged as one avenue to address complex community issues. Their uniqueness, according to Susan Stein (1996), lies in one or more of the following conditions: members are from multiple organizations; the goal is system change; and the collaborative is a means to an end. "Collaborative" is a term now commonly applied to a set of processes intended to create consensus among parties who, in normal circumstances, disagree

vehemently about the issue at hand. Typically, collaboratives take the form of stakeholder groups, sometimes called consensus groups, which come together to try to solve problems jointly which none of the parties could solve alone.

Chrislip & Larson (1994) found the factors which need to be present or deliberately built into a successful collaborative process included: good timing and clear need (see also Bryson & Crosby [1992] and Kingdon [1984], both of whom have stressed good timing and utilizing a window of opportunity as being crucial factors in the ability to collaborate successfully); strong stakeholder groups; broad-based involvement; credibility and openness of process; commitment and/or involvement of high-level, visible leaders; support or acquiescence of "established" authorities or powers; overcoming mistrust and skepticism; strong leadership of the process; interim successes; and a shift to broader concerns.

The collaborative process

A review of the literature advanced from both academicians and practitioners indicates that collaborations have much in common structurally. The majority of successful collaborations seem to pass through predictable developmental stages. However, the pace and outcome through which the stages are achieved vary greatly depending on numerous complex and competing variables.

Although authors tend to use different names to describe the stages of the collaborative process, Kagan (1991) summarizes the stages described in the literature as follows: formation, conceptualization, development, implementation, evaluation and termination. Similarly, Selin & Chavez (1995) have synthesized recent research on collaborative process as it occurs in the natural resource management field. It is proposed that collaboration emerges out of an environmental context labeled antecedents and then proceeds sequentially through problem-setting, direction-setting, and structuring phase. Outcome and feedbacks are the dynamic and cyclical nature of the collaborative process.

Less predictable than the stages, there are numerous variables which can differ in intensity and in their impact on the collaborative process. Theorists studying collaboratives have cautioned

against adhering to a single model in analyzing them. The complex configuration of variables that can impact collaborative efforts are varied and are often site or project specific (Gray, 1989; Kagan, 1991; Mattessich & Monsey, 1992; and Mealville & Blank, 1991).

Challenges to collaboration

Despite many advantages of collaborative planning, why have more regulatory agencies, local governments, human services, and environmental organizations not embraced and promoted this concept? According to Porter & Salvesen (1995), "... planning consumes large amounts of time and talent, and for the most part, no institutional mechanism exists to fund the necessary studies, countless meetings, and negotiations, or to develop and implement a plan" (p. 4). There is also no guarantee that, after all the time and resources are spent, there will be an agreement reached by the affected parties, or that the process will not result in stalemate. High transaction costs may also result from the considerable amount of interactions between government officials and citizens. According to Warren & Weschler (1986), "Transaction costs are the psychological, social, language and resource costs citizens bear when trying to communicate with bureaucrats and to consume the services provided by the typical bureaucratic structure" (pp. 11–12). In short, collaboration can be an uncertain process.

Additionally, collaborative planning requires compromise and tradeoffs. Many organizations cannot compromise on certain issues. Selin & Chavez (1995) have cited an unwillingness of some environmental advocacy groups to compromise as a significant obstacle to collaboration. According to the authors, "Litigation gives these groups a highly visible forum to express their views that is not afforded in compromise situations" (p. 193). Gray (1989) cites obstacles to collaboration may be too difficult to overcome when conflict is rooted in basic ideological differences; one stakeholder has the power to take unilateral action; and a legitimate convener cannot be found.

The organizational culture that exists in many public agencies, which often follows a centralized, rational-comprehensive approach to management, has been criticized in both the

environmental management and human service fields as an obstacle to meaningful collaboration (see for example, Chrislip & Larson, 1994; John, 1994; Osborne & Gabeler, 1993; Schatz, McAvoy & Lime, 1991; and Thomas, 1995). It has been argued that a more flexible and decentralized approach to public management would be more conducive to consensus-building (Robertson & Tang, 1995).

Finally, Bryson & Crosby (1992), Chrislip & Larson (1994), Pierce (1993), and Putnam (1993) have all cited the level of trust among members as one of the most decisive factors in whether a collaborative effort will succeed or collapse.

Why collaborate?

What is it that enables individuals and organizations to collaborate despite the difficulties? Why do people participate in collaboratives and share resources, especially if participants are on the opposite sides of an issue?

Historically, social theorists assumed that without a strong authority to force cooperation, all individuals and organizations, in pursuit of self-interest, would battle each other. Adhering to Mancur Olson's (1965) argument that people will "free-ride" if not given individual incentives, it was commonly thought that rational people will not act to achieve their common interest.

However, there is now convincing evidence that some individuals and organizations will strive to achieve collective goals even when they do not benefit themselves (see Hage, 1974; Marwell & Oliver, 1984; Ostrom, 1990, 1992). Knobe (1988) found that moral commitments were able to attract members to organizations when the organization had altruistic objectives. Etzioni's (1988) framework in *The Moral Dimension*, suggests that there are both self-interest and moral commitments involved in the rational choices of private and public organizations' desire to gain more resources and to accomplish collective goals.

Case Studies

Two mandated collaboratives in Nevada were analyzed: the Clark County Habitat Conservation Plan for the Desert Tortoise (HCP) and the Family Preservation and Family Support Program (FP/FS). Although the collaborative efforts are in different arenas,

they were selected because of the success of their respective collaborative endeavors, and because both collaborations produced concrete results measured in terms of specific outcomes. The chosen efforts are characterized by complex problems, diverse stakeholders, and differing social, political, cultural and ecological attributes. The intent was to gather comprehensive information that, while not generalizable to other initiatives and organizations in a statistical sense, will provide an important perspective to support decision-making and problem-solving by leaders facing difficult and intractable problems.

Plan of action

Initially, the author conducted a review of the textual documents from each collaborative. This included a content analysis of public and organizational documents, including media, newsletters, meeting notes, published articles, and other items used for historical development. After this was completed, a survey instrument (described below) was administered to the Steering Committee members of the two collaboratives. The purpose of the instrument was to gather information of the collaborative process of these two groups and to compare the averages to successful groups that have been assessed nationally.

After the instrument was analyzed, face-to-face/telephone interviews were conducted with several members of each collaborative project to validate, refine and extend what had been learned thus far. Various theoretical tools were employed to interpret and extract meaning.

Respondents

In the Spring of 1996, surveys were distributed to Steering Committee members from the FS/FP and the HCP. A total of thirty-one (31) surveys were distributed to the FS/FP Committee and thirty (30) to the HCP Committee. A total of twenty-five (25) and twenty-four (24) surveys, respectively, were returned—an overall response rate of 80 percent for each of the groups.

Statistical methods

A five-page measurement instrument was used to assess the status of a collaborative effort. The feedback instrument was

used as one tool to assist in the analysis of the collaborative structure. The instrument was developed to capture the strengths and weaknesses of collaborative groups and improve their ability to work together. The instrument development was based on a research project funded by the American Leadership Forum. The instrument (a 40 item scale), "Working Together: A Profile of Collaboration," assesses five dimensions of collaboration: 1) The context for the collaborative group; 2) The structure or design of the collaboration; 3) The members' skills and attitudes; 4) The process that is being used; and 5) The results that are being accomplished.

The instrument has been tested for reliability and validity. The scale reliability with accompanying Cronbach's Alpha for the five dimensions is as follows: context = .46; structure = .77; members = .87; process = .85; and results = .80. The low alpha for the dimension context comes from very little variance on the item scores and the tendency for respondents to rate the items very high (Omni Research, 1996).

The components and questions in this survey relate directly to much of the literature advanced thus far on collaborative efforts. The work discussed previously in this paper makes explicit many of the factors that are necessary for creating success with collaboratives and consensus-decision making models (Chrislip & Larsen, 1994; Melaville & Blank, 1991; Kagan, 1991; and Mattessich & Monsey, 1992). Research conducted by Gray (1989) and Hallet & Birchall (1992) have carefully outlined the various obstacles to effective collaboration.

Clark County Habitat Conservation Plan for the Desert Tortoise

Background

The largest reptile in the Mojave Desert is the desert tortoise, which has existed in one form or another for the past 20 million years. Historically, the desert tortoise occupied all of the Mojave from southwestern Utah through southern Nevada and southeastern California, and into the Sonoran Desert of Arizona and northern Mexico. Today, the tortoise populations are scattered and fragmented, and the species is in serious decline in most of its former habitat (Berry, 1990).

The tortoise is especially at risk in Southern Nevada where it is forced to share its living quarters with the burgeoning and rapidly growing community of Las Vegas. The tremendous population growth in Las Vegas has led to rapid residential and economic development in Clark County. This, coupled with years of drought, a highly contagious and often fatal disease known as the upper-respiratory tract disease, and competition for meager forage with cattle and sheep has led to the decline of this species by as much as 90 percent in some areas of the Mojave (Berry, 1990). In recent years, study populations have dropped another 10 to 20 percent annually. These conditions led to the emergency listing of the desert tortoise as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1989 (Christensen, 1992).

This action by the federal government stalled development in Clark County and resulted in a classic confrontation between economic development and the conservation of endangered species. Construction immediately came to a halt in Las Vegas. Clark County and the city of Las Vegas were forced to stop work on various public facilities, and new housing developments were put on hold, resulting in millions of dollars being tied up in construction commitments. At the same time, up to 6,000 individuals were relocating to the Las Vegas area on a monthly basis (Christensen, 1992; personal communication, Jim Moore, March 22, 1996).

As a result, the city of Las Vegas, the state of Nevada, and local developers sued the federal Department of Interior to overturn the listing. The lawsuit was lost as was the subsequent appeal (Bean, Fitzgerald & O'Connell, 1991).

The planning process

At an impasse, local leaders turned to a little-known and little-used provision of the ESA known as the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) contained in Section 10 (a) to help defuse the confrontation and bring together affected parties to the bargaining table. In 1982, Congress had amended the ESA to create a mechanism for reconciling governmental, business, and environmental interests (U.S. Fish & Wildlife, 1989).

Clark County assembled a steering committee (approximately 30 members) comprised of affected stakeholders including local government representatives from the County and the cities of Las

Vegas, North Las Vegas, Henderson, Boulder City and Mesquite; state and federal agency representatives from the Office of the Governor, Nevada's Congressional delegation, Nevada Departments of Agriculture, Wildlife and Farm Bureau, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service; ranchers; miners; off-road vehicle enthusiasts; hunters; recreationists; university biologists; representatives from developers and the Home-Builders Association; environmentalists including the Nature Conservancy, the Environmental Defense Fund and the local Tortoise Adoption Group; and concerned citizens. This committee took on the task of developing a mitigation plan to allow for the continued economic development in the burgeoning Las Vegas Valley and a suitable long-term protected habitat for the desert tortoise.

The stakes were high, and at a time when spotted owls and logging appeared almost daily in the media, affected parties in Clark County were anxious to avoid the divisive controversy that had embroiled efforts to protest the owl's habitat in Oregon and Washington. Such a failure to implement an acceptable mitigation plan in Clark County would result in a halt to the continued orderly rate of development.

The primary purpose of the Steering Committee was " . . . to oversee preparation of the HCP. It also plays a vital role in the planning process by bringing together groups affected by the listing of the desert tortoise and who have a significant stake in the HCP process" (Clark County, p. 4).

Meetings were held a minimum of once a month, or more frequently at the onset, and the Committee continues to keep this schedule six years later. An attorney, who in 1985 facilitated a similar HCP in Coachella Valley, California, involving the Coachella Valley Fringe-toed Lizard, was hired by Clark County to play a similar role with their plan. In addition, consultants were hired to draft all permit applications, environmental assessments and impact statements, all drafts of the plan, as well as the final plan itself. All major expenditures and recommendations had to be approved by the Board of County Commissioners in Clark County.

Several technical advisory committees were formed including one dealing with biological issues and another focusing on public

information and education. In addition, ad hoc committees were formed as needed to discuss such issues as road closures, research, and tortoise relocation projects. Finally, a hotline was set up to provide information to the general public on various tortoise topics ranging from pre-construction clearance procedures to adoption of tortoises as pets.

Several public hearings were held during the process, including the presentation of recommendations publicly to the Board of County Commissioners. As expected, some of the early hearings were highly contentious meetings with threats being made against some of the participants. At the transition period between moving from the four-year interim short-term plan to the thirty-year long-term plan, a scoping meeting was convened by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to solicit input in a non-confrontational way from the public. It was decided that this type of meeting would be held to still gain input from the public while avoiding the confrontations and arguments that took place at previous public meetings. The scoping meeting allowed for the public to simply list their areas of concerns on flip charts, but no interaction between committee members and the public was permitted.

The collaborative process did not lead to a total consensus. Not all were in agreement with some components of the final plan. The local Tortoise Group objected to the recommendation to cease with the mandatory surveying and removal of tortoises from lands scheduled to be developed. Additionally, the Environmental Defense Fund strongly opposed the plan to mitigate the loss of desert tortoise habitat in and around the Las Vegas Valley by managing public lands more intensely rather than through the purchase of private lands. The mitigation on federal lands was a departure from other HCPs that mitigate at least acre-for-acre by purchasing private lands to be set aside for the benefit of the target species (Beatley, 1995). However, in Clark County, the vast majority (90 percent) of remaining habitat in the planning area is owned by the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Obstacles/Challenges

Several obstacles and challenges threatened the collaborative process. Some County Commissioners were troubled by the notion of spending large amounts of money to protect the desert

tortoise. Initially, some of the Commissioners felt the general public did not support this effort in light of other pressing community needs such as crime, schools, and traffic concerns. However, the desert tortoise was the official state reptile, and the subcommittee on Public Information developed several effective Public Service Announcements (PSA's) concerning the protection of the tortoise and the larger ecosystem in Clark County. After a public opinion poll was commissioned, some of the Commissioners became convinced of the merits of the collaborative effort. It was also much easier to convince the general public that the desert tortoise was worth protecting, because thousands of Las Vegans have them as pets. It has been much more challenging to sell conservation for other endangered species such as the Kangaroo Rat in Riverside County, California; the Fairy Shrimp in Central California; and the Cottonmouse from Key Largo, Florida (Beatley, 1995; personal communication, Jim Moore, March 22, 1996).

The issue that threatened the credibility of the Steering Committee members the most, and which generated the most controversy, was the decision to euthanize tortoises not able to be utilized for research, selected for relocation or adopted out to families. There was a huge outcry from the public nationally, and from as far away as the United Kingdom who were confused with the notion of spending money to protect the tortoises only to kill them later. One steering committee person noted, "This was a classic example of 'group think' . . . we had been together for so long . . . through so many meetings where this issue was debated, that we had convinced ourselves that the public would accept this." The Board of County Commissioners later voted to preclude the euthanasia of any healthy tortoise.

The plan

This collaborative effort resulted in a four year short-term habitat conservation plan, which allowed for the development of 30,000 acres on non-federal land within Las Vegas Valley in exchange for the conservation of over 531,000 acres of prime desert tortoise habitat on federal lands south of the urban center. During the course of the short-term plan, a thirty-year Desert Conservation Plan was developed to incorporate additional species of concern to protect the County from potential future federal listings of these other increasingly rare desert inhabitants.

At least one additional Desert Conservation Area will be established over this thirty year period on public lands in the northern part of Clark County in exchange for the ability to develop over 111,000 acres of non-federal lands throughout the County. This entire effort has been paid for by means of development fees collected throughout Clark County. These fees will continue to fund all future conservation actions.

Conclusion

Unlike Oregon's heated controversy following the federal listing of the Spotted Owl as threatened leading to policy gridlock, further polarization of communities and organizations, and continued court intervention, the Desert Tortoise HCP has been hailed nationally as an example of how affected parties can craft a solution through collaboration, dialogue and engagement of affected parties (Bean, Fitzgerald & O'Connell, 1991; Christensen, 1992; Porter & Salvesen, 1995).

This is not to suggest that the process was problem-free or that there are not controversial issues associated with the Clark County HCP Plan. Given the amount and intensity of divergent views regarding land management and the desert tortoise, there was a real probability of years of gridlock. Meetings were seen by some participants as too drawn-out and often contentious. Mistrust and perceived political maneuvering among some participants marred and threatened the process. Yet, the collaborative planning of the HCP Desert Tortoise Steering Committee accomplished what most other groups dealing with the same or similar issues have failed to do.

Solutions are possible—given the right mixture of urgency, lack of better options, and committed and dynamic committee participants. Strategies to protect the desert tortoise are in place and economic development is continuing at record pace in the Las Vegas Valley.

The Family Preservation and Family Support Program

Background

In response to deteriorating conditions for many American children and to the increasing number of children in out-of-home placement, federal legislation was passed in August 1992

to strengthen troubled families. Hailed as the most significant reform of federally-funded child welfare services since the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-272), the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (P.L. 103-66) provides $1.3 billion to states over a five-year period for early intervention, prevention, and family support services. This legislation provided states with an unique opportunity to reform the child welfare system and create systems that are comprehensive, family-focused, and community-based.

This piece of legislation came on the heels of numerous national debates on the current crisis of the child welfare system. Despite federal and state laws that limit the time a child should stay in foster care (from 12 to 18 months), a recent evaluation of several large states found that thousands of children remain in foster care for substantially longer periods of time (Hardin, 1995). Community involvement in protecting children from abuse and neglect is limited in most jurisdictions and public Child Protective Services agencies carry the primary responsibility for responding to maltreatment.

Several states and communities have embarked on various reforms to serve vulnerable families and children. Some initiatives emphasize an approach that attempts to build a solid community base that meets the needs of families and provides a way to access services without bureaucratic barriers at the neighborhood level. It attempts to develop a community-based system of protecting children and utilizes the assets of the community instead of existing system interventions, thus allowing for multiple responses to reports of maltreatment.

At several national conferences designed to discuss the implementation of these new family preservation and family support monies—consumers, citizens, non-profit child and family serving agencies, and public child welfare agencies clashed over how the monies would be spent. Citizens and consumers assailed public officials for their failure to involve them in the planning and implementation of child welfare services. Citizens and consumers did not trust government officials. Non-profit agencies didn't trust the governmental agencies or each other. Some public officials saw the new monies as a way to reduce the excessively large caseloads of their agency case workers or to provide needed

services to at-risk families. Many non-profit agencies saw these monies as an opportunity to enable them to better respond to the overwhelming needs of their communities and to make up for some of the severe cuts in funding from their state and local governments. Consumers and citizens saw these funds as an opportunity to be included in the planning of services to the community.

The federal legislation required a year of assessment and grass-roots planning involving key stakeholders in the process. However, many states attempted to circumvent the collaborative planning because it was seen as time-consuming, resource-intensive, and included an uncertain outcome. This national debate and the accompanying controversy and distrust of each other and governmental officials spilled over into the state of Nevada.

The planning process

While the state Division of Child & Family Services is responsible for the administration of the program, the five-year plan was organized and developed by a thirty (30) member statewide Steering Committee. The committee met for over a year prior to the submission of the State Plan. Contribution and membership reflected diverse representation from federal, state and county agencies, the Schools of Social Work in the University System, the Family Court system, Native American organizations, consumers, concerned citizens, and a variety of private non-profit agencies dedicated to child and family welfare.

Initially, meetings were held once every other month. The Committee now meets every quarter with several standing committees meeting on a monthly basis. Subcommittees convened to include the following areas: public awareness; needs assessment; technical assistance and training; evaluation and outcome measures; and financial oversight. Ad Hoc committees were established to develop and evaluate the Request For Proposal (RFP) Process and to develop and train participants for town meetings and focus groups.

The state hired a full-time contractor to facilitate the meetings and to oversee the entire process. Consultants were hired to draft the state plan, evaluate the existing Child Protective

System, conduct statewide focus groups and evaluate the program's consortiums. In addition, outside mediators were brought in to assist the committee members in their decisions on how to allocate monies and to help when contentious problems evolved. Finally, technical assistance was accessed to train participants in consensus decision-making, family-centered programming, and community-based work.

Obstacles/Challenges

As with the collaborative effort involving the state desert tortoise, the Family Preservation/Family Support (FP/FS) process was far from problem-free. In fact, many stakeholders expressed serious reservations on participating in the statewide process. Planning meetings were often contentious and heated. The most significant issue that threatened the collaborative process was the level of distrust, both among many of the members, and towards state government.

The plan

The collaborative effort resulted in legislation being drafted to ensure an expanded role of communities in protecting children from maltreatment and supporting vulnerable families. It allows for some services to be provided directly from community agencies rather than the public child protective service agency. A decision was made to funnel the entire state allocation of funding under this project to local communities to assist them in building the capacity to successfully fulfill their expanded role.

Three community-based consortia located in northern, southern, and rural regions of Nevada were selected to receive funding. A decision was made to require a coordinated and collaborative response from the community. No single agency could apply. Services to be delivered through each of the consortia required active involvement from citizens in the community, local, county and state government, churches, local family serving agencies, schools, as well as local businesses and casinos. In order to attempt to "level the playing field," committee members assisted grass-roots/nontraditional participants in drafting their proposal requests for funding. This was seen as a significant departure from traditional practice involving funders and prospective recipients of the funding.

Projects ultimately funded were consumer driven and neighborhood based. The state contracted with the local universities to assist each consortia in the development of measurable outcome indicators. Federal officials hailed the five-year state plan as a model plan and an example of consensus-building and collaborative planning that involved key stakeholders from the community (personal communication, Sid Justice, February, 29, 1996).

Conclusion

The FP/FS project effectively engaged all major stakeholders in a process that resulted in a shared-vision and a shared-plan of action. The state has attempted to move toward community-based protection with emphasis on prevention rather than crisis response; community-wide responsibility for protection of children rather than responsibility by a single government entity; and multiple, differential response to reports rather than a single, uniform response. New legislation has been introduced in the 1997 Legislative Session that would change existing statute and allow for varied levels of intervention and services in both investigation and treatment of child protective services. Levels of mistrust between major stakeholders and government officials have been drastically reduced and will allow for additional opportunities for consensus-building in the future.

Survey Findings

Data analysis plan

Since the data were non-normally distributed, non-parametric statistics were used (O'Sullivan & Rassel, 1995). The level of significance was set at .05. Responses were lumped into the five main categories: Context, Structure, Members, Process and Results. Therefore, the plan of analysis of these data involved comparisons of the five main categories. The mean values of each of the categories were tested for significance for both groups. These were compared between the two groups as well as with additional data collected from respondents nationally that have used the instrument. In addition, individual mean scores were compared between the two groups.

Finally, responses to each item on the survey were analyzed separately through descriptive statistics to determine specific

collaborative strengths and weaknesses in the sample as a whole. These observations will be useful in determining which of the specific areas of the planning process are most significant for the two collaborative groups.

Findings

Comparison between groups

Two sample t-tests were performed to test associations between the two groups (FP/FS and the HCP) and across the five main categories outlined in the survey instrument. Membership was found to be highly significantly different between the two groups (p=.001). The category Structure also was found to be significantly different (p=.05). The categories Results and Process both approached significance at p=.08 respectively.

Chi-square evaluation of the data indicated that only the category Membership between the two groups was significantly different than what would be expected for random distribution with a p value of .01. However, both categories of Results and Process again approached significance with p values of .08 and .07 respectively.

Comparison of categories

A comparison of the five categories between the FP/FS, HCP and the national group data showed that the category Context was perceived as extremely high in all cases (mean= 1.50; 1.39; and 1.41 respectively).

Although lower than Context, Structure and Process were also high as shown below. Membership was rated lowest by the HCP group.

	FP/FS	*HCP*	*National*
Structure	1.61	1.70	1.72
Process	1.64	1.84	1.76
Membership	1.63	2.04	1.77
Results	1.77	1.87	1.95

Discussion

Quantifying, observing, and measuring collaboration is a difficult challenge. Collaborative strategies are not identical; different tactics evolve to accomplish different objectives. Ultimately, determining success of a collaborative effort must be based on whether the originating objective was obtained. What can be inferred from the results of the survey instrument and accompanying case studies, is that the factors which appear to be common components of any successful collaborative effort, such as membership, structure and process, are at a minimum the basis from which all other variables are developed. The success of the two collaboratives cannot be attributed to these basic variables alone; however, the identified components formed the framework upon which the ultimate goals were achieved. Due to the peculiar political and socio-economic dynamic of each effort, the emphasis in weighing that each of these components variables receive may be very different, yet the outcome can be perceived to be a common success.

Differences in collaborative groups

Despite the obvious differences between the two groups: one being related to environmental issues and the other focusing on social service problems, there are some significant differences concerning the reason the collaboration was initiated and the membership characteristics. Although both efforts came about as a result of federal regulation, the HCP project came about after repeated efforts to invalidate the emergency listing of the tortoise had failed in court. At an impasse, affected parties agreed to come to the table to attempt a resolution. Since legal recourse had failed, a collaborative venture to craft a solution may have been a strong motivating factor in members' commitment to the process. Some participants of other HCP projects have described the situation as a kind of "balance of terror" in which environmental and development communities stay with the process because failure to do so would create a huge liability for their competing interests (Porter & Salvesen, 1995). In the FP/FS project, the economic and political risks for non-participation were minor and there had been no court involvement in the issue.

Additionally, the stakes were much higher in the HCP project. The continued economic growth of Clark County was virtually at a standstill. Failure to funnel funds for community-based programming through the FP/FS project, while disappointing, would not have created the immediate economic impact and political fallout for the state. That is not to suggest that a decision to keep federal social service monies at the state level would not have created political controversy. In fact, many participants expected that to happen. However, it would not have led to severe consequences and immediate liability for the failure to craft an acceptable solution.

Membership characteristics also differed significantly. Participants in the HCP process came from opposite ends of the political and philosophical spectrum with diametrically opposing views concerning whether the desert tortoise warranted listing as endangered. Members' views were more divergent, intense and volatile. In contrast, although there was a significant amount of distrust, especially with consumers, most individuals involved in the FP/FS project were like-minded and shared similar views on the need for community-based services for at-risk families. This accounts for the significant findings when the two groups were compared to each other. The two sample t-tests and the chi-square evaluation were both highly significant. Furthermore, the Membership category for the HCP was the lowest average of any category at 2.04 compared to 1.63 for the FP/FS and 1.76 for the national data average.

Evaluation and funding

Items accounting for some of the lowest averages addressed the monitoring and evaluation system. This corresponds to some of the concerns voiced in the literature regarding the considerable amount of funding which is needed for effective collaborative efforts (Marsh & Lallas, 1995; Porter and Salvesen, 1995). Evaluation and monitoring are resource intensive. Sources for funding many environmental, land management and water resource issues have historically relied heavily on development impact fees. However, increasingly, developers are pushing for the costs to be shared by the general public. Timothy Beatley (1995) suggests, "Often, previous growth and development in a community, which may

benefit the entire community, may be responsible for bringing a species to the brink of extinction. Is it not equitable, therefore, for the broader public to contribute to these conservation efforts?" (p. 67). A move to push more of the costs to the general public may erode future interest in protecting various species, especially if they are not easy to market to the community, like insects or most reptiles.

In the FP/FS collaboration, the second lowest score was attributed with the item concerning having adequate staff to plan and administer the collaborative effort. This FP/FS effort is funded entirely by the federal government. Many members doubted that any other entity would pick up the cost if federal funds dried up. Like many one-time discretionary funding projects from the federal government, continuation of these efforts rarely materialize at the same level or intensity from the state or local community due to an inability to find a stable funding source.

Lessons learned

So why should the reader believe that the collaborative process described here led to the resolution of the conflicts rather than the demands of the situation, the need for action, or the general ability of political and administrators' actors to craft solutions to problems and overcome barriers to action?

In the case of the HCP, although the urgent development needs of Clark County was a strong motivating reason that brought people to the table and contributed to the ultimate resolution of the issue at hand, similar public land management planning efforts for the desert tortoise in the other high growth regions of its range (southern California and northwestern Arizona) have failed or are still in the process of trying to reach solutions to the multiplicity of public land-use issues (e.g. the Western Mojave Coordinated Management Plan, and the northern and eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan). Reasons attributed to the lack of a plan included the failure to include those affected by proposed HCP plan, the inability to identify a credible outside conveyer, and not securing the commitment of high-level, visible leaders (Jim Moore, personal communication, April 20, 1996).

For example, the failure to involve affected citizens in public land management policy in the Western Mojave Coordinated Management Plan early on resulted in a complete lack of acceptance by local residents in the affected California communities of Barstow, Baker and Victorville. After three years of virtually internal planning and development, public support for the plan was solicited and duly rejected. This forced all parties to regroup with new participants including a loosely-knit, populist coalition of public land users referred to by local and federal officials as CAVE People (Citizens Against Virtually Everything) (Molly Brady, personal communication, April 9, 1996).

Although the federal Department of Health and Human Services is in the process of evaluating the success of the FP/FS program, recent national and regional conferences on the program have highlighted those states that have been successful in executing an acceptable plan and identifying needed system-wide changes. Reasons cited have included failing to employ the various distinctive features of the collaborative process.

As previously acknowledged, there in no single way to achieve resolution of complex problems through collaborative planning. The political culture and mediating variables will dictate the objectives and structures to be utilized. However, there are a few lessons, experiences and outcomes that can be advanced from analysis of these successful initiatives in Nevada and may prove helpful for others engaged or planning to engage in similar collaborative efforts.

Involvement of affected parties. Both collaborative efforts spent a considerable amount of time involving individuals and groups affected by the problem at hand. Involvement was broad-based. This encompassed various strategies to include divergent interests on the Steering Committee and to involve the public in defining the problem, as well as input into the resolution of the problem. However, individual public involvement was not pursued without recognition of the need to protect the greater public interest. Both groups attempted to achieve a balance between the experience of governmental officials and the knowledge of citizen and community groups.

Shared-leadership developed. Although both collaborative efforts were federally initiated, leadership was not centered on governmental officials. Leadership was a shared responsibility. Government officials did not assume the traditional leader role but assisted in the facilitation of the efforts, and hired credible conveners to assist with the process. When contentious issues arose, individuals from the outside were brought in, or a consensus decision-making process was employed.

Trust became stronger as the collaborative effort continued. Trust was a major issue throughout both collaborative efforts. Due to past perceptions and the controversial nature of the various issues, establishing a level of trust between members was seen as the most crucial element for most members. Both groups spent a great deal of time bringing the right players to the table and developing an atmosphere where individuals could learn to work together. Several members said they have become more tolerant and have developed a greater understanding of the "other side." However, one member cautioned that collaboration is not for the faint-hearted: "You have to be psychologically tough. . . . People who can't put up with some screaming and yelling won't last."

Other collaborative efforts emerged. The Clark County HCP is in the process of evolving and expanding its focus on other species which may be equally impacted by the pace of development in the Las Vegas Valley and surrounding area. The Clark County Multi-Species HCP seeks to provide both public and private land owners the assurance that, with a few modifications to the current conservation plan for the desert tortoise, the federal government will not require substantial additional lands be set aside for the protection of target species.

Additionally, other collaborative efforts resulted from each of these groups. For example, a bottom-up grass-roots collaboration has formed in Moapa Valley (north of Las Vegas) called the Muddy River Regional Environmental Impact Alleviation Committee. The initiative was started by a resident member of the Clark County HCP group who represented the interests of miners and rural citizens. Local Moapa Valley residents agreed to

participate to avoid federal intervention due to the listing of two species as "species of concern" and the potential listing of several others.

Likewise, as a result of the other collaborative effort, two family serving initiatives have attached themselves to the FP/FS collaborative project including: the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count Project (a nationwide effort to collect benchmarks on the status of children on a state-by-state basis) and a federal home visiting project attempting to coordinate the delivery of services to first-time mothers. In addition, experiences and tools learned during the FP/FS project in conducting town meetings and focus groups have been employed to support a Governor's initiative to develop family resource centers throughout the state.

Government provided frameworks for "people to act". The government succeeded in providing the arena for collective action and citizen involvement to occur. Kirlin (1996) refers to this as "place value," where government provides the necessary frameworks within which individuals, groups, and organizations can act. Members from both groups gave high marks for government's ability to engage key stakeholders in crafting solutions to various complex problems and in the use of both formal and informal resources and structures.

Future Research

This study has contributed to an emerging data base on the prolific field of collaboration. Additional studies aimed at understanding various aspects of collaboration are needed. For example, are some factors more likely to be present in collaborative projects which are mandated, than in efforts which are entirely voluntary? Both of the projects examined in this study came about as a result of federal intervention. Is it more difficult to achieve certain factors in mandated collaborations?

Additionally, what are the long term effects of collaborative efforts? Since collaborative efforts in the arenas of human services, resource management and environmental planning are relatively new, it is perhaps premature to give an accurate assessment of their long-term viability.

Finally, what are the boundaries of collaborative efforts? Do they translate into political action, resource development and other collaborative ventures?

The next few decades will undoubtedly provide even greater conflicts where collaborative efforts may be the only viable avenue for resolution. It is important to understand the limitations of these efforts and to suggest possibilities for improving this method of handling, and ultimately resolving, complex issues.

Conclusion

Putnam (1993, 1995) questions whether civic community can be developed when he laments, "The civic community has deep historical roots. This is a depressing observation for those who view institutional reform as a strategy for political change. . . . Where norms and networks of civic engagement are lacking, the outlook for collective action appears bleak" (p. 183). However, many theorists in the fields of resource management, human services and environmental planning appear more optimistic in their belief that civic community can be created (Bryson & Crosby, 1992; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; John, 1994; Ostrom, 1990, 1992). These authors have also successfully documented numerous cases where new arrangements have been crafted to effectively solve complex and seemingly intractable human and environmental resource issues within a coordinated, consensus-building framework.

This is especially important for a city like Las Vegas where communities are just beginning to develop. They do not have the deep historical roots that Putnam suggests are needed. It is possible for new communities to undertake effective collective action for the common good. The Clark County Habitat Conservation Plan for the Desert Tortoise and the Family Preservation and Family Support Program are excellent examples of this. Although mistrust permeated the initial meetings of these groups, and strong philosophical differences existed, a shared vision and commitment to the issues at hand enabled successful resolutions of problems and effective plans of action to be put in place.

Collaboration is not a cure-all, one-size-fits-all model. It appears to work well when the affected parties perceive that it is in

their best interest to be at the table, and they don't have a better solution. It is important to choose issues where a collaborative process would be significant and useful in building a sense of community and would provide a foundation on which to build upon. Using collaboration to resolve intractable problems is fairly experimental. Despite many of the purported benefits, it remains an uncertain process. This uncertainty, coupled with the high transaction costs, clearly is a limiting factor in its broader application. However, if the United States is going to be prepared to deal with inevitable future conflicts; politicians, bureaucrats and the general public will need to at least be willing to try consensus-based mechanisms.

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