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PLAYING NICE IN THE SANDBOX: EXPLORING THE BEHAVIORS OF EXECUTIVE AND OPERATIONAL LEADERS IN CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

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PLAYING NICE IN THE SANDBOX: EXPLORING THE BEHAVIORS OF EXECUTIVE AND OPERATIONAL LEADERS IN CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of California State University, San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by Debra Lynn Mustain

March 2019
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March 2019
Approved by:

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Edna Martinez, Committee Member
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ABSTRACT

Educational attainment in the United States is at the highest levels since recording started, yet large numbers of students are not completing education at the secondary and postsecondary levels. This lack of education impacts their long-term prospects for living wage careers, stable housing and the ability to support both themselves and their families. A growing response to this crisis is the development of cross-sector collaborative partnerships to address educational attainment resulting in an educated and skilled workforce that will ultimately improve prosperity in a community or region. This collaborative work has expanded as a result of growing recognition that all sectors of the economy have a stake in education as a way to create strong communities and regional prosperity. While evidence of the challenges in educating all students abounds, evidence of success in collaborative partnership efforts to improve education is sparse.

This constructivist grounded theory research study was developed to explore the collaborative behaviors leading to success in improving educational outcomes for all students. Leaders at the executive and operational levels of collaborative partnerships participated in this study through a three-phase process of semi-structured interviews. Data collection and analysis for this study used a process of constant comparison and occurred simultaneously with a comprehensive literature review. Participants in this research study represented collaborative partnerships from across the United States that are focused on

iii
improving educational attainment at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Four findings from this research study support an overarching substantive grounded theory that explicates the importance of moral purpose as the underpinning for achievement of collaborative outcomes. The findings further describe the behaviors necessary for success in crafting strong relationships, building trust, and communicating for impact. These interpersonal behaviors can be supported by the presence of psychological safety at the group level to maximize the efficacy of collaborative partnerships to achieve systems improvements in education. This study also encourages all collaborative partnerships to consider using a continuous improvement approach to their work grounded in intellectual humility. The study concludes with recommendations for future research to further explore the implications of psychological safety in the context of collaborative partnerships, noting that both intellectual humility and curiosity are aligned with the concepts of psychological safety and continuous improvement or improvement science.
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who has always been in my corner, even when I made mistakes. To my parents, thank you for teaching me the value of hard work. To my sister, thank you for (generally) answering the phone when I call and for teaching me about being a strong woman and good friend. To my children, persist. You are kind, smart, talented and wonderful in your own ways, and I have every confidence that you will each achieve your biggest dreams and aspirations. Finally, to my husband, Clarke, I could not have done this without your constant love and care. I'm so proud to be your wife.

I love all of you more than you will ever know.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................ iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ....................................................................................................... v

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................ ix

CHAPTER ONE introduction ................................................................................................. 1
  Problem Statement .............................................................................................................. 2
  Purpose Statement .............................................................................................................. 7
  Research Questions .......................................................................................................... 8
  Significance of the Study .................................................................................................. 8
  Assumptions ..................................................................................................................... 9
  Delimitations .................................................................................................................... 9
  Definitions of Key Terms ................................................................................................ 10
  Summary .......................................................................................................................... 14

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW .............................................................................. 16
  Sensitizing Concepts ....................................................................................................... 18
  Relationships: “Playing Nice in the Sandbox” .............................................................. 19
  Moral Purpose ................................................................................................................ 44
  Trust .................................................................................................................................. 45
  Psychological Safety ........................................................................................................ 51
  Continuous Improvement ................................................................................................. 60
  Communication ................................................................................................................ 64
  Leadership ........................................................................................................................ 67
  Summary .......................................................................................................................... 79
Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 211

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROTOCOL ........................................... 214

APPENDIX B: CONSTANT COMPARISON PROTOCOL ............................................. 219

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER .............................................. 222

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT .............................................................................. 224

APPENDIX E: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL .................................... 227

APPENDIX F: RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANTS .................................................... 229

APPENDIX G: COMMONALITIES AMONG FRAMEWORKS ........................................ 231

REFERENCES .................................................................................................................... 234
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Nine Characteristics of Effective Systems Leaders................................. 34

Figure 2. Five Keys to a Successful Google Team................................................. 60

Figure 3. Experience of Psychological Danger versus Psychological Safety .. 197
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Education has long been considered a cornerstone of the "stability and vitality of our democracy" (Stitzlein, 2017, p. 1) in the United States. Our economies have developed and sustained innovations over time that placed the U.S. as a leader of industrialized nations (West, 2016). Our communities have developed and depended on groups of leaders that can address local challenges, including housing, public safety, and growth. Our families have relied on education in many, but not all cases to propel children beyond their parents' educational achievements and toward greater prosperity in successive generations. Despite the growth and gains in the U.S. economy, in communities and families, the dream of an earned degree or credential and the prosperity that comes from a well-paid career remains only a dream. The following is a study that explored the behaviors of executive and operational level leaders in cross-sector collaboration focused on improving educational attainment. This chapter starts with a discussion of the consequences of failed educational experiences and the costs to individuals, organizations, and communities. Next, the purpose of the study is explicated, providing an overview of the context and challenges addressed in collaborative partnerships. Finally, this chapter shares the research inquiry, assumptions, delimitations, and provides definitions and contextual descriptions of the key terms used in this study.
Problem Statement

There is convincing evidence on the social and economic value of educational attainment in the United States (Belfield, 2014; Belfield & Levin, 2008). Literature detailing the health benefits to both individuals and communities includes compelling evidence on the association between socioeconomic status and health (Link & Phelan, 1995). Multiple research studies detail the clear relationship between schooling and the reduction of criminal activity (Billings, Deming & Rockoff, 2014; Lochner & Moretti, 2003; Belfield, 2008). In 2013, the estimated national savings from increasing the high school male graduation rate by five percentage points was $18.5 billion dollars ("Saving Futures, Saving Dollars," 2013). The value of education to lifetime earnings has been extensively researched and reported (Carnevale, Rose & Cheah, 2011; Carnevale, Strohl & Melton, 2011). Studies on educational attainment and high-skill, high-wage careers highlight an increasing need for bachelor's degrees in the current and emerging U.S. economy (Carnevale, Jayasundera & Gulish, 2016; Carnevale, Strohl & Melton, 2011). Despite overwhelming evidence of the social and economic benefits of education, many students fail to complete, even at the high school level.

The United States is home to over 15 million students attending high school in grades 9-12 (The NCES Fast Facts, 2018). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) provides data regarding education across the K-12 and postsecondary levels of education in the United States. According to NCES,
the adjusted cohort graduation rate of these students in 2015-2016 was 84%, its highest average since the start of measurement in 2010-2011 with over four of five students graduating with a high school diploma within four years of starting ninth grade. While overall graduation rates are trending upward, there are clear gaps in achievement for students of color in some areas of the country. NCES statistics show that only 57% of Black students in the state of Nevada graduated in 2015-2016. Only two states, Texas and West Virginia, had Black student graduation rates that were higher than the 84% overall national rate. In that same school year in Minnesota, only 65% of Hispanic students graduated while in six other states (Arkansas, Iowa, Maine, Texas, Vermont, and West Virginia), graduation rates for Hispanic students were higher than the national average graduation rate. White and Asian/Pacific Islander students fared better than their Black and Hispanic counterparts overall, respectively averaging 88% and 91% graduation rates across the nation (NCES Reference Tables, n.d.). Regardless of the state or the population served, the failure to graduate from high school for 16% or more of our nation’s children comes with crippling, long-term costs to their families, the communities where they live and the economies that they participate in. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that full-time workers (age 25 and older) without a high school diploma earned an average of $494 a week in the first quarter of 2016, while their counterparts with a high school diploma earned $679 per week on average. Earnings for workers with some college or an associate degree rose to $782 weekly in the same period, and for
those with a bachelor's degree, the weekly average was $1,155. Advanced degree holders with master's, professional or doctoral degrees earned $1,435 weekly on average in the same period. For the 84% that completed high school nationally in 2015-2016, the opportunity to earn an advanced certificate, credential or degree can result in better employment opportunities, higher wages, and improved health (McFarland et al., 2018).

The improvements in graduation rates are not solely happening at the high school level. Postsecondary degree attainment in the United States is also trending upward, with increases in the overall numbers of associate, bachelor's and master's degrees from 2000-2016 (McFarland et al., 2018). In 2016, the six-year graduation rate for full-time, first-time college students, indicating those that graduated from a "four-year" college or university program within "150% of the normal time for completion" was 60%. Retention rates from 2015-2016 show that 81% of students were retained from freshman to sophomore year. At the community college level, graduation rates were not reported, but retention rates from first to second year for full-time, first-time students was 62%. In 2015-2016, 1.9 million bachelor's degrees and 1 million associate degrees were conferred in the United States. This represents an increase of 54% for bachelor's degrees and 76% for associate degrees in the period from 2000-2016.

While this upward trend appears positive, a historical achievement gap persists. Achievement gap data on postsecondary attainment shows that percentages of White 25 to 29-year-olds who attained an associate degree or
higher in 2017 in comparison to both Black (21%) and Hispanic (26%) students were not significantly different from the corresponding gap in 2000, 17 years earlier (McFarland et al., 2018). This trend was also reflected in bachelor’s degree attainment, with a gap between White and Black attainment at 19% and White and Hispanic students at 24%. From 2000-2017, White students earning a master's degree increased from 6 to 10%, while Hispanic students moved from 2 to 4%. Over the same 17-year period, Black students earning master’s degrees did not increase, remaining at 5% annually (McFarland et al., 2018).

While diploma and degree attainment data show persistent achievement gaps, NCES data also shows the number of young people who are not working and not going to school, and the economic and racial disparities that exist for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and students of color. In 2016, 17% of the nation’s 20 to 24-year-olds did not work and were not pursuing higher education. The data reflected a greater percentage of young people (20-24) in poor households that were not working and not attending school at 31%, and a corresponding percentage of 13% in non-poor households. In the United States in 2016, American Indian youth represented 31%, Black youth represented 26%, and Hispanic youth represented 20% of the 20 to 24-year-olds that were unemployed and not pursuing an education while White and Asian youth represented 13 and 12 percent respectively (McFarland et al., 2018).

The price of perpetuating the achievement gap can be estimated from multiple perspectives as detailed earlier in this chapter. The costs to regional and
national economies include lost intellectual capital and lost gross domestic product production in the United States, estimated at 5.6 billion dollars in 2011. (McFarland et al., 2018). It also extends the continuation of critical gaps in workforce preparation and training for current and future industries as well as lost productivity from the undereducated and unskilled workforce that is currently available. In response to the challenges in recruiting and retaining an educated and skilled workforce, employers, organizations, and agencies from private, public and nonprofit sectors are developing collaborative partnerships with educational organizations. These partnerships include both K-12 and postsecondary educational institutions. The primary focus of these collaborative, cross-sector partnerships is to equip students with the 21st-century knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes, and dispositions for success in college, career, and life (Greenhill, 2010). The creation of cross-sector partnerships to improve current systems of education and workforce development recognizes the urgent need to change educational outcomes for large numbers of students. It also highlights the potential return on investment for partners as a result of collaboratively preparing an educated citizenry and skilled, locally-available workforce.

The goal of building shared prosperity in a plethora of diverse and unique communities across in the United States is ambitious at best and is seen by many as an impossible task. The challenge of accomplishing the work needed to achieve that ultimate goal, and what it will take in the realm of collaborative
partnerships to do so over time is the topic of this research. This study explored executive and operational level behaviors in cross-sector collaborative partnerships that are employing career pathways as a primary strategy for improving educational attainment at the secondary and postsecondary levels within a defined community or region.

Purpose Statement

The challenge of educating a child in the 21st Century is universally shared among families of all races, religions, and socioeconomic classes in the United States. An educated citizenry and skilled, locally-available workforce are viewed as essential resources for increasing regional prosperity (Berger & Fisher, 2013). Preparation of all students to enter and complete postsecondary education at any level and to successfully participate in the workforce requires significant shifts in both teacher and student preparation for an emerging and uncertain global economy (Wagner, 2015). Collaborative partnerships have developed among employers, educators, government and community organizations and agencies to collectively address economic prosperity through educational attainment (Berger & Fisher, 2013). Evidence of long-term success in collaboratives is scarce (Willis, Greene, Abramowicz, & Riley, 2016). The human capital required for a sustained focus on improving educational attainment includes both executive and operational level leaders positioned and committed to moving the work forward beyond political elections, competing educational priorities, funding challenges, and retirements. To successfully implement and institutionalize
regional, long-term, and sustainable change, leaders from all sectors will need to develop effective, replicable processes and practices for recruiting, selecting and engaging leaders at the highest levels across multiple public and private sectors.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research inquiry is to explore executive and operational level behaviors in cross-sector collaborative partnerships that are employing career pathways as a primary strategy for improving educational attainment at the secondary and postsecondary levels within a defined community or region.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the information available on the leadership behaviors necessary for developing and sustaining successful cross-sector collaborative partnerships focused on improving regional prosperity by increasing educational attainment for all students. The critical behaviors to foster collaborative success identified in this study can influence the degree of success for a collaborative partnership. Partners in collaborative efforts can use information gained in this research study to inform the development of collaborative partnership principles, processes, and practices. Potential collaborative partnership members, policymakers, school boards, technical assistance providers, and funders can use the information from this research study to investigate and improve current and emerging collaborative practices.
The primary objective of this study was to develop theory regarding the leadership behaviors that foster measurable and sustainable improvements in educational outcomes through cross-sector collaboration. To date, there is little evidence for the sustainability of such collaborative partnerships. The benefit to existing and emerging collaborative partnerships includes the ability to apply theory developed from this research in multiple similar collectives and to learn from that application as appropriate in each context to strengthen and potentially accelerate the systems change process in education and workforce development.

Assumptions

The primary assumption made in the development and implementation of this research study is that collaboration is an effective behavior in addressing the improvement of educational outcomes for all students.

Delimitations

This study did not evaluate the validity of specific educational improvements or initiatives adopted by each collaborative. It did not evaluate the achievement of any particular "improvement" (defined locally) or set of improvements. This study identifies research that challenges the notion that collaboration is effective, but it does not seek to address the question of whether or not collaboration is a worthwhile endeavor. The study focused on how behaviors and actions of leaders at the executive and operational levels of a
collaborative partnership work to move toward the commonly identified overarching goal, set of goals or outcomes for improving educational attainment in a community or region. Individual demographic information, including gender, age, and ethnicity was not considered as part of the research study. This research study did not evaluate the effectiveness of structures (networks versus hierarchical organizations, for example) nor did it evaluate or focus on a collaborative of a specific geographic size or boundary (school district, city or region).

Definitions of Key Terms

The definitions necessary to provide a foundational understanding of the terms in the chapters that follow are provided below. These definitions represent how the terms will be used in the document in its entirety.

Behavior: “The way in which someone conducts oneself or behaves; the manner of conducting oneself; the response of an individual, group, or species to its environment; the way in which something functions or operates.” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Behavior is the term that will be consistently used to describe the actions and interactions of research study participants and in their descriptions of experiences throughout this dissertation.

Collaboration: “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, Murray-Close & Monsey, 2001, p. 4). Bedwell, Wildman, DiazGranados, Salazar, Kramer, and Salas (2012) define collaboration as: "an emergent process whereby two or more social entities actively and reciprocally engage in joint activities aimed at achieving at least one shared goal." In this research study, the terms collaboration and collaborative will be used to describe the cross-sector efforts of groups, teams, and partnerships. The conditions for and principles of a collective impact approach are discussed in the document. Virtually all collaborative partners who participated in this research study claimed some level of recognition of the collective impact approach in their local efforts. However, they primarily discussed their group’s work with the use of “collaboration”, “collaborative group” or “partnership.”

**College and Career Readiness**: Definitions of college and career readiness are still being debated among states for purposes of state accountability measures. The definition developed by the School Superintendents Association (AASA) includes these college-ready indicators: Grade point average of 2.8 or above on a 4.0 scale, and completion of one or more academic indicators, including advanced placement exam completion with a score of 3 or more; completion of an advanced placement course with a letter grade of C or above; Dual credit for college English or mathematics with a letter grade of C or above; completion of Algebra II with a letter grade of C or above; completion of an International Baccalaureate Exam with a score of 4 or better.
The career-ready indicators from the AASA include identification of a career interest and completion of two of the defined benchmarks for career readiness, including: 90% or better attendance; completion of 25 or more hours of community service; completion of a workplace learning experience (hours not defined); completion of an industry credential; completion of a dual credit career pathway course; and participation in two or more organized co-curricular activities (“Redefining Ready!”, n.d.)

**Collective Impact**: “Collective Impact is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem, using a structured form of collaboration.” (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 36). The conditions for and principles of a Collective Impact (CI) approach are discussed in this research study. Collaborative partners interviewed for this study espoused the conditions and principles of CI in various ways and acknowledged CI as an approach that they may use in part, but consistently described their structures as collaborative groups or collaborative organizations, not collective impact organizations.

**Cross-Sector Collaborative**: An organization or group (formal or informal) organized to work jointly with others or together across a sociological, economic, or political subdivision of society. (Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2006, p. 44)

**Cross-Sector Collaboration**: “The linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to
achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately.” (Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2006, p. 44)

**Executive Level Leaders:** In this research study, executive-level leader's typical job titles include public or private sector presidents and chief executive officers, superintendents, and executive directors.

**Group:** Collection of individuals who coordinate their individual efforts (Carter, 2009). “A group is defined as a number of individuals gathered in close proximity due to a common interest.” Carter further differentiates teams and groups by the following:

- Groups have common interests, while teams have common goals.
- He states that the term group is perceived to be “more fair, neutral, unbiased and all-inclusive”, and does not carry the connotation of winners and losers, thus often replacing the term team in organizational efforts. (Carter, 2009, p. 4).

**Operational Level Leaders:** In this research study, operational level leader's typical job titles include public or private sector manager, directors, deans, principals, associate or assistant principals, coaches, and coordinators.

**Partnership:** Merriam-Webster dictionary provides three definitions of partnership, two of which are relevant to this research study. The definitions include: "1) The state of being a partner: participation; 2) A relationship resembling a legal partnership and usually involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities.” (“Partnership”, n.d.)
In this research study, the terms collaborative partnership and collaborative group will be used interchangeably, consistent with how research study participants and literature referenced use the terms.

Social Entrepreneurship: An enterprise with the aim of solving social problems or effecting social change. (Martin & Osberg, 2007)

Team: “A group of people who do collective work and are mutually committed to a common team purpose and challenging goals related to that purpose.” (Hill & Lineback, 2011, p. 1)

Summary
The importance of educational attainment for all students and its relationship to health, safety, and prosperity is underscored by data that shows persistent underperformance of our nation’s students of color and economically disadvantaged students in earning high school diplomas and postsecondary degrees. Wage data presented in this chapter highlights the disparity in income levels for those without a high school diploma and those who have earned degrees at all levels with incremental increases in income at every level of achievement. Young people who are economically disadvantaged continue to drop out of both education and the workforce in disproportionate numbers as compared to their non-poor counterparts. The cost to the United States economy in lost productivity, health care, social services, and safety is well-documented. Given the data, people from all sectors recognize that change is needed. Leaders from business, education, government, nonprofit and community
organizations are coming together to address the challenges of an uneducated and unskilled citizenry and workforce.

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two represents the major concepts identified and discussed in this research study. The chapter is organized into five broad categories of information developed through an iterative process of data collection and analysis coupled with an extensive review of relevant literature through multiple sectors engaged in collaborative efforts. The five categories presented in Chapter Two include literature relevant to the topics of Collaboration, Leadership, Relationships, Trust and Communication.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Cross-sector collaboration is proliferating as a strategy for addressing challenging societal issues (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006). Groups of interested and like individuals in diverse settings with an equally diverse set of agendas are increasingly coming together to attempt to solve complex problems (Green & Johnson, 2015). These societal problems are not merely technical challenges, but adaptive ones requiring new ways of thinking and working together (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). Multi-organizational, cross-sector partnerships are increasingly developed to address complex challenges that exceed the capacity of any single organization to solve them (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Clarke & Fuller, 2010). Thomson, Perry and Miller (2009, p. 23) state: "A growing body of multidisciplinary research suggests that we live in an increasingly "networked" world that demands forms of organizing quite different from bureaucracies or firms" (as cited in O'Toole, 1997; Powell, 1990). This study explored executive and operational level behaviors in cross-sector collaborative partnerships that are employing career pathways as a primary strategy for improving educational attainment at the secondary and postsecondary levels within a defined community or region.

A grounded theory research design was used for this research project. Among the three traditions of grounded theory widely recognized in the literature, constructivist grounded theory is a recent iteration and is ontologically and
epistemologically aligned to relativist and constructivist worldviews (Charmaz, 2014). In the original conception of "classic" grounded theory, the literature review was relegated to the end of the data collection process to allow theory to emerge, rather than force its development (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Strauss and Corbin's (1990) stance on and revision of the original grounded theory literature review affirmed the inevitable existence of prior knowledge based on disciplinary and professional literature (Charmaz, 2014). Their version of "Straussian" grounded theory emphasized the concept of creation and allowed for deliberate engagement with the literature. In constructivist grounded theory, the literature review may be conducted both before and throughout the process of data collection and analysis. Thornberg advocates (as cited in Charmaz, 2014, p. 307) for an "informed grounded theory" that includes researcher use of "preexisting theories and research findings in the substantive field in a sensitive, creative and flexible way." Charmaz (2014, p. 307) advises letting "...this material lie fallow until after you have developed your categories and relationships between them." The role of literature in identifying and developing concepts to address early hunches and ideas can shape the early development of a literature review. The literature review was further developed throughout the three phases of the data collection, and analysis process as categories and relationships were created and refined as suggested by Charmaz and consistent with the role of constant comparison in the application of a constructivist grounded theory research approach.
Sensitizing Concepts

Barney Glaser (2002, p. 1) is famously quoted to say that "All is Data". While Charmaz (2014) agrees that everything learned in the process of research can be data, there are distinctions of varying quality, relevance, and usefulness of data collected. Charmaz (2014) also acknowledges that researchers possess varied abilities when determining which data is most useful and how to capture and code data thoroughly. Constructivist grounded theory supports the epistemological view that people construct data, including the documents to be analyzed and interactions to be observed (Charmaz, 2014). Researchers' perspectives and assumptions heighten attention to certain aspects or types of data (Charmaz, 2014), shaping the questions and topics to be addressed by the research study. To combat implicit bias and filters in perception, grounded theorists use "sensitizing concepts" to develop ideas on processes found in collected data (Bowen, 2006; Charmaz, 2014). Blumer (1969) defined a sensitizing concept as a "broad term without definitive characteristics; it sparks your thinking about a topic (as cited in Van den Hoonoord, 1997). The use of sensitizing concepts in grounded theory includes identification of early and tentative ideas to question and hunches to pursue. They can provide a starting point for a line of inquiry. In grounded theory, this includes conceptualizing a research study with early and tentative interests in a specific topic, allowing for the development of a "loose frame" to explore those interests (Charmaz, 2014).
Sensitizing concepts that initially framed this study and that were addressed in participant interview questions are collaboration and leadership. The actions, interactions, and behaviors involved in these two broad areas were the foundation for early inquiry in this research study.

Relationships: “Playing Nice in the Sandbox”

Collaboration

Collaboration is a hot topic in schools and communities and is emerging as a focus for research. Mullen & Kochan, 2000 (as cited in Hafernik et al., 1997; Mullen & Lick, 1999) state that the increasing awareness of benefits gained through collaboration in the context of education has influenced the development of networks connecting individuals, organizations, and institutions. Morse (2010) identified the challenges faced by public organizations, arguing that these challenges are unable to be solved by a single organization due to their complexity. Morse asserts that solutions for public sector issues are increasingly addressed through "boundary-crossing partnerships" (as cited in Crosby & Bryson, 2005; Luke, 1998; Linden, 2002). Chrislip and Larson (1994, p. 11) view collaboration as "Not simply another strategy or tactic or means for achieving an end. It is something broader, more encompassing, and more powerful. In its public manifestation, it is another way of doing business around public issues". According to Thomson, Perry and Miller (2009), A variety of understandings and definitions of collaboration can impede the cumulative and rigorous alignment of research across sectors and disciplines. Wood and Gray (1991) challenged
collaborative scholars and practitioners to address the meaning of collaboration. As they reviewed articles on collaboration in their research, they found that each had a different and possibly incomplete definition of collaboration. The result of that inconsistency includes an inability to measure results accurately (Holmgren, n.d.). Holmgren (n.d.) further states: "Widespread and varied use of the term collaboration renders it nearly meaningless, except as a way to manage the expectations of donors." Common dictionary definitions of collaboration include "the action of working with someone to produce or create something," "…to cooperate with an agency or instrumentality with which one is not immediately connected," and "traitorous cooperation with an enemy" (Dictionary.com, 2018; Merriam-Webster, 2018). Mattessich, Murray-Close & Monsey (2001, p. 4) developed a working definition in their review of relevant research on collaboration: "Collaboration is 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." Gadja (2004, p. 66) asserts:

…collaboration" is a hard term to grasp. Although collaboration can empower and connect fragmented systems to address multifaceted social concerns, its definition is somewhat elusive, inconsistent, and theoretical. In its overuse, the term "collaboration" has become
a catchall to signify just about any interorganizational or interpersonal relationship, making it difficult for those seeking to collaborate to put into practice or evaluate with certainty.

BerG-Weger and Schneider (1998, p. 698) defined interdisciplinary collaboration as "an interpersonal process through which members of different disciplines contribute to a common product or goal." Bronstein's definition (2003, p. 1 as cited in Bruner, 1991) states that: "...interdisciplinary collaboration is an effective interpersonal process that facilitates the achievement of goals that cannot be reached when individual professionals act on their own." Among these definitions, common elements include the existence of relationships, mutuality, process, and goals. Page (2010, p. 246) asserts that "Despite the benign connotations of "collaboration," political dilemmas arise when multiple stakeholders share the power to design or implement policies, making dominant coalitions and authority hard to assemble- much less wield efficaciously."

Thomson, Perry, and Miller (2009, p. 23) define interorganizational collaboration as "...a term used by scholars and practitioners to describe a process that can emerge as organizations interact with one another to create new organizational and social structures." They propose a theoretical framework of collaboration that is grounded in two evidence sources: first, an exhaustive review of available theoretical literature resulting in a comprehensive analysis of collaboration as it is defined across multiple sectors and disciplines. Second, the results of field research, including 20 interviews with organizational directors
regarding their experiences with collaboration and case studies conducted between 1995 and 1999. The definition of collaboration developed and based on these two sources is: "Collaboration is a process in which autonomous or semi-autonomous actors interact through formal and informal negotiation, jointly creating rules and structures governing their relationships and ways to act or decide on the issues that brought them together; it is a process involving shared norms and mutually beneficial interactions" (Thomson et al., 2009, p. 25). Their definition includes five components of collaboration. Two, governance and administration, refer to the structures of collaborative efforts. Two additional dimensions, norms and mutuality, are based on social interactions. A final dimension, agency, addresses organizational autonomy (Thomson et al., 2009). The five dimensions proposed by Thomson et al. emerged through a widening focus on the study of collaboration (as cited in Gray, 1989, 1996, 2000; Huxham, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2005) as well as literature on interorganizational relations and organizational behavior (Thomson et al., 2009). Wood and Gray (1991) assert that the process of interaction in collaboration is "least understood."

Developing Collaborations.

Clarke and Fuller (2010) described multiple process models that exist for the "... formation and management of collaborations" (as cited in Gray, 1985; Hood et al., 1993; McCann, 1983; Seitanidi & Crane, 2008; Waddell & Brown, 1997). A common process model discussed in Clarke and Fuller’s work includes three stages of development: problem-setting, direction-setting and structuring
Problem-setting is defined when potential partners begin conversations over commonly identified concerns. Direction-setting, the second stage in this common process model, involves stakeholders honing a common purpose and goals to guide activities. The final stage, structuring, develops the process and structures to support shared work over time.

Waddell and Brown (1997) offered a collaborative process model encompassing five stages, and that focuses on sustained collaboration as the outcome. The five stages include: 1) identifying preconditions for partnership; 2) convening partners and defining problems; 3) setting shared directions; 4) implementing action strategies, and 5) institutionalizing and expanding successful intersectoral collaboration. The researchers note that while Waddell and Brown's model incorporates both preconditions and a specific action phase, their outcome is focused on process in the ongoing sustainability of efforts rather than external outcomes (Clarke & Fuller, 2010).

Clarke and Fuller also developed their process for collaborative strategy. They describe it in this way: "The joint determination of the vision, and long-term collaborative goals for addressing a given social problem, along with the adoption of both organizational and collective courses of action and allocation of resources to carry out these courses of action" (2010, p. 86). In contrast to the Waddell and Brown (1997) model process outcome, Clarke and Fuller's (2010, p. 88) model proposes to involve itself "... to solve a common social problem."
Collaborative Structures.

The numbers and types of collaborative groups have grown by hundreds since 2011 when the article "Collective Impact" by Kania and Kramer was introduced to members of philanthropic, educational and private-industry led groups (Schalliol, n.d.). These groups have developed formal structures resembling hierarchical organizations, peer learning communities and informal networks to tackle complex problems including poverty, homelessness, and opioid use. Collaborative groups have engaged in conversations to develop principles and processes and have developed large-scale plans for addressing multiple issues within their respective communities and regions. A large sector of current “collective impact” efforts focuses on educational attainment across the spectrum from cradle to career. Many of these groups have aligned themselves with national organizations and networks, including StriveTogether, Alignment USA, and Ford Next Generation Learning Communities, and have adopted the various principles, structures, and processes developed and espoused by these groups. A recent report, titled "When Collective Impact has an Impact" (2018) details the characteristics of 25 collective impact groups considered successful from across the United States, highlighting "the contribution and outcomes of collective impact, the design, and implementation of the collective impact approach." The report also takes an in-depth look at the role of equity within the highlighted collaboratives.

Collaboration as a 21st Century Skill.
Dede (2010) identified and discussed the development and importance of “contextual” skills that are increasingly necessary for a complex and interconnected global environment. He states: “Collaboration” is a perennial capability, always valued as a trait in workplaces across the centuries. Therefore, the fundamental worth of this suite of interpersonal skills is not unique to the 21st century economic context” (p. 2).

Dede further discussed the increasing necessity for the development of collaborative capacity for “. . . work in knowledge-based economies that is increasingly accomplished by teams of people with complementary expertise and roles, as opposed to individuals doing isolated work in an industrial setting” (Karoly, 2004 as cited in Dede, 2010, p. 2). He states:

The nature of collaboration is shifting to a more sophisticated skill set. In addition to collaborating face-to-face with colleagues across a conference table, 21st century workers increasingly accomplish tasks through mediated interactions with peers halfway across the world whom they may never meet face-to-face. Thus, even though perennial in nature, collaboration is worthy of inclusion as a 21st century skill because the importance of cooperative interpersonal capabilities is higher, and the skills involved are more sophisticated than in the prior industrial era.

Tony Wagner, in his book Creating Innovators (2015) also identified collaboration as essential in the 21st century citing “collaboration across networks and leading by influence” as one of his seven survival skills based on research conducted
with business leaders on the skills necessary to survive and thrive in the modern workplace. Dede (2010) and Wagner (2015) are two among many researchers, authors and others who espouse collaboration as necessary and important; however, few resources on the specific actions that constitute collaborative behavior exist.

In the business sector, Forbes Magazine published its *Six Crucial Behaviors of Collaborative Leaders* (2017). Dr. Carol Goman, Contributor to the magazine, listed the following six behaviors as key to collaborative success in business: first, "silo-busting." Goman notes that this behavior includes the development of unifying goals by senior leadership, creation of shared understanding of those goals, incentivizing cooperation, and working with other areas of the organization to achieve shared goals and objectives.

Goman identified building trust as the second collaborative leadership behavior, discussed at length in this chapter. The author cites the importance of transparent, honest and candid communication in building trust and also identifies the importance of celebrating successes, sharing ownership, actively engaging in the collaborative work, and getting to know colleagues. Goman suggests that offering retreats, workshops or offsite events provides important opportunities for developing and deepening personal relationships among colleagues in an informal setting.

The third collaborative leader behavior identified by Goman is aligning body language, providing nonverbal cues signaling caring and positive regard
toward others. Goman acknowledges that at times it is necessary to use nonverbal communication to convey power or status but offers that “warmer” nonverbal cues are often underutilized as a tool to create positive working relationships.

Promoting diversity is the fourth collaborative leader behavior identified by Goman (2017). This behavior recognizes the importance of gathering work teams of varying expertise, skill level and experience in addressing complex challenges. Researchers at the University of Michigan found that diverse perspectives and thinking led to better solutions for difficult problems when compared to highly-skilled but homogenous groups addressing the same issue. Goman claims that “innovation is triggered by cross-pollination” (2017, p. 3), with people both inside and outside organizations creating new and powerful solutions when diverse perspectives at all levels are combined and focused on a shared problem.

The fifth behavior, titled "sharpening "soft" skills" by the author, addressed empathy as the behavior that had the greatest overall impact on perceptions of leader performance in a study that included 18 countries, 20 industries, and responses from approximately 15,000 leaders. In this study, empathy included the "ability to listen and respond empathetically" (p. 3). Four of ten leaders who responded to the study self-reported being "proficient or strong in empathy."

The final behavior identified by Goman is the creation of psychological safety. Goman asserts that fear, distrust, and insecurity trigger a need to "hoard" or hold on to vital information or resources in the workplace. She further states
that when thoughts and ideas are criticized, ridiculed or ignored by peers or supervisors, people will engage in self-protective behavior, withdrawing based on a perceived or real threat to their image, status or employment. Psychological safety, recently popularized by Google's "Project Aristotle, (Duhigg, 2016) and Dr. Amy Edmondson’s TED Talk ("Building a psychologically safe", 2014) is further described later in this chapter.

Other authors and publications from the education and business sector have also attempted to identify the specific behaviors for successful collaboration. Ibarra and Hansen (2011) identified five behaviors for leaders to be successful in the 21st century, abandoning the traditional "command and control" style of management in order to address diverse and complex global challenges across a wide swath of sectors. The first behavior identified by the authors is for leaders to become "global connectors." This includes the ability to successfully "link people, ideas and resources that wouldn't normally bump into one another" (2011, p. 70) and aligns with Goman’s (2017) notion of promoting diversity, recognizing the importance of connecting "usual and unusual suspects" to address problems that often cross sector boundaries. The second and related behavior identified by Ibarra and Hansen is to "engage talent at the periphery," underscoring the importance of diversity in addressing and managing contemporary challenges.

Ibarra and Hansen’s third behavior is to "collaborate at the top first." This behavior highlights the need for executives to engage in collaborative efforts at
the highest organizational levels, experiencing the same types of difficulties and
discomforts that workers at other levels may experience, and modeling how to
successfully navigate the development of collaborative goals and actions. The
authors assert that while employees regularly operate in teams and work groups,
executives do not often operate in the same manner. Ibarra and Hansen suggest
coaching for executives in this area, opening executives up to be vulnerable,
sharing failures and fears, ultimately among colleagues. The authors report that
executives who have engaged in this process have successfully modeled and
implemented collaboration with a "trickle-down" effect, resulting in the adoption of
similar practices by managers throughout their organization.

Ibarra and Hansen then moved to the subject of outcomes and the tension
between "quick wins" and long-term success. They assert: "If leaders are to
encourage more innovation through partnerships across sectors...they need to
stop relying heavily on short-term performance indicators" (p. 73). The authors
highlight the need to shift from performance goals, where individuals
demonstrate their leadership or intelligence as individuals, to learning goals that
encourage continuous improvement of attributes such as leadership or
intelligence. The shift, according to Ibarra and Hansen (2011), opens up
opportunities for managers to ask questions and learn from others. The authors
note that some companies ensure that feedback on executive performance is
also gathered from all levels of an organization, rather than confining feedback to
supervisor or peer evaluations, creating transparency and opportunities for all
levels to have a voice in the organization's direction and success. A final note by Ibarra and Hansen on collaboration at the executive level is the critical importance of "depoliticizing senior management," rewarding executives for collaborating with others rather than holding tight to their individual agendas. One organizational leader opined: "We go out of our way to make sure that politics get eradicated, because I think they are very bad for an organization" (p. 74). The leader sets an expectation that open disagreement in meetings is necessary to keep politics in check, fostering a team environment.

The fourth behavior identified by Ibarra and Hansen (2011) is for leaders to “show a strong hand” once collaboration has been established. They caution that once collaboration starts to take place, employees will tend toward collaborating on everything, ultimately creating inefficiencies and overlap in work, long meetings and endless deliberations toward consensus. The authors caution that executives must assume and maintain an active role in directing collaborative teams, staying agile by creating and disbanding collaborative teams as needed to accomplish the work. They further assert that effective collaborative leaders must maintain clear lines of decision-making and responsibility, allowing decisions to be made in an efficient and effective manner and also providing opportunities for input, debate and constructive conflict as part of the decision-making process.

The fifth and final behavior identified by Ibarra and Hansen is for executives to "loosen control without losing control." This behavior, closely
related to the behaviors of connecting and engaging diverse talent discussed earlier in this chapter, encourages executives to "harness ideas, people and resources from across boundaries of all kinds" to include creating strong connections within and outside of traditional organizational boundaries. This boundary-spanning behavior, according to the authors, requires executives to "lead by influence rather than authority" (p. 74) to move work forward, thwart politicking, stop unproductive activity and make thoughtful and efficient decisions.

Collaboration is also a topic of interest in human resource management, cutting across all public and private sectors. Within human resource management, Bedwell et al. (2012) identified six collaborative behaviors that help to shape performance outcomes. Their research study integrated themes, practices, and the development of a cross-sector conceptualization of collaboration across disciplines and discussed the implications of collaborative practice on human resource management. Bedwell et al. (2012) propose that the following six collaborative behaviors are vital in shaping performance outcomes:

First, adaptive behaviors, include "behaviors that contribute to effectiveness in dynamic, complex and uncertain settings" (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007 as cited in Bedwell et al., 2012). Second, the authors highlight the nature of collaboration as an extra role, noting that collaboration is not generally anyone’s sole job or responsibility and that it is integrated in multiple ways in existing jobs, including an expectation of helping others within a collaborative partnership (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000 as cited in Bedwell et al., 2012). The third
behavior identified by Bedwell et al. is information processing, including developing understanding, codifying, processing, retrieving and storing information within or on behalf of the collaborative entity. They note that information is processed within groups as it is discussed, shared and interpreted among collaborative partners. Bedwell et al. list leadership as their fourth collaborative behavior. The researchers differentiate leadership behaviors as those focused on influencing others and those focusing on implementation of the work (Yukl, 2006 as cited in Bedwell et al., 2012). The fifth behavior identified by the researchers is sensemaking, including taking information (behavior three) and processing that information as it is discussed, shared and interpreted among collaborative partners. The sixth and final behavior identified by Bedwell et al. (2012) is task execution. Task execution incorporates many of the necessary activities and behaviors to be accomplished to meet the collaborative’s goals.

While collaboration is discussed from a variety of perspectives in business, collaboration in an educational context is discussed both within and outside of classroom settings. In the classroom, numerous checklists of collaborative skills, as well as lesson plans that embed collaborative tasks, are available for educators. Many use the terms collaboration and cooperation interchangeably and do not differentiate between the two. Others, primarily centered outside of the classroom setting, discuss collaboration in the context of improving educational outcomes as is the focus of this research study. In those instances, collaboration is often discussed as an improvement effort within a
single building or single district. *What We Know About Collaboration*, a research brief produced by The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) as part of their 4Cs Research Series, provides definitions and models of collaboration primarily centered in K-12 practice (Lai, DiCerbo, & Foltz, 2017).

There are a number of commonalities among the 20 frameworks, models, and articles related specifically to behavior in collaboration, teamwork, or for successful leadership of such efforts included in this literature review. Three areas of commonality among most of the sources are: relationships, communication and trust.

Relationship components discussed in the literature include the importance of connecting potential partners, managing conflict and celebrating successes in collaborative efforts. Equal Measure/Harder and Company (“Cultivating Systems Leadership”, 2017) discussed the importance of relationships and trust for systems leaders as foundational for both change and growth. They cited the role of empathy in building both trust and relationships, including the need to express care for other’s concerns and perspectives. In the business sector, Goman (2017) encouraged collaborators to invest time and energy in learning about and building relationships with colleagues. Saltiel, Sgroi, & Brockett (1998) concurred with other findings, identifying “a valued relationship” and synergy between partners as key to success in collaborative efforts.
Trust was also identified as a foundational behavior for successful collaboration. Trust is discussed in detail later in this chapter. Of the frameworks and articles identified for this literature review, virtually all connect trust to successful collaborative practice. In this chapter, authors Covey, Merrill and Tschannen-Moran’s writings are cited and explicated, highlighting the ways that trust is developed and maintained in collaborative efforts.
The third key behavior for successful collaboration identified in multiple sources is communication. Areas of communication discussed in relation to this topic include listening which is detailed later in this chapter.

The behaviors for success in collaboration identified in this section include 20 sources from multiple sectors. Each document or framework was reviewed for evidence of identified behaviors leading to success in collaboration. Relationships, trust and communication are three key behaviors commonly identified in these frameworks as important for achieving successful collaborative outcomes.

**Challenges in Collaboration.**

Collaboration may be increasingly viewed as necessary and desirable, but research evidence shows that it is not easy (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone 2006). Collaboration is regularly assumed to be an efficient way to allocate and share scarce resources (Holmgren, n.d.). Case studies reveal that collaborative group members experience significant challenges that undermine the development of collaborative relationships (Holmgren, n.d.). Wei-Skillern and Silver (2013) explored the factors for collaborative success: "Despite high hopes, hard work, and significant investment, the social sector has experienced countless partnerships that have failed to live up to expectations." Varda & Retrum (2015, p. 634) noted in their research on collaborative groups that "... collaborations are often characterized by a high level of dissatisfaction with their actual outcomes relative to expectations, and correspondingly, a high rate of failure" (as
in Madhok & Tallman, 1998, p. 326). In 2010, Page (p. 247) highlighted the "...high transaction costs, sub-optimal policy designs, and administrative structures" in collaborative groups where priorities and self-interests diverge among partners." He further states that the implementation of such groups requires substantial resource allocation for coordination and monitoring (as cited in Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). To complicate the matter, Page (2010, p. 247) insists that actors in a collaborative environment "...may do so only for instrumental reasons, to cloak the guileful pursuit of their interests in the language of public deliberation and stakeholder accountability." Mattessich, Murray-Close & Monsey (2001) caution that collaboration is not a tool to be universally deployed, likening the overuse of collaboration to the use of only one household tool, such as a hammer, for every repair job in a home. Given the many challenges and concerns identified in research on collaborative outcomes, Wei-Skillern and Silver (2013, p. 121) questioned: "How are some collaborations able to achieve spectacular results while others fail spectacularly?"

**Collective Impact**

"The evolution towards a collective impact (CI) approach to making large-scale change is not necessarily a neat and tidy undertaking; it can be messy, and at times confusing" (Holmgren, n.d., p. 2). In 2011, after Kania and Kramer introduced the concept of "collective impact", the article was quickly shared among existing collaboratives, philanthropic and nonprofit organizations. The article represented a new way to think about working together and generated a
great deal of interest and enthusiasm in the topic for a variety of sectors and industries (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016). Paul Born, a pioneer in the collective impact movement, said: "Kania and Kramer understood the work we were doing so well, and described it so effectively, that they essentially laid out a new operating system for community change" (as cited in Cabaj & Weaver, 2016, p. 1).

Collective impact was quickly adopted in discussion and practice as a way to create change in a variety of settings, including addressing economic, educational and social challenges (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016).

Kania and Kramer (2011) identified five conditions essential for success in collective impact that can be applied across a wide range of public/private partnerships and organizations. The five conditions include a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and a unifying body for collective impact activity that they titled the "backbone organization." The definition of a backbone organization as originally conceptualized by Kania and Kramer included scant details about the identification, purpose, and structure of such an organization. The concept of one convening organization leading a variety of partners in a collective impact effort generated discussion among existing partnerships looking to take a leadership role in solving complex challenges. The backbone organization conversation also created controversy, tension, and competition among existing initiatives where many recognized that (generally) one organization would be identified as "the leader" and that others would not gain the same public visibility (Wolff et al.,...
In 2016, Cabaj and Weaver published "Collective Impact 3.0: An Evolving Framework for Community Change". In that paper, the researchers discussed the changes, criticisms, and opportunities for collective impact as it has evolved.

These included modifications by Kania and Kramer, authors of the original article, and commentary from many of the prominent practitioners and researchers in the field. FSG, a consulting firm where Kania serves on the leadership team and who manages the Collective Impact Forum, led the charge to modify and expand the original concepts introduced in 2011. These include the addition of pre-conditions for collective impact, modification of terminology and phases of the approach, and the identification of fundamental principles and practices (Cabaj & Weaver, 2016).

Cabaj and Weaver (2016) assert that the early experimentation with collective impact in diverse contexts and settings has helped to identify its initial limitations. These include lack of community voice in change efforts; "excessive focus "on short-term data; increased recognition of the importance that policy and systems change play in collective impact; and an "over-investment" in backbone support (2016, p. 2). Wolff et al. (2016, p. 2) also expressed serious concern, stating: The collective impact model "was introduced in a six-page essay without pilot testing, evaluation, or significant experience in developing coalitions, yet government agencies and foundations quickly adopted and endorsed it." Wolff et al. (2016, p. 2) further lamented the "failure to cite advocacy and systems change as core strategies, engage those most affected in the community as partners with
equal power, and directly address the causes of social problems and their political, racial and economic contexts." Other criticisms of the early conception of collective impact include "10 Places Where Collective Impact Gets it Wrong" (Wolff, 2016); Boumgarden and Branch (2013), in "Collective Impact or Coordinated Blindness?"; and Vu Le, in his writings on "Trickle-Down Community Engagement" and the "Illusion of Inclusion" (as cited in Wolff et al., 2016). In response to these and other criticism of the initial approach, FSG has worked with critics (including Cabaj and Weaver) to refine and address issues with the initial conception of collective impact. In 2016, FSG released "Collective Impact Principles of Practice" which served as a response to concerns over limitations of the original conception of collective impact.

Despite the response by FSG, critics of collective impact have continued to address its limitations and to highlight other community change frameworks that have been less publicized and that were developed by other practitioners and organizations focused on community change. Cabaj and Weaver developed "Collective Impact 3.0" in response to the criticism of the original Collective Impact work, recognizing that the action inspired by the original article can continue through refinement. Their interpretation of the seminal article is one of many potential iterations and reformulations of the original conception of collective impact.

The overarching paradigm shift proposed by Cabaj & Weaver is to change perspectives and actions from management of collective impact efforts to
movement building. The rationale for a shift is based on their assertion that "chances for impact are dramatically better if would-be change-makers explicitly bring to their work a movement-building orientation" (2016, p. 3). They further argue that rather than focusing on improving a system from a management perspective, the focus becomes one of changing systems. The five original conditions of CI were also reconsidered in Cabaj & Weaver's article. This includes moving from a common agenda to a community aspiration; from shared measurement to strategic learning; from mutually reinforcing activities to high leverage activities; from continuous communication to inclusive community engagement; and from the politically-charged position of the backbone organization to "containers for change". As Cabaj and Weaver's (2016) reinterpretation of Kania and Kramer's article generated discussion on the shortfalls of the original concepts, FSG leaders Sheri Brady and Jennifer Splansky-Juster also responded with new principles to further describe and support the original collective impact definitions and work.

**Collective Impact Principles of Practice.**

The eight "Collective Impact Principles of Practice" begin with two principles focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. These principles align with the identification of "unwavering attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion" as one of the nine characteristics of effective systems leaders identified by Equal Measure in their 2017 Issue Brief: *Cultivating Systems Leadership in Cross-Sector Partnerships*. Brady and Splansky-Juster’s (2016) two principles also
loosely align with the six principles developed by Wolff et al. (2016). The first principle of practice for collective impact as defined by Brady and Splansky-Juster (2016, p. 1) is to “Design and implement the initiative with a priority placed on equity”. This principle insists that equity is embedded in every step of the development of collaborative governance structures, planning processes, implementation, and analysis. In applying this principle to collaborative practice, the authors insist that it is essential to disaggregate data and thoughtfully develop research-based strategies and promising practices focused on improving student outcomes in underserved populations.

The second principle of practice for collective impact highlights the need for embedding community into collaborative efforts. Brady and Splansky-Juster (2016, p. 1) address one of the main criticisms of the original iteration of collective impact through this principle of practice. Wolff et al. (2016, p. 2) expressed serious concern that the model did not engage community members affected by both the current conditions and proposed changes as partners “with equal power”. Aspirational aspects of this principle include the opportunity to “co-create solutions rooted in lived perspectives” and supporting capacity-building in a community while identifying structural barriers and power dynamics that limit inclusion.

The third principle developed by Brady & Splansky-Juster (2016, p. 2) is to “Recruit and co-create with cross-sector partners.” This principle recognizes the necessity for engaging multiple sectors in systems change. While this principle
supports principle two in establishing the inclusive nature of successful collaborative practice, it also calls out a need to consider how collaborative groups are formed and structured.

The use of data for continuous learning, adaptation, and improvement is the fourth principle of collaborative practice. Brady and Splansky-Juster (2016) highlight the need for collaborative partners to identify, collect, analyze and respond to data that confirms or disconfirms the effectiveness of collaborative actions in addressing shared goals and outcomes. This principle also highlights the importance of adaptation in response to a VUCA world (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014) by creating a culture of learning and inquiry that uses data to drive both continuous improvement and "strategic refinement" (Brady & Splansky-Juster, 2016, p. 2).

Leadership is the focus of the fifth principle developed by Brady and Splansky-Juster, who identify the unique leadership skills of systems leaders necessary for success in a collaborative environment. The authors assert that systems leaders must possess skills in convening, management, and facilitation. They also highlight the importance of leaders creating safe, open spaces for discussing and resolving conflict in a collaborative group. Brady and Splansky-Juster (p. 3) opine that collaborative systems leaders hold responsibility for helping group participants to "...understand both the complexity and non-linear nature of systems-level change". They recognize that these leaders must be open to examining and creating change within their own organizations to both
serve the commonly-shared agenda and model the behavior necessary to create systemic change. Collaborative systems leaders, according to the authors, must be able to build and strengthen relationships, developing trust among partners along the way. This is identified on both the individual systems leader level and the collective level in the seventh principle of collaborative practice.

The sixth principle of Brady and Splansky-Juster’s (2016) work is to focus on strategies at the collective, rather than individual program or organizational level. This principle supports the work identified in principle five regarding the focus on the collaborative effort rather than an individual organization. Brady and Splansky-Juster encourage collaborative systems leaders to increase coordination and communication among organizations and to change policies, practices, and behaviors of both collaborative partners and their beneficiaries to shift both cultural and social norms of the group or community.

Brady and Splansky-Juster’s (2016) seventh principle focuses on the importance of building relationships, developing trust and cultivating respect among partners. This principle also considers how to co-create a shared understanding of the problem, aligning both goals and work in new and innovative ways. It supports the development of an environment that fosters inquiry and learning and results in culture change.

The eighth and final principle developed by Brady and Splansky-Juster's (2016) is to "Customize for local context." The authors recognize the importance of a deep understanding of the local problem that the collaborative group is
working to address through both community input and collected data. They further explicate the need for understanding what is already happening in the community, including similar efforts to address a common problem and opportunities to align with and/or leverage current work and potential partners to catalyze change. This principle underscores the many factors in the local context that are unique to a group or community that must be honored and included in any collective impact effort. The eight collective impact principles of practice expand on the original conception of CI addressing many of the criticisms leveled against the early iteration of the work and providing support for grounding CI work with the families and in the communities served and affected by CI efforts.

Moral Purpose

Asera, Gabriner & Hemphill (2017) identified five key themes of successful collaborative partnership through their research. The first theme identified is centered on the importance of moral purpose in collaborative work and states: “A partnership’s leadership needs to be informed by clear moral imperatives” (2017, p. 9). The researchers further explicate that while moral imperative is key in coalescing collaborative work, it is not likely to be solely sufficient for moving a collaborative forward in its improvement efforts.

Fullan states: “Just as moral imperative is not a strategy, neither is being “right” (2011, p. 3). He encourages leaders to undertake a deliberate plan to establish moral imperative as a strategy, with the first step being that leaders make a personal commitment that includes demonstrating moral purpose,
passion and competence. Fullan asserts that educational leaders must find moral purpose within themselves and encourages leaders to establish clarity of purpose in systems change efforts. Research developed by Bailey, Shantz, Brione, Yarlagadda, and Zheltoukhova explicated the components of purposeful leadership to include the “. . . extent to which a leader has a strong moral self, a vision for his or her team, and takes an ethical approach to leadership marked by a commitment to stakeholders” (2017, p. 11). While Bailey et al. (2017) do not exclusively focus on moral purpose in their research, they do include it as part of a leadership model that supports collaborative partnership development. Fullan asserts that leaders either positively or negatively impact the development and expression of moral purpose in both organizational and societal settings. He further claims: “Whether you are an insurance executive or a school principal, you simply cannot be effective without behaving in a morally purposeful way” (2001, p. 2). While moral purpose can provide a foundation for action, it is not sufficient to change a system (Fullan, 2001). The development of trust among collaborative partners is identified as one component necessary for collaboration (“Nine Characteristics”, 2017) in systems change.

Trust

In her book *Trust Matters*, Megan Tschannen-Moran offers a working definition of trust based on Baier’s (1994) definition and an exhaustive literature review across multiple professional sectors: “Trust is one’s willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent,
honest, open, reliable and competent" (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 17 as cited in Mishra, 1996; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998, 2000). According to Tschannen-Moran (2014), "trust matters" because it is impossible for any one person to develop or sustain many of the ideas, relationships, and organizations that are individually and collectively important to us. She further explains that trust is necessary in situations requiring us to depend on others to be both benevolent and competent while caring for something or someone that is important to us. Given that we must allow others to assist us in caring for what we hold dear, others are positioned to help or harm what we value.

Tschannen-Moran (2014) likens trust to both glue and lubricant. As a glue, trust holds things together. Partnerships and informal agreements are often formed and function on trust rather than by formal contract. People working to accomplish a shared goal must be cooperative and move together in a sort of cohesion to achieve a shared effort. As a lubricant, trust underpins organizational success by strengthening team efforts and communication among groups. The researcher further describes the contribution of trust in improving efficiencies in working together when confidence in others is high, positive intent is assumed, and integrity is expected. Tschannen-Moran likens a lack of trust to the loss of lubricant in an engine, with heat and friction generated that can severely impair or even destroy the engine's working mechanisms. The researcher claims that trust is a judgment and a choice that is based on experience and evidence, and that demonstrated trust often outweighs the objective evidence to justify its
existence. Trust, according to Tschannen-Moran (2014) is developed through action, kept commitments and conversations. Trust is created by individuals and is not to be taken lightly or for granted as it is a dynamic element that can change over time (Tschannen-Moran as cited in Solomon & Flores, 2001). The researcher further cites Solomon and Flores (2001) who asserted that it is unethical to withhold trust based on race, ethnicity, gender or another group membership.

Trusting relationships are frequently identified as the foundation for collaboration (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006). According to Casey (2008), trust and honesty are necessary elements for successful partnership development (as cited in Thorelli 1986; Bytheway & Dhillon, 1996; Gardener, 2003). Brinkerhoff (2002) discussed the common success factors in partnership effectiveness (based on Whipple & Frankel, 2000) that included trust, ability to meet performance expectations, senior partnership support, partner compatibility, and clear goals. Asera, Gabriner & Hemphill (2017) identified five key themes of successful partnerships through a literature review and research interviews focused on two collaborative group efforts in California. The third of five themes highlights the importance of leadership engaging a variety of stakeholders and building “long-term relationships and coalitions among them” (p. 20). The researchers further identified three aspects of relationships that are of critical importance to collaborative success, the first of which is “establishing trust among participants” (p. 29).
Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey (2001, p. 14) recommend that a collaborative group in the early stages of formation "... temporarily set aside the purpose of the collaboration and devote energy to learning about each other." They further recommend that collaborative partnerships allow time for trust-building and developing shared understanding and shared language. Casey (2008) states that partners must get to know each other as a critical factor in partnership success (as cited in Ring & Van De Ven, 1994; Stonehouse et al. 1996; Ahuja, 2000). Casey further affirms that developing trust, clear ownership and belonging are critical aspects of partnership success (as cited in Jarillo, 1988; Levinthal & Fichman, 1988; Courtney et al., 1996; Stew, 1996; Lorenzoni & Lipparini, 1999; Sharkie, 2005; Casey, 2006).

Asera et al. (2017) assert that the importance of trust is that it fosters the development of shared decision-making. They further state:

Trust grows in relationships over time, resting on repeated experiences of partners showing up, listening, responding and working together. The existence of trust among partners does not mean that everyone will agree all of the time, but it creates an underlying shared commitment and a willingness to learn together. (p. 29)

Asera et al. (2017) also recognized the elusive nature of trust and openness in collaborative efforts when territoriality exists despite a willingness to partner with others.
Dimensions of Trust

Schaubroeck, Lam & Peng (2011) studied two dimensions of trust in leadership, identifying how each is associated with differentiated outcomes (as cited in Yang & Mossholder, 2010). In their research study, Schaubroeck et al. (2011) noted that existing research focused on functional aspects of leadership behaviors that encourage positive behaviors among followers (as cited in Hackman, 2002) or in the broad literature on leadership with an emphasis on specific dimensions of behavior (as cited in Pillai, Schriesheim & Williams, 1999). Schaubroeck et al. (2011) propose that “trust in the leader is critical to linking leader behaviors and team performance, and that transformational and servant leadership represent general tendencies of leaders to engage in behaviors that inspire their followers' trust” (p. 863).

McAllister (1995) created a conceptual framework defining and distinguishing two dimensions of trust: cognition-based and affect-based trust. According to Schaubroeck et al. (2011), cognition-based trust includes trust in performance settings including demonstrations of competence, dependability, responsibility, and reliability. McAllister asserted (as cited in Schaubroeck et al., p. 864) that “people more readily form the kinds of emotional attachments with a coworker that affect-based trust represents” when sufficient cognitive-based trust is developed. Affect-based trust, as described by McAllister refers to the “emotional bonds between individuals” that are founded in expressions of “genuine care and concern for the welfare of others” (1995, p. 26).
Characteristics of affect-based trust as discussed by McAllister include the demonstration of "empathy, affiliation, and rapport on the basis of shared regard for the other person" (as cited in Schaubroeck et al., p. 864). McAllister (1995) asserted that affect-based trust is positively influenced by cognition-based trust, acting as a sort of accelerator moving individuals to connect with coworkers in ways that they would not otherwise connect if cognition-based trust was solely present.

Schaubroeck et al. (2011, p. 864) connected cognition-based trust to followers’ perceptions of leader competence. They state: “When team members perceive that they are pursuing meaningful, shared objectives through clear processes that have been outlined by the leader, they are more likely to develop high cognition-based trust in the leader...”. Affect-based trust, by comparison, is tied in the research to team psychological safety. Psychological safety will be discussed later in this chapter.

Distrust

While trust is a critical element of effective team performance, it is not always present between and among team members and their leaders. Casey (2008) explains that previous experiences can influence the development of trust over time, impacting both the current and future direction of partnership efforts (as cited in Van De Ven & Walker 1984; Levinthal & Fichman 1988; Ring & Van De Ven 1992; Garvey & Williamson 2002). “When the level of trust is low, people are gripped by worry and fear and use their energies to protect themselves and
limit personal involvement” (Casey, 2008, p. 40 as cited in Sharkie, 2005). Casey asserts that the absence of trust can be a barrier to the development of an effective collaborative effort (as cited in Powell et al. 1996; Boddy, Cahill, Charles, Fraser-Kraus, & Macbeth, 1998). Distrust creates insecurity and anxiety, causing others to feel unease and to engage in protective efforts (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, as cited in Govier, 1992). Tschannen-Moran (2014) states that dishonest behavior may damage trust more than lapses of other kinds because it is viewed as “an indictment” on personal integrity and character. She explains that one reason people may fail to be honest is to avoid conflict. Another way that mistrust is fostered, according to Tschannen-Moran (2014) is by leaders who choose to withhold information to manipulate others or maintain control. Guarded behavior, she asserts, breeds mistrust with others. Distrust can be costly to a collaborative partnership, according to Tschannen-Moran. A lack of trust may ultimately cause partners to limit their engagement in the collaboration or leave the partnership altogether (Casey, 2008, as cited in Ring & Van De Ven 1994; Engstrom et al., 2002).

Psychological Safety
Kahn (1990, p. 708, as cited in Edmondson, 2003) defined psychological safety as “feeling able to show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career.” Edmondson (2003, p. 4) posited that psychological safety “describes individuals’ perceptions about the consequences of interpersonal risks in their work environment.” According to
Carmeli and Gittell (2009, p. 711), psychological safety “refers to one’s beliefs about how others will respond when he or she would ask questions, seek feedback, report an error, or come up with a new idea.”

Delizonna described six ways to create psychological safety in her 2017 Harvard Business Review article on high-performing teams and psychological safety. First, Delizonna encourages collaborative group participants to "approach conflict as a collaborator, not an adversary (2017, p. 2). The author stated that people "hate losing more than they enjoy winning" and that perceived losses spur attempts to regain a "level-playing field" through criticism, competition or disengagement. Second, Delizonna acknowledges the human component of creating psychological safety, noting that universal needs for respect, social status, autonomy, and competence exist among virtually all members of a team. The author asserts that recognition of these essential needs builds trust and promotes "positive language and behaviors" (p. 3).

The third way to build psychological safety, according to Delizonna (2017) is to anticipate reactions and plan countermoves in presenting to others. This includes thinking through how people will hear a message to be sure that it is perceived as information, not a personal attack. The author suggested that by preparing to address difficult conversations and likely reactions, the presenter can both consider the many perspectives that may be encountered and how to best frame a conversation for success. The fourth component of creating psychological safety is to replace blame with curiosity. Delizonna credited John
Gottman's research on this point: "blame and criticism reliably escalate conflict, leading to defensiveness and eventually disengagement" (p. 4). The author suggested that by replacing blame with curiosity, it creates a space for a real conversation, rather than a reactive or “back and forth” interaction.

Delizonna’s fifth component for creating psychological safety is to ask for feedback on the delivery of messages. The author stated that by asking for feedback on how a message is delivered, the opponent can be disarmed while the sender models both vulnerability and fallibility, which can lead to increased trust.

The sixth and final component for creating psychological safety for teams is to measure psychological safety (Delizonna, 2017). Edmondson (1999) developed a 24-item survey to assess the development of psychological safety in teams. A simpler, seven-item survey was also designed for quick self-assessment and discussion among teams (Edmondson, 2011, p. 42) and includes the questions below. In this exercise, Edmondson “. . . asked team members how strongly they agreed or disagreed with these statements:"

1. If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.
2. Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
3. People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.
4. It is safe to take a risk on this team.
5. It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.
6. No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.

7. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized. (Edmondson, 2011, p. 42)

What are the Differences Between Trust and Psychological Safety?

Edmondson (2003) highlights three significant differences between trust and psychological safety. First, the object of focus is different between trust and psychological safety. Trust focuses on how a person will give others the benefit of doubt, while psychological safety questions whether others will give you the benefit of the doubt when you have made a mistake. Second, trust pertains to a wide range of time, including current and future events and interactions. In contrast, psychological safety refers to a narrow and immediate or short-term temporal range, referring to “interpersonal consequences that an individual expects from engaging in a specific action such as reporting on errors (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009 as cited in Edmondson, 2004). Third, trust relies on perceptions of organizational support and caring about employee well-being (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009 as cited in Eisenberger et al., 1997; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), while psychological safety promotes comfortability in taking interpersonal risks.

Relationships between Trust, Leader Behavior and Psychological Safety

Schaubroeck et al. (2011) researched cognition-based and affect-based trust as mediators of leader behavior influences on team performance. In their
study, the researchers differentiate the "cognitive and affective dimensions of trust as separate factors" (p. 863) that affect team performance and psychological states. Schaubroeck et al. further suggest that identifying the cognition- and affect-based dimensions of trust in a leader helps to develop a better understanding of the relationship between leader behavior and team outcomes. The researchers noted that beliefs about leader competence are primarily connected to cognition-based trust, while team psychological safety is related to affect-based trust. They assert that psychological safety can “contribute to team performance over and above the effects of team potency” developed through cognition-based trust. Team potency refers to the collective expectations of a team related to their capabilities and performance (Schaubroeck et al., 2011). Schaubroeck et al. aligned team potency with the concept of confidence in their research, asserting that high confidence does not necessarily equate with a psychologically safe environment, and further opined that the combination of team potency and psychological safety “have additive effects on team performance” (p. 864). By contrast, the researchers claim that “affect-based trust is positively related to team performance through the mediating influence of team psychological safety” (p. 865). Team psychological safety is defined by Edmondson as “...a shared belief that the team is a safe environment for interpersonal risk-taking” (1999, p. 354). Attributes of psychologically safe teams as described by Schaubroeck et al. and developed through affect-based trust include respecting others' competence, care and
concern for others as individual people, and trust itself. Schaubroeck *et al.* (2011) identify the benefits of psychological safety for teams to include promotion of team learning and performance (as cited in Edmonson, 2004). Baer and Frese (2003) further report psychological safety as a factor in improving the achievement of goals in organizations. High levels of psychological safety in teams, according to Schaubroeck *et al.*, increase both engagement at work and the likelihood that people will share valuable knowledge and skills. The researchers assert that this moves from an individual level to strengthen engagement in team-level tasks (as cited in Edmonson, 1999).

Schaubroeck *et al.* (2011) highlighted the roles of both transformational leadership and servant leadership behaviors in establishing trust and influencing both the dimension of trust demonstrated and the overall psychological safety on a team. Schaubroeck *et al.* proposed that “transformational leadership is positively correlated to team potency through the mediating influence of cognition-based trust in the leader” (p. 865). They further opined that “servant leadership is positively related to team psychological safety through the mediating influence of team members’ affect-based trust in the leader” (p. 866) when controlling for the influence of transformational leadership. Their findings suggest that cognition-based and affective-based trust may help unlock the potential of teams by giving them more confidence in their abilities to perform very effectively and to create conditions in which members feel comfortable expressing differences in a way that enables the team to better learn from
experiences and to identify more creative task strategies. Findings further suggest that team members act in ways that are beneficial to the team’s performance, including seeking help and feedback from others, proposing innovative solutions to problems, engaging in boundary-spanning behavior on behalf of the team, and speaking up about concerns before they develop into crises. The researchers found that transformational leadership "is arguably the most reliable and potent mainstream leadership behavior variable for predicting team performance" (p. 869), and that "the behaviors associated with servant leadership can be particularly useful for leaders to break down the barriers between members and to build a climate of psychological safety" (Schaubroeck et al., p. 870). However, the researchers cautioned that “. . . high levels of psychological safety are not always useful for group performance, particularly when group members do not share clear and compelling goals” (p. 870). Trust in leadership is identified by Schaubroeck et al. (2011) as an essential element of high-functioning team performance. The researchers assert that behaviors from both servant and transformational leadership approaches can be used to develop confidence in a leader's competence and agenda and to gain trust in anticipation of a leader's benevolent actions toward individuals and teams. They encourage leaders to use both servant and transformational leadership approaches as appropriate for the context, noting that the different approaches are complementary.

Behaving as an Effective Team Member
In 2012, Google engaged in an organizational research project to understand the success factors in building excellent work teams (Duhigg, 2016). The study, titled "Project Aristotle," looked at the differences between hundreds of teams at Google to determine why some were more successful than others. The company’s long-held beliefs to that point included the notion that great teams were comprised of combinations of "the best people" in the company. The project study team, composed of a variety of Google experts in statistics, organizational psychology, sociology, and engineering, included Julia Rozovsky, a newly-hired researcher from Yale University. The project team studied 50 years of research on teams and team composition. They looked at interactions and behaviors of teams both within and outside of the work environment. They also considered the role of gender and longevity in team success. Despite collecting data on 180 teams from across the entire company, there was no evidence of patterns that suggested that the makeup of a team had any impact on its success. The research team eventually landed on group norms as the key to improving teams at Google, but still struggled to identify patterns that consistently showed relationships between a group’s behavior norms and group success. Eventually, Rozovsky and the Google team discovered in the literature the concept of psychological safety that closely aligned with the qualitative data on effective teams and that was ultimately identified as the primary determinant of team effectiveness. While psychological safety was identified as the primary determinant for effective teams at Google, it was not the sole characteristic for
team effectiveness. Additional attributes, behaviors, and skills identified in this research include:

Behaving as a dependable/reliable partner, including completing work on time and following-up to finish work that was started; Structure and clarity, including "An individuals' understanding of job expectations, the process for fulfilling these expectations and the consequences of one’s performance" (Re:Work, n.d., p. 1) on the group’s efficacy; Meaning, including each individual defining his/her sense of purpose in the collaborative group’s work or outcomes achieved by the group; and, Impact, where each individual judges the results of their own work, using subjective judgement whether the work being done makes a positive contribution to the larger group’s overall outcomes. The clarity created in high-functioning teams through consistent and explicit communication is the next topic of this literature review.
Continuous Improvement

The American Society for Quality (ASQ) defines continuous improvement as “the ongoing improvement of products, services or processes through incremental and breakthrough improvements” (“What is the plan”, n.d.).

According to ASQ, there are two types of improvements that can be made: improvement efforts that are incremental over time or breakthrough improvements that occur all at once. There are multiple models and frameworks
for continuous improvement that are commonly referenced in the business sector, including Lean, Six Sigma and Total Quality Management ("What is the Plan", n.d.). Similar models focused on educational outcomes include the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching’s Improvement Science approach. According to Anthony Bryk, President of the Carnegie Foundation, “the press to push good ideas into rapid large-scale use rarely delivers promised outcomes” (Bryk, 2015, p. 468). Bryk asserts that “solutionitis” occurs when educators jump to a quick solution before fully exploring and understanding the problem at hand. He further claims that “solutionitis” occurs as a response to groupthink where strong opinions and claims of quick fixes narrow the perception of the systemic issue at hand. Bryk described the difficulty that educational leaders face with public pressure mounting for change and simultaneous stability, and warns that despite those pressures, leaders must see the complete and complex systems at play to fully understand and ultimately improve them at scale (Bryk, 2015).

Improvement Science, as conceptualized by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, includes six core principles of improvement (Bryk, 2015). The first, to “Make the work problem-specific and user-centered”, encourages curiosity in looking at the whole system and inclusiveness in hearing from a variety of participants in the questioning process. This principle aligns with the focus on curiosity as conceptualized by Edmondson in developing an environment for psychological safety (2014). It also underscores Edmondson’s
idea on framing questions as “learning problems, not execution problems” (2014).

The second principle of improvement is that “Variation in performance is the core problem to address.” Carnegie states that determining not only what works, but the audience that it works for and the conditions or context necessary for an improvement to work reliably are essential understandings in development of solutions. They caution that “best practices” are those often successfully implemented in a limited number of settings with very specific conditions that are not likely replicated, resulting in disappointment and abandonment of improvement efforts.

The third principle is to “See the system that produces the current outcomes.” The need to deeply understand the system that is creating the outcomes requires observation of local conditions and context for the work as well as development of a hypothesis that is transparent to others.

The fourth principle of improvement science as developed by Carnegie is that “We cannot improve what we cannot measure.” Carnegie encourages leaders to develop data collection systems for both processes and outcomes, anticipating for unexpected consequences and measuring those as well.

The fifth principle highlights the Carnegie Foundation’s use of the plan-do-study-act cycle. Carnegie’s version of the Deming or Shewhart Cycle (from a “plan-do-check-act cycle” to a “plan-do-study-act” (PDSA), recognizes the importance of “learning fast, failing fast, and improving quickly” (“The Six Core
Principles”, n.d.). The implementation of PDSA cycles is undertaken after leaders have developed a comprehensive understanding of both the system producing the current outcomes and the specific problem they are trying to solve. PDSA cycles are designed to be incremental and quickly replicable to learn what works and to scale improvements that work reliably over time.

The sixth and final principle is to accelerate improvements through networked communities. Carnegie’s version of this is the Networked Improvement Community (NIC). These NICs are collaborative in nature, meeting to review data, plan, execute and evaluate PDSA cycles.

**Intellectual Humility**

The concept of “possibly wrong, definitely incomplete” espoused by Carnegie closely aligns with the conceptualization of intellectual humility that can be defined as “recognizing that one’s beliefs and opinions might be incorrect” (Leary *et al.*, 2017, p. 793 as cited in Gilovich & Griffin 2010; Hilbert, 2012; Leary, 2017, p. 1 as cited in Church & Barrett, 2017; Hopkin, Hoyle, and Toner, 2014). Leary states that while intellectual humility “. . . is fundamentally a cognitive phenomenon” there are theories that capture the behavioral aspects of intellectual humility, including behaviors related to acquiring and processing information. Leary claims that people who have higher intellectual humility spend a greater amount of time to gather and consider information for decision-making and establishing values. He further asserts that intellectual humility is relational, and that people who demonstrate high intellectual humility are more open-
minded, flexible and humbler in their opinions and beliefs (Leary, 2017 as cited in Krumrei-Mancuso & Rouse, 2017; Hopkin et al., 2014; Porter & Schumann, 2017). Leary states that increased intellectual humility is linked to empathy, including respect for others' viewpoints in situations where there is disagreement.

Intellectual humility has implications for leading collaborative partnerships. Researchers cited in Leary propose that “. . . people who are less egoically focused on their own beliefs and opinions will naturally respond more positively toward other people” (2017, p. 8). Intellectual humility may be viewed as a behavior that supports the development of relationships (Leary as cited in Davis et al., 2013; McElroy et al., 2014; Van Tongeren et al., 2014) though he notes that additional study on the strength of this relationship is needed. Intellectual humility may encourage interaction with others by establishing a “safe” environment for communication among collaborative partners.

Communication

In 2002, Margaret Wheatley opined: “Human conversation is the most ancient and easiest way to cultivate the conditions for change—personal change, community and organizational change. . .” (p. 3). Asera, Gabriner & Hemphill (2017) identified the importance of “openness to collaboration” as a precursor to productive collaborative partnerships. Casey (2008, p. 76) cites Newell, Robertson, Scarbrough, and Swan (2002) who claim that “trust is a prerequisite” for developing communication practices at a “sufficiently high level. . . to facilitate the sharing of knowledge.” Casey further asserts that trust provides the
foundation for effectively communicating ideas that results in greater sharing of knowledge and cooperation among partners (as cited in VonKrogh et al. 2000).

Equal Measure/Harder and Company identified effective communication as one of their nine systems leadership characteristics in cross-sector partnerships (2017, p. 10). They assert that “systems leaders are skilled at bridging division to show where common interests lie.” Common language was cited in Asera, Gabriner & Hemphill (2017) as a necessary component of collaborative group success. The researchers identified the development of a “terminology handbook” for cross-sector collaborators as a promising practice in the development and use of a shared language among partners. Equal Measure/Harder and Company also acknowledge the importance of “codeswitching”, where leaders can speak the language of other sectors in addition to their own sector. An example of this is a workforce professional who is sufficiently well-versed in education to discuss an enrollment problem. The researchers note that “flexing the narrative” for varying audiences is “a necessary tactic to galvanize system actors toward the vision” (2017, p. 10).

Fullan discussed the importance of communication and stressed that communication during implementation of a new initiative is “far more important” than the communication preceding implementation (2011, p. 48). Fullan noted that communication should be focused, repetitive, and consistent. He further identified the importance of talking about the impact of the work, highlighting promising practices to overcome challenges that may occur in the process of
implementation. Kania and Kramer (2011) and Kania, Hanleybrown and Splansky-Juster (2012) discussed the importance of continuous communication as one of the original “Five Conditions of Collective Impact”. In their conceptualization, communication is open and consistent across the collaborative partnership with the intention of developing a common purpose and motivation. Kania et al. (2012) recognize communication as a vehicle for building trust. A related, but separate condition of collective impact identified as the “common agenda” by Kania et al. (2012) highlights the need for a “common understanding of the problem” that can be achieved through effective communication. Ehrlichman, Sawyer, and Spence (2018) discuss the need for “sensemaking” that includes developing a deep understanding of the context, historical experience, actors and diverse perspectives involved in a collaborative effort. Sensemaking underscores the importance of explicit acknowledgement of the current environment, recognizing both differences in perspectives and common interests and establishing a “common foundation” for collaborative action.

In the eight “Collective Impact Principles of Practice”, Brady and Splansky-Juster (2016) discuss the importance of diversity and inclusion in collective impact efforts. They state: “Community members can bring crucial (and sometimes overlooked) perspectives. . .” (2016, p. 1). Equal Measure/Harder and Company stress the importance of hearing “all voices” in collaborative conversations, ensuring that viewpoints from diverse individuals are incorporated
into the forming and functions of the collaborative partnership. Ehrlichman et al. discuss the need for “sensemaking” that includes “surfacing diverse perspectives” and development of a “shared understanding” of the system components, individuals, and organizations (2018, p. 3).

While sensemaking provides the context and understanding necessary for successful communication, listening is also identified as an essential element of communication. Wheatley writes: “I believe we can change the world if we start listening to one another again” and recognizes the need to “each listen well” (2002, p. 3). Vostal, McNaughton, Benedek-Wood and Hoffman (2015) identify active listening as a skill in communication that leads to successful collaboration. The researchers identify three elements of active listening that include: 1) unconditional attention demonstrated by the listener; 2) paraphrasing by the listener to ensure understanding of the speaker’s message; and 3) questioning to generate additional discussion and information sharing. This focus on questioning for understanding aligns with both Edmondson (2014) and Bryk’s (2015) notions on the role of questioning as way of practicing inclusiveness by gathering input from diverse perspectives.

Leadership

As collaboration requires a different way of communicating and working together to address complex challenges, leadership also shifts in significant ways. Chrislip and Larson (1994, p. 15) assert that there are "significant obstacles or barriers to change that civic and political leadership, as traditionally
practiced, have failed to overcome." Morse, in conceptualizing a new and
different context for leadership, (2010, p. 231) proposes using the term
"integrative public leadership" to describe "boundary-crossing leadership and
serve as a unifying, interdisciplinary framework for reflection and action into the
future." Wheatley (2012, p. 48), addresses both the tradition of leadership and
the new reality when she states: "It's up to the leader to call people together,
using one of the many well-honed processes that simultaneously lead to good
collective thinking and forge new relationships among staff."

Chrislip and Larson (1994) address the differences among more traditional
leadership types, including tactical and positional leadership and contrast those
leadership types with collaborative leadership. Tactical leadership, as described
by Chrislip and Larson (1994), is generally employed in a situation where the
result is clear, and a plan for achieving objectives has been developed.
Examples of tactical leaders include sergeants in law enforcement, surgeons,
and coaches. Chrislip and Larson (1994) opine that many of our conceptions
regarding leadership reflect on early experiences with tactical leaders, who are
often conceptualized as heroes. Tactical leadership is viewed as relatively
straightforward in its focus on mission, strategies, and tactics to achieve a clearly
defined end goal.

Positional leadership, the second type of leadership discussed by Chrislip
and Larson (1994) is associated with workforce and military hierarchies and
traditional centers of power. Position and leadership are commonly conflated, as
holding a position may or may not allow for positional leadership to occur. Positional leaders generally have authority over some structure.

**Collaborative Leadership**

Leadership in the context of collaboration, requiring the ability to shift perspectives to work successfully with a wide variety of partners and stakeholders, continues to unfold as practitioners both hone their skills and recognize the critical need for a new kind of leadership ("Cultivating Systems Leadership," 2017). Wei-Skillern and Silver assert that the "leadership skills and culture that are essential to successful network building, however, are often overlooked." They maintain that "these skills are the critical factors that differentiate failed or mediocre collaborations from those that achieve transformational change. Leadership mindset and skills critical to the success of networks are the opposite of what is typically rewarded in the philanthropic sectors" (2013, p. 122). A recent example of the impact of leadership mindset on the success or failure of initiatives is the California Career Pathways Trust Grant. Despite investments of $500 million to catalyze development of career pathways leading to high-skill, high-wage careers, the results of the first round of grant implementation yielded few sustainable consortia, with positions created to do the work of connecting sectors of business and education largely being eliminated rather than sustained after grant funding ended (McLaughlin, Groves and Lundy-Wagner, 2018). Despite the need identified by Kania and Kramer (2011) for a backbone organization, and other frameworks, models and articles
highlighting the need for people to serve as connectors among sectors, the functions of leading and managing collaborative partnerships remain a funding challenge (McLaughlin, Groves and Lundy-Wagner, 2018).

The need for collaborative leaders, despite challenges in sustainability of such efforts, continues. Chrislip and Larson (1994, p. 127) underscore the demand for leadership that engages others in collaborative processes, convenes key partners and facilitates group interactions and processes toward outcomes. In this new leadership role, leaders move from unilateral action to promoting and safeguarding the process of collaboration. Positional power gives way to servant leadership in collaborative efforts. Collaborative leadership, the third type of leadership discussed by Chrislip and Larson (1994), is characterized by different tasks and roles than either tactical or positional leaders. Collaborative leaders commonly work both within and outside of their organizations across boundaries and sectors. These leaders may work with both private and public sector partners at multiple levels from executives to operational leaders. Collaborative leaders must be willing to tolerate both ambiguity and not knowing the solutions to challenging problems (Chrislip & Larson, 1994).

**Transformational Leadership**

In 1978, James MacGregor Burns asserted that there are two distinct types of political leadership: transactional leadership and transformational leadership (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). While transactional leadership focuses on an exchange of value, transformational leadership is "a process in which leaders
and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation." (Rao, 2014, p. 150)

There are four elements of transformational leadership according to Bass (1999). The first, individualized consideration, is based on a leader focusing on meeting the individual needs of each employee. This requires the leader to demonstrate empathy and support, practice open and transparent communication and to recognize individual contributions to a team effort. The second element of transformational leadership described by Bass (1999) is intellectual stimulation. This includes leadership behaviors of risk-taking and seeking input from employees. Burns (1978) claimed that leaders demonstrating this element encourage creativity and development of individual thinkers. This element also embraces challenging assumptions and learning, according to Burns.

The third element of transformational leadership is inspirational motivation (Bass, 1999). This element describes a leader that can clearly share an inspirational vision and inspire employees to action. Bass asserted that leaders demonstrating this element challenge employees and help them to understand the "why" in each activity or task, establishing a clear purpose for accomplishing the work at hand. The final element of transformational leadership is idealized influence (Bass, 1999). According to Bass, a leader demonstrating this element will be a role model for ethical behavior and will instill a sense of respect and trust among followers. The four elements of transformational leadership,
according to Bass (1999) collectively form an approach to leadership that facilitates transformational change in people and systems.

Santamaria and Santamaria (2012, as cited in Burns, 1978), note that while many current researchers have defined transformational leadership in varying and evolving ways, the principles underlying the practice of transformational leadership remain consistent. These include the notion that leaders look to meet higher-order needs in individuals as identified by Maslow (1943), and work holistically with people, not bifurcating the professional from the personal in daily interactions and experiences. According to Moynihan, Pandey & Wright (2012), transformational leadership is distinguished from transactional leadership by the absences of self-interest as the driving motivation factor among employees, though the researchers note that leaders have successfully applied both transactional and transformational leadership in practice. While transactional leadership focuses on an exchange, transformational leadership engages employees beyond self-benefit to focus on the needs of the customers and organizations that they serve (Moynihan et al., 2012). Applied transformational leadership empowers individuals to not only complete their job requirements but serves to challenge and inspire them to work at levels beyond their comfort zones (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012). According to Moynihan et al. (2012), transformational leadership shapes the behavior of employees through three psychological processes (as cited in Bass et al., 2003). These processes include the work of transformational leaders to engage employees in
the organization's "values and outcomes," explicating a clear sense of the organization's mission and purpose and inspiring employees with "confidence and direction about the future of the organization" (Moynihan et al., 2012). The processes also include leaders functioning as role models and developing employee pride and helping employees to gain a sense of ownership by engaging them in reimagining assumptions about organizational challenges and potential solutions. Transformational leaders actively model and practice the behaviors that they espouse for others in the organization. Moynihan et al. (2012) propose that these transformational leadership processes collectively improve workplace culture and help employees to engage in the organization’s improvement efforts through a greater understanding of and commitment to the organization’s goals. Santamaria & Santamaria (2012), assert that the benefits of transformational leadership include strengthening morale in the workplace as workers are actively engaged in all aspects of operations, fostering a sense of efficacy at all levels; increased ownership in and responsibility for the organization’s success; and an improved bottom-line with increased productivity and efficiency as a result of employee engagement, buy-in, and meeting high expectations. The challenges in transformational leadership, conversely, include leader burnout, lack of sufficient structure to meet high expectations, and employee exhaustion.
Critical Leadership

Santamaria and Santamaria (2012, p. 5) propose an applied critical leadership that integrates transformational leadership, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory. They define applied critical leadership as follows: "...a strengths-based model of leadership practice where educational leaders consider the social context of their educational communities and empower individual members of these communities based on the educational leaders' identities (i.e., subjectivity, biases, assumptions, race, class, gender and traditions" as perceived through a critical race theory lens". They assert that this model adopts a "strengths-based" approach as leaders consider the additive effect of their strengths as important contributions to their leadership practices. Santamaria and Santamaria (2012) also differentiate between two types of practitioners of applied critical leadership using critical race theory: those who are historically marginalized, and those who are advantaged and who choose to adopt an applied critical leadership style. They assert that when both those who choose to practice applied critical leadership, and those who are traditionally marginalized collaborate, a "discourse of liberation" is created which moves an institution toward educational equity (as cited in Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 7-8). Assumptions in applied critical leadership include; racism as an inherent condition in the United States and the public education institutions that serve students; the importance of storytelling in exploring issues of marginalized populations;
openness to a critique of liberalism; and approaching racism with common sense (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012 as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009).

They further state that it is essential that critical leaders "understand and practice interest convergence, a principle of critical race theory as a phenomenon resulting in socio-political action and decision-making benefiting people of color and others who are marginalized-as well as all citizens with parity" (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012 as cited in Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings, 2010). The researchers claim that racial equality will be "accommodated" when the interests of white people converge with those of color (as cited in Bell, 1980, p. 23). Interest convergence can be used to analyze pedagogy and policies that can transform the preparation of teachers for future generations. It is cited as a "disruptive movement" to fight racism in teacher education to ultimately change conditions in the classroom for all students. Santamaria and Santamaria assert that "interest convergence must be realized before substantive change in educational leadership practice occurs" (2012, p. 6).

Servant Leadership

"Servant leadership emphasizes the role of service to others and the role of an organization to develop people who can improve the future" (Parris & Peachey, 2013, p. 378). Servant leadership, conceptualized in the 1970's by Dr. Robert Greenleaf, emphasizes the role of leader as servant. Greenleaf states: “It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first.” (1977, p. 27). Greenleaf describes the leader as one who is “sharply different” from
individuals who perceive themselves as leaders before servants and cautions that this may be due to a need for power or material possessions. Greenleaf asserts that servant leaders ensure that the priorities of others are served, and that as a result of that constant care, followers develop more fully as people.

Greenleaf eschews a hierarchical organizational structure in favor of a shared power structure, again encouraging the role of leader as human optimization agent. He describes the importance of sharing power as a way to lead and empower others. Critics of servant leadership cite Greenleaf’s assertion that servant leadership is a way of life, not a management technique that can be tested. According to Parris and Peachey (2013, p. 380), Greenleaf “warned that servant leadership would be difficult to apply and operationalize” and he wanted people to grow through the development of servant leadership behaviors and characteristics.

In 2002, Russell and Stone identified attributes of servant leaders (as cited in Parris & Peachey, 2013) that align with attributes conceptualized by Greenleaf to include: “vision, honesty, integrity, trust, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation of others, and empowerment.” (p. 380). An integrated servant leadership model was developed (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006) that synthesized the previously identified attributes into five factors, and Van Dierendonck (2011) proposed six key characteristics of servant leadership. The numbers of conceptual models, attributes and characteristics identified in multiple settings highlights the interest in servant leadership across sectors.
Systems Leadership

A more recent addition to the leadership theories that abound in literature across sectors is the concept of systems leadership. While information on systems theory and limited information on systems leadership is available, there is not a standard definition readily available for this type of leadership, nor information on how it intersects with the fields of adaptive leadership and collaborative leadership. Senge, Hamilton, and Kania in "The Dawn of Systems Leadership" (2015, p. 28) characterized three major attributes of systems leaders to include: 1) the ability to see the larger system; 2) the ability to foster reflection and deep, generative conversations; and 3) the ability to "shift collective focus from reactive problem-solving to co-creating the future". These attributes provide leaders with the necessary skills to build a shared understanding of complex problems, dedicate time to thinking about their thinking in a reflective and curious manner, and to help people articulate their deeper aspirations for positive change. In “Systems Thinkers in Action”, Michael Fullan (2004) discussed system leadership as it relates to education:

A new kind of leadership is necessary to break through the status quo. Systematic forces, sometimes called inertia, have the upper hand in preventing system shifts. Therefore, it will take powerful, proactive forces to change the existing system (to change context). This can be done directly and indirectly through systems thinking in action. These new theoreticians are leaders who work intensely in their schools or national
agencies, and at the same time connect with and participate in the bigger picture. To change organizations and systems will require leaders to get experience in linking other parts of the system. These leaders, in turn, must help develop other leaders with similar characteristics.” (Fullan, 2004, p. 7)

Executive Leader Engagement

Asera, Gabriner & Hemphill (2017) identified the importance of executive leadership engagement for successful collaborative partnerships. The researchers assert that executive leaders can “set the tone” for a collaborative group, signal importance of the partnership in a public and visible way, identify and allocate resources, and empower and encourage staff to collaborate. Asera et al. (2017) describe the importance of systems thinking as a function of the executive level collaborative group to address “big-picture issues” facing their respective organizations, both individually and collectively. The researchers argue that ”Without the engagement of executive leaders, it is difficult for partnerships to be initiated and sustained with clear focus, appropriate support, and continuing strategic guidance” (p. 19).

Operational Leader Engagement

Asera, Gabriner & Hemphill (2017) claim that middle-level leader engagement is also essential for sustaining effective collaborative partnerships. The researchers describe the importance of these leaders’ perspectives in addressing the specifics of implementation. Operations-level leadership is called
on to execute the vision of executive leadership in a way that is substantially different from the purpose and focus of the executive leadership group.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the literature based on early sensitizing concepts of collaboration and leadership. It also provided an overview of the behaviors identified through the three phases of data collection and analysis. The researcher added to the literature throughout the research study process consistent with the development of a constructivist grounded theory research study. In Chapter Three, the research design and methodology will be clearly described and will provide an overview of the procedures, instruments, and methods used in this research study.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Collaboration is commonly recommended as a strategy for solving complex problems. Collaborators from all sectors of a community contribute powerful potential solutions to intractable problems, including poverty, homelessness, and hunger across the globe (Green & Johnson, 2015; Kania & Kramer, 2011; "Addressing Complexity," 2009). This study explored executive and operational level behaviors in cross-sector collaborative partnerships that are employing career pathways as a primary strategy for improving educational attainment at the secondary and postsecondary levels within a defined community or region. This chapter details the research approach, design, and methods to be used in gathering and analyzing data from executive and operational level representatives, funders and technical assistance providers representing and supporting cross-sector collaborative groups located across the United States.

Research Approach

According to Creswell (2014, p. 3), research approaches are the "plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation."

Research approaches to be considered for this study included quantitative designs, focused primarily on numerical data to quantify study results; qualitative designs,
where actors are studied in their environments to describe a situation or experience; and mixed methods, including a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell, 2014). A review of these approaches provided evidence for the selection of qualitative research as an appropriate way to address the inquiry focus of this study. The decision was based on the nature of the research inquiry, strategies to be employed in this study, methods identified to be used with these strategies and the philosophical perspective of the researcher (Creswell, 2014).

The research inquiry proposed in this study focused on relational behaviors and actions in cross-sector collaboration. The purpose of this study was to explore the executive and operational level behaviors in collaborative partnerships focused on improving educational attainment and using career pathways as a key strategy in a defined community or region at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Employment of a qualitative strategy supported the exploratory nature of the study design and the intent to explain, rather than test or measure the variables involved in this study (Creswell, 2014). Interviews and observations are two qualitative methods that provide opportunities to discover emerging and recurrent themes in multiple interactions. This study was structured with three phases of interviews and observations, each followed by a period of transcription, memo-writing, additional literature review and data analysis. Document and multimedia materials from each collaborative group
were analyzed to add detail, structure, and context in each of the three interactive phases of data collection and analysis.

The proposed research design aligned with the researcher's constructivist worldview. This worldview focuses on understanding through the individual construction of meaning in the world in which they work, play and live (Creswell, 2014; Charmaz, 2014). Constructivists assert that there are multiple subjective realities dependent on individual perspectives and adopt an inductive and curious approach to exploring the complexity of these converging realities (Creswell, 2014; Charmaz, 2014). Constructivist researchers frequently study actions, processes, and interactions among people (Creswell, 2014). Constructivism assumes that humans construct meaning as a way of understanding the world and recognizes that social interaction with others is essential in making meaning (Creswell, 2014; Charmaz, 2014).

Research Design

In a review of the purpose of this study and relevant methodology, four qualitative designs emerged for consideration. The selection of an appropriate qualitative design was based on consideration of the overall contribution of the research to the existing literature, the researcher's interest in utilizing an inductive approach to the proposed study, and the multitude and diversity of groups and individuals to be included in the sample population. Case study, phenomenology, ethnography and grounded theory were the qualitative designs considered for use.
The first research design considered was a case study. This design addresses a specific context or small set of contexts in which the participants and research questions live. Case study design inquiry focuses on the development of a detailed analysis of an event, activity or process in a specific time and occurrence (Creswell, 2014). Case study design uses a variety of data collection procedures and is framed around a research question using a deductive approach (Creswell, 2014). The researcher believed that the emergence of themes in one case study would not provide sufficient data for the development of substantive theory. In a preliminary review of existing literature on cross-sector collaboration, the researcher found a recent surge in case studies on the topic related to interest in the concept of collective impact. This led to the researcher's conclusion that a completed case study on a cross-sector collaborative group would not substantially add to the existing literature. Subsequently, this design was not selected, and a second research design was explored.

The second qualitative design considered for this study was Phenomenology. Phenomenology situates itself in the lived experiences of individuals and aims to describe these experiences through an in-depth data gathering process over an extended period (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenology was eliminated as a research design for this study through a process of comparison with grounded theory. One distinction between phenomenology and grounded theory is the identification and situation of the research question within the study (Wimpenny & Gass, 2000). In phenomenological studies, the question
is identified at the outset of the study and data is collected in a deductive process (Creswell, 2008). In grounded theory, the research question and ultimate focus leading to substantive theory development will inductively emerge from recurrent and deepening cycles of data collection and analysis (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). The second distinction between phenomenology and grounded theory, according to Wimpenny and Gass (2000), is that the interview in grounded theory maintains more structure around actions and processes than in phenomenological research. Phenomenological researchers are focused on describing in detail an experience and the interpretation of that experience by study participants (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenology seeks to describe, rather than explain a phenomenon (Smith, 2003). Given these distinctions, phenomenology was not selected as a research design for this study.

A third design, Ethnography, possesses many of the attributes that are appropriate for the proposed study. Ethnography encompasses the study of "behaviors, language and actions" (Creswell, 2014, p. 14) of people in a specific cultural and social context ("Ethnographic research techniques," n.d.). Charmaz (2014) encourages grounded theory researchers to consider the integration of ethnographic methods by "combining ethnographic observations" with informal conversations as a robust data collection strategy. However, ethnography is utilized to explore and describe a culture and context in detail, rather than explicating the multiple actions, processes, and relationships among a variety of participants and groups as proposed in this study (Creswell, 2014; Najafi et al.,
Therefore, ethnography was not selected for the research design, but direct observation is included in the methods of this study as an element of ethnographic data collection.

The final research design considered and ultimately selected for this study was grounded theory. Grounded theory was selected as it most closely aligned with the researcher’s constructivist worldview and interest in collecting and analyzing qualitative data that would result in the generation of substantive theory. This theory, "grounded" in research, was developed in the inductive and recurrent process of exploring executive and operational level behaviors in sustaining cross-sector collaborative groups. Grounded theory methodology is well-suited for the emergence of previously unknown themes, exploration of the nuances of actions, processes, and relational behaviors in social interactions that inform theory development (Charmaz, 2014).

**Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory is an emergent and evolving research design. Grounded theory emerged in the 1960's in a period of economic prosperity and political dominance enjoyed by the United States (Thornberg, 2012; Charmaz, 2014). Sociologists from the University of Chicago wrote and published formative works, inspiring graduate students including Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. In 1967, Glaser and Strauss authored their seminal publication “The Discovery of Grounded Theory” after their initial collaboration studying death and dying in hospitals (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014). Glaser and Strauss...
proposed the development of theories based on qualitative research with origins in sociology. Their grounded theory design involves the development of substantive (local) or formal (generalizable) theory through the "study of a process, action or interaction grounded in the views of participants" (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). "The grounded theory approach supposes that theory is "grounded" in data, rather than presumed at the outset of the research" (Brod, Tesler, & Christensen, 2009, p. 1264). Data collection and analysis in grounded theory occurs through multiple cycles of inductive inquiry, uncovering themes and relationships among categories of information (Creswell, 2014; Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2007).

Grounded theory was antithetical to the prevailing positivistic focus on scientific method and objectivity in the mid-1960s (Age, 2011; Thornberg, 2012). Proponents of qualitative research claimed that a quantitative focus failed to adequately address the complex nature of human interactions and challenges (Anderson, 2010; Foley & Timonen, 2015). Glaser and Strauss originally defined grounded theory to include cycles of data collection and analysis using a constant comparison method in the analysis of emerging themes (Kolb, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The early construction of categories, codes and theory development as data analysis continues to be refined and validated in grounded theory practice (Lawrence & Tar, 2010).

Glaser and Strauss eventually moved in different directions, with Glaser remaining mostly consistent with his revised (1978) grounded theory
construction, thereby establishing what is known as "classic" grounded theory. (Kenny & Fourie, 2015; Thornberg, 2012, Glaser 1978). Strauss modified his approach to grounded theory in his 1987 follow-up publication “Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists”. In 1990, Strauss partnered with Juliet M. Corbin to move grounded theory toward a rigorous method of verification (Charmaz, 2014), a variation of grounded theory eventually termed "Straussian" (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). Glaser criticized the move, asserting that Strauss and Corbin's procedures ignore emergence in the research and force technical application of grounded theory in a prescribed manner, contradicting the original ideas of grounded theory (Kenny and Fourie, 2015; Kelle, 2005).

In the 1990's, researchers continued to move away from the positivism and early conceptions of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz, who studied with both Glaser and Strauss, rejected the notion of objective reality in conceptualizing constructivist grounded theory, claiming instead that meaning is constructed through actions and interactions in a social context (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). In constructivist grounded theory, the researcher co-constructs and co-authors the theory in an interplay with the data (Mills, Bonner, & Francis 2006; Charmaz, 2014).

There are several common features of grounded theory that vary in implementation among classic, or “Glasserian; “Straussian” and Constructivist grounded theory (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). These features include: treatment of the literature, coding, memoing & diagramming, and identifying the core category
(Mills, Bonner, & Francis 2006; McCann & Clark, 2003). Among these, Kenny & Fourie (2015) assert that the treatment of the literature, coding procedures and the philosophical perspectives underpinning each type represent the key distinctions among the traditions.

The literature review is a standard feature among research studies. While traditional research approaches utilize the literature review to inform and support the research questions in a study, grounded theory application calls for the development and use of a literature review across a continuum. In classic grounded theory Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 37), requested that researchers "...ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated". Glaser and Strauss acknowledge, however, that researchers will have some familiarity with the research topic at hand, stating: "...the researcher does not approach reality as a tabula rasa" (1967, p. 3).

After Glaser and Strauss diverged philosophically in the 1970's, Strauss, along with Juliet Corbin, challenged Glaser's early position, encouraging the use of literature throughout the research process, and emphasizing the distinction between "an empty head and an open mind" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Kelle, 2005). This stance accepts that there is a relationship between the researcher's knowledge and its influence on the research. While Strauss and Corbin affirmed the use of literature throughout the research process, they were not advocating a complete review of relevant literature prior to the start of a research study (Kenny
& Fourie, 2015). Instead, Strauss and Corbin counseled restraint in the use of the literature as a way of preserving fresh observation of the phenomena (Kenny & Fourie, 2015).

Charmaz, in her conception of constructivist grounded theory, echoed the endorsement of engagement with the literature from Strauss and Corbin (1990). Charmaz further encouraged the use of literature in both a specific literature review and integrated into the whole of a completed thesis (Charmaz, 2006; Kenny & Fourie, 2015). The completion of a comprehensive literature review, however, should be delayed until after the completion of data analysis, according to Charmaz. This preserves the researcher’s ability to maintain openness to the data and sustains the researcher’s creativity while still providing a comprehensive review of the literature (Kenny & Fourie, 2015).

Coding procedures among the three types of grounded theory vary significantly in their structure, intent and outcome (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). Classic grounded theory focuses on two stages of coding: substantive and theoretical coding, with the goal of discovering grounded theory in the data. Within the first stage of substantive coding, there are two processes. The first, open coding, occurs through a line-by-line analysis and three-stage constant comparison resulting in developed conceptual categories. As open coding progresses, categories develop density and interrelationships among categories become visible. In the second process, selective coding, the focus on data is reduced to a core category and related categories that appear closely and
significantly tied to the core category. In the second stage of theoretical coding, relationships among significant concepts emerge into grounded theory (Kenny & Fourie, 2015).

Straussian grounded theory departed significantly from the original conception of coding in classic grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990), proposed a four-stage coding model with rigorous and systematic procedures to “create, rather than discover” (Kenny & Fourie, 2015; p. 1274) a grounded theory that aligns closely with the data. The four-stage model proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) included open coding in a similar fashion to Glaser and Strauss's original conception of grounded theory. It then moves to axial coding, where five sub-categories are developed between each category and its subcategories in a specific structure. Selective coding, the third step in Straussian coding procedures integrates categories and elevates them to a “higher level of abstraction to fashion a grounded theory” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The identified core category must have significant breadth and abstraction such that it can incorporate other categories. A five-step process within selective coding further develops the grounded theory. A final step, labeled as the conditional matrix, is designed to integrate and summarize the three earlier levels of coding in Straussian grounded theory. The matrix includes eight levels of influences used to determine the path of a specific incident, allowing the researcher to identify the cause, conditions and consequences of specific phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Kenny & Fourie, 2015). A grounded theory is ultimately created
in Straussian grounded theory, in contrast to the discovery or emergence of theory in classic grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Kenny & Fourie, 2015).

Constructivist grounded theory coding procedures are similar in structure to those developed in classic grounded theory. A two-stage model, developed by Charmaz (2008), is characterized by its flexibility, with Charmaz encouraging researchers to practice “imaginative engagement with data” (Charmaz, 2008, p. 168). In the first stage, open coding follows Glaser’s original line of questioning in the analysis of data, but codes for actions and processes rather than static themes through the use of gerunds to highlight action in the participant’s experience. In the second stage, focused coding hones the recurrent and significant codes identified in the open coding process. These codes are developed into theoretical categories subject to additional theoretical sampling to reach theoretical saturation. Kenny & Fourie (2015) assert that memo-writing is a key activity in the construction of a theory at this stage in the process. They assert that memo writing allows researchers to identify gaps and scrutinize categories in the process of theory construction.

Methods

Selection of an appropriate research design is the foundation for a successful study (Creswell, 2014). Selection of research methods is critical in determining the types and quality of research data to be obtained for the proposed study (Creswell, 2014). In grounded theory, methods focus on engagement with research participants through interviews, analyses of relevant
documents and ethnographic techniques (Charmaz, 2014). This study utilized semi-structured interviews, direct observations, document and multimedia material analysis, and memo writing to collect a comprehensive set of data for analysis. Interpretation of the data occurred through three phases of inquiry, memo writing, and coding using a constant comparison method.

**Philosophical Worldview**

Worldview is the third component of the overall research approach. Like design and methods, worldview alignment with both the research topic and researcher perspective can strengthen the overall study approach (Austin & Sutton, 2014; Creswell, 2014). Worldviews identified in research design include postpositivism, constructivism, transformative and pragmatism (Creswell, 2014). Of these, postpositivism is most closely related to quantitative research, maintaining belief in cause and effect, and an external and objective reality (Creswell, 2014). "Classic" grounded theory proposed by Glaser and Strauss (2008) has been characterized as positivist in nature (Age, 2011; Charmaz, 2014). Positivist researchers were assumed to be passive and unbiased in their methodical collection of facts, and in the case of "classic" grounded theory, the discovery of these facts would allow a theory to emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2014). By contrast, the constructivist worldview is seen as aligned with qualitative research and begins with "the assumption that social reality is multiple…and constructed" (Creswell, 2014). The development of constructivist grounded theory, beginning in the 1990’s signaled a move toward flexibility and
construction of theory by the researcher through an iterative data collection and analysis process (Charmaz, 2014). According to Charmaz (2014, p. 12), "Constructivist grounded theory adopts the inductive, comparison, emergent and open-ended approach of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original statement" on grounded theory. The researcher recognized that alignment of approach, design, research methods, and philosophical worldview supports the development of an excellent qualitative study based on criteria used to demonstrate validity (Tracy, 2010; Creswell, 2014). Given the epistemological fit with both the researcher's worldview and the proposed research design, this study utilized constructivist grounded theory.

Research Setting

This research study was conducted among individual participants working in or supporting organizations and networks that are leading or participating in collaborative groups. Organizations and networks initially identified for participation in this study include cross-sector collaborative groups from across the United States. These groups may commonly identify as utilizing a "collective impact" approach (Kania & Kramer, 2011) or "cradle-to-career" partnership model to catalyze group work. Strive defines this partnership as: "A cradle-to-career partnership is the local coordinating body that organizes the efforts of everyone who works to support the success of every child, ensuring the initiative has impact and maintains momentum. The people involved include school staff;
local nonprofit, business and faith leaders; investors; other professionals in the field; and students and their families.” (“8 million students, one vision”, n.d.).

Collaborative groups to be included in this study met the following criteria:

1) Collaborative groups, learning communities or networks that have been in existence for two or more years, and 2) that represent two or more sectors in their membership (education, employers, government, community and faith-based organizations as examples). These groups, situated in communities and geographic regions across the United States, are actively working to improve educational attainment. Each group has identified and locally defined educational attainment with a variety of success indicators including high school graduation, entry into college without the need for remediation, and development of an educated and skilled workforce. This study explored the executive and operational level behaviors in collaborative groups focused on improving educational attainment and using career pathways as a key strategy in a defined community or region at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Collaborative groups, learning communities and networks were identified using existing contacts through professional networks and connections via "weak ties" (Granovetter, 1977) to a variety of collaborative groups. Potential groups that appear to meet the preliminary selection criteria were also identified through online research. Early identification of such groups to develop a purposive sample for data collection in phase one of this research study was completed
and included participants from organizations that met the defined selection criteria.

Technical assistance (TA) providers and funder organizations can offer unique perspectives on the work of collaborative groups. These providers and funders play an essential role in helping groups to organize, structure, convene and partner to achieve goals in common. While the providers and funders may not participate in the daily operations of many of the collaborative groups, they often maintain regular contact with collaborative group leaders, allowing them an intimate perspective on the work of the group. TA providers and funders participated in one to three semi-structured interviews via telephone, online conference, in-person at their work sites or in the field at conferences or public events. Providers and funders were also observed conducting activities with a participating collaborative group and are doing so at the same time that the group’s interactions are being observed. Observation of TA providers and funders was incidental as interactions between TA providers, funders and collaborative group members were not a focus of this research study.

Research Sample

This study captured the perspectives of executive level leaders, including presidents, chief executive officers, and superintendents who are participating in the leadership of a collaborative group. This study also collected interview data from operational level leaders, gaining a perspective from those implementing the collaborative's work and "leading up" with executive level leaders.
Operational leaders' job titles include deans, administrative managers, directors, and specialists. They may report directly to the respective executive leader in their organization, or a second-in-command leader, but have the primary responsibility to represent their respective organization at the operational level in the collaborative group.

A purposive sample of individuals at the executive and operational levels of each participating collaborative group, funder and TA provider organizations focused on improving educational attainment were initially identified for participation in this research study. This sample included 40 potential study participants who were invited to take part in this research study. Preliminary identification of individual participants for possible inclusion in this study occurred through discussions with collaborative groups, learning communities and networks, funders, and TA providers. Identified individuals were screened via telephone or email to ensure compliance with the individual participation criteria, including 1) At least two years of experience in their current work role; 2) Professional role is aligned to the executive or operational level of work at their respective work site. Job titles and typical job duties were reviewed to ensure that any variations in organizational structures and titling conventions across sectors and among participating organizations did not result in the misidentification of fitting participants at the respective levels of responsibility identified for inclusion in this study; 3) Currently participating in a collaborative group at the executive or operational level, holding a role within the collaborative
group as a team member or leader; 4) Has responsibility for participating in the collaborative group as part of their work assignment and representing their work organization within the collaborative group. Former collaborative group members who have recent experience relevant for participation in this study, and who met criteria 1-4 within the last two years were considered for inclusion in this study. This includes former group members who have retired, have recently changed work roles or have accepted positions in other organizations.

Individuals who met the criteria for participation were invited to participate in the research study. Each participant completed an Institutional Review Board approved informed consent form before beginning their participation in the research study. A table listing participant pseudonyms, industry sectors and leadership roles is found in Appendix F.

Research Data

Research data gathered for this study included data from interviews, observations, documents, and multimedia materials. Commencement of data collection was subject to an expedited review and approval of the proposed study by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University San Bernardino. The IRB review and approval process submission included an overview of the proposed study, interview protocol, interview questions and informed consent forms for all participants.

Identification of data collection instruments appropriate for the selected research design was based on a review of grounded theory and ethnographic
research methods (Creswell, 2014; Charmaz, 2014; Glesne, 2011). Selection of data collection procedures was also shaped by the researchers' worldview (Scotland, 2012; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Creswell, 2014). The emergence of data throughout the research process did not necessitate modifications to initial interview questions as the overall design remained appropriate for the development of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). IRB modification was not needed.

Data Collection Instruments

Interviews.

Interviews are the primary data collection instrument in grounded theory (Laitinen et al., 2014). An interview protocol including a list of pre-constructed, open-ended questions for initial data collection via semi-structured interviews was developed and approved by IRB. Initial questions were developed for all three phases of the data collection process. Flexibility and openness are essential components of grounded theory and help to maintain the inductive nature of the grounded theory design (Charmaz, 2014).

Interview questions were divided into three sections corresponding to three scheduled phases of interviews. Interview questions were based on sensitizing concepts identified in the preliminary literature review. A complete list of interview questions is available as Appendix A.

Observations.
Field notes were developed during observations and included both descriptive and conceptual notes. The field notes complemented and provided evidence related to interviews and the document analysis process. The use of interviews, observations, and document analysis allowed for the triangulation of data across multiple sources (Patton, 1999) to reveal both consistent and inconsistent data for consideration in the development and refinement of the interview protocol in phases two and three.

**Document and Multimedia Material Analysis.**

Document and multimedia materials analyzed included a variety of publicly-available materials developed and disseminated by each collaborative group, technical assistance provider or funder. Documents analyzed in this study included collaborative group bylaws, agendas, minutes, flyers, promotional or informational emails, press releases, and reports. Documents provided by TA providers and funders additionally included research briefs, curricular materials, frameworks, and grant agreements. Documents were collected from study participants, collaborative group members, websites, and gathered at public events. Multimedia materials, including websites, social media posts, infographics, organizational charts, recordings, and videos were also collected from collaborative groups as appropriate to explore the actions, processes, and relationships among participants in collaborative groups, TA providers, and funders.
Memos.

According to Charmaz (2014, p.162), memos "chart, record, and detail a major analytic phase of our journey." Memos provide evidence of emerging themes, participant and researcher experiences, and can offer valuable opportunities to establish validity through constant comparison of data throughout the data collection and analysis process (Charmaz, 2014; Glesne, 2011). The researcher’s case-based and conceptual memos were developed and secured by the researcher as confidential materials per IRB regulations.

Charmaz (2014) and Glesne (2011) recommend capturing thoughts as they occur by developing memos. These memos can lead to early opportunities to begin data analysis. Sbaraini, Carter, Evans and Blinkhorn (2011) identified two types of memos to be developed in a grounded theory study: case-based and conceptual memos. Hutchison, Johnston, and Breckon (2010) identified five types of memo-writing for grounded theory based on work by Bringer, Johnston, and Brackenridge (2004) and later modified that structure to meet the specific needs of their research project. This project developed case-based and conceptual memos through regular reflection on the project, at the conclusion of each interview, observation or data analysis and throughout the process of data analysis using a constant comparison method (Boeije, 2002).

Data Storage

All publicly available print and online materials were archived for the duration of the study. All confidential materials, including recorded and
transcribed interviews, observations, memos, and relevant non-public documents are maintained in locked files in accordance with IRB regulation "45 CFR 46.115(b) requiring that all records relating to IRB approved research be retained for three years after closure of the project." (U.S. Department of Health, n.d.)

Data Collection

Individuals representing organizations and networks, technical assistance (TA) providers, and funders identified for inclusion in this study participated in data collection activities conducted in three phases of collection and analysis. A preliminary and purposive sample of candidates for participation in this research study was identified and categorized by role to ensure adequate participant representation at both the executive and operational levels of collaborative groups for phase one data collection. If the respondent met the participation criteria, the informed consent information was provided for review and signature, and a telephone or online semi-structured phase one interview was scheduled.

Interviews

Individuals at the executive and operational levels of their respective work organizations were asked to participate in a total of one to three semi-structured interviews of no more than one hour for each interview. Each interview utilized the IRB-approved interview protocol to organize the interview process and questions. All interviews were digitally recorded. Interviews were conducted via online conference (using Zoom, an online conference tool) or via telephone based on the participant's availability and preferences. At the conclusion of each
interview, results were transcribed and coded, and a memo was written by the researcher to capture initial impressions, ideas, and observations. Memos were analyzed as data at each phase in the data collection and analysis process. At the conclusion of all phase one interviews, the researcher conducted additional literature review based on emerging themes in the phase one data collection process.

The second phase of semi-structured interviews was scheduled with a group of participants through a combination of purposive and theoretical sampling to address additional questions and to clarify information shared during the first interview. Participants who were identified and added to the study in phase two data collection participated in the screening process to confirm that each participant met the criteria developed and applied to phase one participants. Semi-structured interviews of up to one hour in length were conducted online using Zoom. After the second round of interviews, results were transcribed and coded with identified themes and memos were written. The third and final phase of interviews with individual participants selected through theoretical sampling were scheduled and conducted. At the conclusion of three phases of interviews, final coding occurred, memos were written, and themes and categories were further refined to move forward in theory development.

**Observations**

Individuals representing collaborative groups were asked to provide access to identified group meetings and events for direct observation as needed.
during each phase of data collection. The researcher assumed the role of observer as participant in this research study (Glesne, 2011). This included the researcher attending meetings, events, and training organized by collaborative groups where the researcher can observe interactions, processes, and actions. The researcher completed field notes during observations. The observations were semi-structured, with the researcher capturing descriptive and reflective field notes during observation with some opportunities for follow up and clarifying questions (Glesne, 2011). Memo writing occurred at the conclusion of each observation.

Document and Multimedia Analysis

Document and multimedia data were collected from participating organizations and research participants, through public searches and archival records throughout the research process. Participants were asked to provide relevant and publicly-available group documents at interviews and observations. These documents included relevant structure, process, informational and promotional documents and multimedia materials sufficient for understanding the stated mission, vision, goals and outcomes, operations, membership and data collected and disseminated for each collaborative group. Documents were also collected via websites and online research. Participants were not asked to share confidential information, including private correspondence, emails or other sensitive documents. Researcher notes were taken as approved by the respective collective group members. Agreements regarding recording, including
audio and video as well as note-taking were made in advance of observations and in compliance with the approved IRB data collection procedures.

**Memos**

Case-based and conceptual memos were developed by the researcher to capture initial impressions, observations and follow-up questions for each of the three phases of data collection and analysis. Case-based memos provide opportunities to reflect on each interview immediately after the interview is conducted and included the researcher's initial impressions of the participant's responses, their reactions and what the researcher learned from the interview (Sbaraini *et al*., 2011). Conceptual memos record thinking about the codes and their meanings, processes observed as they occurred and provide evidence for comparisons of similarities and differences in data. Conceptual memos also raise questions for future interviews (Sbaraini *et al*., 2011).

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis conducted in this research inquiry included multiple steps in a cyclic process of data collection and analysis. The foundation for analysis is a verbatim transcription of interviews with additional notes on observed behaviors and context. Observations and document analysis provide additional contextual clues as well as data to support the emergence of themes and categories based on the data collected. The development of memos at the conclusion of each encounter (interviews and observations) and throughout the research process provides meaningful opportunities for reflection on the data as it comes into
focus. In this process, data is analyzed by searching for themes and patterns that are evident, and those that are absent as well as the nuanced interpretations of experience that can provide clues for future inquiry (Charmaz, 2014).

There are specific rules for coding in the use of grounded theory (grounded theory) (Charmaz, 2014). Each version of grounded theory has its own set of rules aligned with the theoretical assumptions of the particular version of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). The structure of data analysis in constructivist grounded theory is based on the constant comparison process of data collection and analysis (Glesne, 2011).

**Constant Comparison**

The constant comparison method was used to develop common themes around participant experience, collaborative structure, process, and sustainability. Themes were compared across individual interviews representing multiple employment sectors and collaborative groups to identify commonalities and areas for further investigation through second and third round interviews and examination of related documents. Shared themes were refined and analyzed in light of research to test the validity of the measure against previous research on organizational sustainability. Boeije (2002) asserts that the number of steps in constant comparison is not clearly defined in research and should be determined in relation to the phenomena being studied with a consistent unit of analysis. Four steps for constant comparison were utilized in this study:
1. Comparison within a single interview (identifying consistencies and inconsistencies in a single transcribed interview).
2. Comparison between interviews within the same group (executive and operational level leaders).
3. Comparison of interviews from different groups (implementers, TA providers, and funders).
4. Comparison in pairs (in this case the pair would be one executive and one operational level leader within the same organization).

The four steps utilized in this study were also applied to observations and document analysis. In phase one, purposive sampling provided a variety of respondents at different levels and in three distinct roles for implementation (partners in implementation, TA providers, and funders). In phases two and three, data collection and analysis activities moved toward increasingly theoretical sampling as themes were emerging and tentative categories were developed.

Constant comparison aligns with theoretical sampling as it allows the researcher to hone and focus efforts to find data based on early theoretical ideas (Boeije, 2002). Units of analysis must be determined to ensure that comparisons are efficient and effective among multiple types of data. Variation is a key component of constant comparison as the commonalities and differences in responses, ideas and feelings can reveal important areas for further inquiry.
These variations provide opportunities to fill or explicate gaps in data collection, resulting in a thick, rich description of each theme as it emerges (Boeije, 2002).

Charmaz (2014) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) encourage researchers to be creative in interactions moving between gathering and analyzing data. Researchers are encouraged to consider both "close-in" or traditional data comparisons as well as "far-out" comparisons that demand creativity and complexity in thinking about the possibilities that data could reveal given a lack of traditional constraints in comparison. A protocol to be used in constant comparison with the four steps identified in this research inquiry is found in Appendix B.

Transcription

Each participant signed an informed consent form to allow the recording of interviews. A digital recording device was generated via Zoom to capture the participants' experiences and responses in interviews. The researcher used Zoom to develop and provide a rough transcript, and personally transcribed all interviews, checking for accuracy of the rough transcript and refining where necessary to ensure accuracy of the final transcript. Nvivo12 for Mac was used to upload and analyze data after transcription and deidentification. Each interview was transcribed verbatim.

A non-identifying variable (participant number) was assigned to each participant's interview to deidentify collected data. The participant number was also used to identify the transcription, any observations and related private
documents that were received during document analysis. A list of each participant's name and the number assigned to that participant was secured in an alternate location from study data collected to ensure confidentiality. Each participant's name, workplace, and location were removed from the transcript to ensure anonymity. Information that remained identifiable for research purposes included job titles and levels (executive or operational level) and employment sectors (education, private business, and government, as examples). Pseudonyms were attached to participant data to ensure anonymity of responses.

**Coding**

Coding allows researchers the opportunity to begin analyzing data gathered during interviews and observations. Coding also provides a pause in the data collection process where the researcher can reflect on and refine the focus and direction of subsequent data collection efforts (Charmaz, 2014). The process of coding differs among classic, Straussian and constructivist grounded theory researchers (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). Classic and constructivist grounded theory ascribe to flexible coding models, while the Straussian model employs a stringent five-step model criticized by both Glaser and Charmaz for its inflexibility and perceived lack of responsiveness to emerging themes and focus areas (Kenny & Fourie, 2015; Glaser, 2014; Charmaz, 2014). In this study, the researcher employed the constructivist practices developed by Charmaz (2014) that consist of initial and focused coding.
**Initial Coding.**

Initial coding mines data for early ideas to consider and pursue in subsequent phases of data collection (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). Initial coding pursues these ideas through a detailed, line-by-line analysis of transcribed data, documents, observation notes, and memos to identify and highlight participant responses, including perceptions, actions, and behaviors related to the research inquiry (Charmaz, 2014). Codes take the form of gerunds that describe actions or processes (Charmaz, 2014). The goal of the researcher during initial coding is to maintain the quality of openness, taking each new piece of information and resisting the urge to move to conclusions based on early data. Initial coding did not alter the course of subsequent data collection efforts, including the identification of new or different participants, modification or refinement of the research focus (Charmaz, 2014). Initial coding occurred during phase one of this study and encompassed the initial set of interviews and observations conducted with a purposive sample of 27 individuals. Document and multimedia analysis provided additional data and context for initial codes, keywords and early themes in phase one.

Charmaz (2014, p. 116) suggests four questions for use in initial coding. In completing a line-by-line review of transcribed interviews, observation notes, memos, and document analysis, she recommends consideration of the following four questions:
1. What is this data a study of? (Glaser, 1978 p. 57; Glaser & Strauss, 1967)

2. What do the data suggest? Pronounce? Leave unsaid?

3. From whose point of view?

4. What theoretical category does this specific datum indicate?

(Glaser, 1978)

**Focused Coding.**

Coding in phases two and three of this study was increasingly focused on conceptual coding. Focused coding uses the most frequent codes, recurrent themes in early data or those that are most significant based on sensitizing concepts to "sift, sort, synthesize and analyze large amounts of data" (Charmaz, 2014, pg. 138). Focused coding serves to accelerate data analysis, condensing data collected to date and sharpening the area of possible theory development. Focused codes are conceptual and can be used with larger chunks of data than in initial coding (Charmaz, 2014). Focused coding expedites the process of examining initial codes and determining which codes emerge as potential areas of theory development. Questions recommended by Charmaz (2014, p. 140) to be asked during the focused coding process include:

- What do you find when you compare your initial codes with data?
- Which of these codes best account for the data?
- What do your comparisons between codes indicate?
Do your focused codes reveal gaps in the data?

In which ways might your initial codes reveal patterns?

Have you raised these codes to focused codes?

Charmaz (2014) further attests that focused coding can affirm the emerging analysis and tentative categories of the research study.

**Memo Writing**

Memo writing is the intermediate step between data collection and the development of a written paper (Charmaz, 2014). Memo writing helps researchers to remain open to the emerging data and serves as a method of research validation (Charmaz, 2014). Memos capture experiences, thoughts and initial perceptions at a point in time that can provide early ideas about themes and relationships to be explored in subsequent data collection (Charmaz, 2014; Glesne, 2011). Memos also provide opportunities to develop thoughts when they occur and can provide mental space for exploring new perspectives and thoughts on the research study (Glesne, 2011).

Memo writing is essential in the development of a "thick, rich description" (Tracy, 2010), providing real-time detail that could be lost in attempting to recount an interview or observation in the weeks that follow, rather than hours. Memos capture the researchers' observations, reflections and unexplored questions about each encounter and event in the research process. Charmaz (2014) asserts that "your memos will form the core of your grounded theory. "Charmaz (2014) suggests using memo-writing to deconstruct data, looking at various
codes, comparing events and interviews and finding links between different data
that may not be initially evident. She recommends reviewing memos regularly as
part of the data analysis process and concludes that early memos often reveal
gaps in the data that need to be filled.

**Theoretical Sampling**

Theoretical sampling is closely connected to the process of constant
comparison in data analysis (Charmaz, 2014). As tentative categories begin to
take shape in the research inquiry, data collection efforts are refined to focus on
data necessary to create a thick, rich description within each category (Charmaz,
2014). Theoretical sampling allows the researcher to further develop and explore
each category until no further properties emerge (Charmaz, 2014). Categories
are thus considered to be saturated with data. The researcher can then move to
diagram or sort categories to infuse them into the emerging theory. Glaser and
Strauss (1967) developed theoretical sampling as a way to keep the researcher
from nonproductive analyses. In this research inquiry, theoretical sampling
included honing the interviews conducted in phases two and three of the
interview process as well as increasing the emphasis on observations and
document analysis that aligned with emerging themes and categories from phase
one and early phase two data collection efforts.

Charmaz (2014) cautions researchers on understanding the proper use of
theoretical sampling in data analysis efforts. She asserts that maintaining an
open and curious mindset about sampling, avoiding preconceptions in both the
process of data collection and data itself, is key is developing a quality grounded theory. In early data collection efforts, sampling is typically conducted with a purposive sample of participants that broadly reflect the population of the research inquiry topic. It is also common to address initial questions in research and to sample "until no new data emerge" (Charmaz, 2014 p. 197). These are considered traditional approaches for qualitative research. Charmaz's description of sampling is akin to using a map to guide data collection efforts. She described initial sampling as the starting place, and theoretical sampling as the guide moving the researcher toward potential destinations as they are revealed on the map. Theoretical sampling pertains to advancing theoretical and conceptual development in the data analysis process. It is less concerned with the initial sample structures and explores how the initial data can be explored and further developed to the point of emergent theory (Charmaz, 2014).

Abductive Reasoning

The concept of abduction was introduced by C.S. Peirce and is defined as "the process of studying facts and devising a theory to explain them" (Richardson & Kramer, 2006 p. 499). It is further described as a process to associate a date with ideas, often using existing theory to make connections and generate new ideas in the process of data analysis. Coffey and Atkinson state that "abductive reasoning lies at the heart of "grounded theorizing". They go on to state:

Our important ideas are not in the data, and however hard we work, we will not find those ideas simply by scrutinizing our data ever more
obsessively. We need to work at analysis and theorizing, and we need to do the intellectual, imaginative work of ideas in parallel to other tasks of data management. (1996, p. 155)

In this research inquiry, abductive reasoning was employed as a meaningful strategy for interacting with the emerging data analysis. Charmaz (2014) describes the process of using abductive reasoning as attending to data that is ill-fitting under interpretations or generalizations that have been developed in the data analysis. In this case, the researcher made inferences based on “imaginative ways of reasoning” (Charmaz, 2014, p.201). As imaginative and more "far out" explanations are developed, Charmaz (2014) stresses the importance of returning to the data for further examination as well as gathering additional data to test new interpretations developed through abductive reasoning.

Theoretical Saturation

Charmaz (2014) explains that categories are considered "saturated" when developed data no longer provides new insights or properties describing the core theoretical categories. She further asserts that "saturation is not seeing the same pattern over and over again" and encourages researchers to go beyond the apparent descriptions to find insight, establish relationships that are abstract and theoretical and practice analytic precision in a holistic inquiry.

An important distinction in determining theoretical saturation is the concept of sampling adequacy, which focuses on the credibility of the study by having a
study size sufficient to generate relatively complex theory (Charmaz, 2014). The purposive sample size in this study is 27 total individuals to complete semi-structured interviews. Bryman (2012) states that researchers using grounded theory cannot determine at the outside the appropriate sample size needed to achieve theoretical saturation. Wiener (2007) describes the determination of theoretical saturation as a judgment on the part of the researcher. Theoretical saturation occurred in this study as a result of a combination of sample size relative to the theory developed and judgment of completeness of each category developed in the data analysis process relative to holistically exhausting all potential insights about the data.

Theory Construction

Thornberg and Charmaz (2012) provide the following definition: "A theory states relationships between abstract concepts and may aim for either explanation or understanding." Charmaz (2014, p. 228) further claims that theory "remains slippery" in discourses around grounded theory. There are two worldview orientations that commonly influence grounded theory. A propensity for theory to explain and predict, rather than describe is based on a positivist definition of theory. Interpretivist definition of theory stresses interpretation and abstract understanding over simple explanation. In the interpretivist tradition, the researcher's interpretation of the study is not attempting to establish cause and effect (Charmaz, 2014). Instead, interpretive theory aims to understand meaning
and action and how they are created. Development of theory in constructivist grounded theory is based on construction, not emergence (Charmaz, 2014).

The process of theory construction in constructivist grounded theory is based on foundational assumptions of multiple realities and co-construction through interaction (Charmaz, 2014). Constructivist grounded theory "aims to create theory that has credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness." (Charmaz, 2014). The implications for data analysis in this research inquiry included acknowledging subjectivity throughout the data analysis process; practicing reflexivity through memo development; and using available tools to demonstrate validity including constant comparison, abductive reasoning, and theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2014). Theorizing in research practice, as Charmaz (2014) asserts, "means being eclectic, drawing on what works, defining what fits." In this research inquiry, a grounded theory was developed relative to the sample size, quality of the data, and through rigorous and holistic analysis of each category, ensuring that categories were fully explored and considered.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Validity is defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2008) as "the quality of being well-grounded, sound, or correct." In research, validity is defined as the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Creswell, 2014). There are a variety of criteria to determine validity within each research approach, and selection of appropriate ways to determining validity is relative to the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2014). For example, a quantitative
study is designed to measure the effects of an independent variable or set of variables on a dependent variable. A qualitative study, by contrast, does not seek to measure, but rather to describe or explain a situation, experience or phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2014; Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001).

A qualitative approach to research requires corresponding methods to demonstrate validity (Golafshani, 2003; Creswell & Miller, 2000). While criteria have been developed by many researchers, these criteria have not been universally agreed upon and accepted (Tracy, 2010). Researchers have argued in favor of and against lists of criteria for validity in qualitative research with differing attributes and aims (Tracy, 2010; Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001). Lincoln and Guba (1985), Leininger (1994) and others have proposed similar, yet unique criteria to conceptualize qualitative validity. The growing lists of validity criteria have been synthesized, positioning various standards and models to be used by qualitative researchers with no explicit agreement on a universal set of criteria even when terms are identical (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001). Regardless of the lack of universal agreement, identification and utilization of a set of criteria for determining validity are essential for excellent qualitative research (Tracy, 2010; Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

"Big-Tent" Criteria proposed by Tracy (2010) represent major topics for establishing the validity of this research inquiry include determining relevance; developing a quality study design; creating rigorous data collection and analysis
processes; and developing a thick, rich description that captures the obvious and nuanced experiences of study participants. These eight criteria have been compared to other lists with similar terms and concepts, including Lincoln & Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. While the researcher initially sought to utilize the four trustworthiness criteria by Lincoln & Guba, Tracy's eight "Big-Tent" criteria (2010) appeared to holistically address validity throughout the research process from conception through dissemination and were used in this research study to establish validity.

The first of eight criteria identified by Tracy (2010) for excellent qualitative research is the selection of a worthy topic for study. Indicators include topic relevance, timeliness in context to current interests, significance to the field and stakeholder interest. These indicators align with Creswell's (2014) discussion regarding the selection of a research approach, design, methodology and worldview. Significant contribution is the second criterion and is related to the worthy topic criteria in its intention to inform the field. Both worthy topic and significant contribution criteria are listed in the quality indicators for Adequacy of the Dissertation at California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) and are listed to be addressed in Chapter one of the dissertation.

Four of Tracy's (2010) criteria relate to the concepts of research methods and activities. The first, rich rigor is a qualitative research criterion that includes multiple indicators from theoretical constructs underpinning a study up to the
processes utilized for data collection and analysis. It also includes time in the field, sufficient sample size and description of context(s). The criterion of credibility was identified by both Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001) and Tracy (2010) and can be linked back to a previously developed and named criteria by Lincoln & Guba (1985). Credibility includes the concepts of triangulation in research (Creswell, 2014) and the development of a "thick, rich description" as discussed by Glesne (2011). Ethics in developing and conducting a research study is indicated through the process, including items such as IRB approval, relational ethics and exiting research locations in an ethical manner. The final criterion related to methods is meaningful coherence. This criterion focused on the study and includes indicators of adequately addressing the research inquiry, using methods and procedures fitting the goals of the study, and creating a connection among the respective parts of a study including the literature review, research inquiry, and findings. These indicators align with CSUSB quality indicators in chapters two, three and four as listed on the Adequacy of the Dissertation score sheet.

Sincerity is a criterion for the development of excellent qualitative research according to Tracy (2010). Indicators of sincerity include the development of self-reflexive evidence and transparency regarding the challenges in research. The positionality statement developed for dissertation submission at CSUSB is one piece of evidence for the existence of sincerity in a research study. The second
piece of evidence related to sincerity is the development of memos throughout the research process.

The final criterion identified by Tracy (2010) and related to the writing of a dissertation based on qualitative research is the concept of resonance. Resonance is focused on the telling of the story, similar to a "thick, rich description" with palpable detail and nuance. Resonance can also be achieved through the development of transferable findings and naturalistic representations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) from the research field of study.

This research inquiry incorporated each of the eight quality criteria for demonstrating validity in the design and implementation of this study. The selection of holistic criteria for validity from start to finish in the dissertation process provided important checkpoints at each stage of design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination. The Adequacy of the Dissertation scoring sheet as well as the Literature Review rubric provided by CSUSB was also used to check for validity at each step in the dissertation process.

**Trustworthiness**

Creswell (1998) established eight essential procedures to ensure credibility or trustworthiness. Glesne (2011) summarized the eight procedures to include:

1. Prolonged time in the field to build connections with participants,
2. Use of multiple methods of data collection, resulting in triangulation of data among sources
3. Seeking peer feedback for reflection
4. Looking for negative confirmation that does not support the hypothesis being tested
5. Checking researcher subjectivity and clarifying researcher bias
6. Checking information with study participants
7. Developing "thick, rich descriptions."
8. Allowing an external audit of research by an uninvolved party

In this research inquiry, trustworthiness was established through the use of multiple methods of data collection, including interviews, observations, document analysis, and memos. Trustworthiness was also established by checking researcher subjectivity through the inclusion of a positionality statement in the dissertation and through completion of memos throughout the data collection and analysis process. Memos also support the trustworthiness of this research inquiry by providing detailed information resulting in thick, rich descriptions of the context, interactions, processes and actions of the participants in this study.

Positionality of the Researcher

The researcher's positionality is influenced by past and current experiences and roles that directly relate to this research inquiry. As a student in K-12 education, the researcher was provided abundant opportunities by middle-class parents who emphasized the importance of a good education, hard work, and persistence in achieving any worthwhile goal. While the researcher's parents
valued education, they also believed that hard work was the key to getting ahead. They entered the workplace while in high school, graduated and did not return to earn educational credentials or degrees at any level of postsecondary education. The researcher entered postsecondary education as a first-generation college student without sufficient social capital to navigate success in the first year of college. While she was ultimately successful over time and through multiple stops and starts, many first-generation college-going students do not persist and complete postsecondary degrees at any level, resulting in low levels of educational attainment in many areas of the United States.

The researcher enters this project as a white middle-class woman with significant power and privilege. In 28 years as a professional educator, she holds a firm belief that quality public education for all students is essential to our nation's future prosperity. It is not, however, in its current form, the "great equalizer" as described by Horace Mann and others (Growe & Montgomery, 2003). As she has recognized her fortune and privilege, she is compelled to give back to others, particularly those who are marginalized or who face barriers to achieving their highest aspirations. Quality public education holds the potential to become that great equalizer. The imperative to improve the educational system requires input and leadership from beyond education. The researcher maintains a steadfast commitment to working together to transform the system to engage and support all students in educational attainment.
A diverse cross-section of participants including executive and top-level educational leaders, local employers, community partners, technical assistance providers, and funders (among others) were interviewed for this research project. The researcher’s experience working as a counselor provides her with the background knowledge and skill to actively listen and relate to others in interview and observation settings. Use of a constructivist grounded theory approach to research provides opportunities for capturing participant voice in a way that honors individual experience to make meaning of efforts to work and prosper in a collective. The researcher was aware that in this process she may have felt challenged by strong opinions and egos of leaders who appear interested in edifying themselves before helping students and families to achieve educational success. She worked to balance sensitivity to and bias against the voice of ego among influential leaders in this work, using memo writing as a tool to practice reflexivity. The researcher intends to use her experiences as a student, teacher, counselor and administrator, and social and political capital earned and granted through these roles to construct grounded theory. The researcher aims to inform collaborative efforts to increase levels of educational attainment for students from across the United States.

Summary

This chapter detailed the research approach, design, and methods to be used in the proposed research study. The research focused on gathering and analyzing data from representatives, technical assistance providers and funders
representing and supporting cross-sector collaborative groups located across the United States. Methods for data collection, data analysis and for establishing validity in this research study were described and supporting documents for successful implementation of the research using a constructivist grounded theory approach were identified. The researcher's positionality in relation to the research study was described as a practice in reflexivity that continued throughout the research study.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Educational attainment data provides clear evidence of the benefits to students who complete educational programs beginning with high school graduation and increasing with each subsequent credential or degree (Belfield, 2014; Belfield & Levin, 2008). Literature detailing the many health, social and economic benefits of education highlights the need for advanced education at the postsecondary level, yet many young people fail to complete a degree or certificate that provides the necessary knowledge and skills to enter a high-skill, high-wage career (Carnevale, Jayasundera & Gulish, 2016). In response to a growing demand for an educated and skilled workforce and in recognition of the need to address persistent achievement gaps, schools, employers and public and private sector partners are entering collaborative partnerships that are designed to improve educational attainment for students and the available workforce for employers. These collaborative efforts are intended to result in increased prosperity in communities and regions. They are designed around a variety of formal and informal groups of cross-sector partners at varying levels of responsibility and influence within their organizations and communities.

This study explored executive and operational level behaviors in cross-sector collaborative partnerships that are employing career pathways as a primary strategy for improving educational attainment at the secondary and postsecondary levels within a defined community or region. This chapter details
the categories, themes, and findings from the national data collection process employed in this research study.

Cooperation or Collaboration?

Information gathered in the first phase of the data collection process generated over 350 preliminary codes. These codes were further refined into early themes, reflecting the depth and breadth of participant responses to questions including study participants’ understanding and experiences of cooperation, collaboration, and collective impact in a localized context. The first question: ”What does collaboration mean to you?” laid out participants’ spontaneous impressions of what collaboration is, and how it is defined, often within the local context of the participant. A following question, ”What are the behaviors that you think are important for collaboration?” further defined the specific behaviors and actions that participants identified as crucial components of collaborative practice. The responses to these phase one questions provided a combined list of approximately 150 coded references that were analyzed to develop themes around collaborative behaviors. These codes were compared to the master list of codes identified for all questions in phase one as a practice of constant comparison to ensure a thorough exploration of the dimensions of collaborative behavior reported by participants in this study. While participants were able to provide personal definitions and give examples for both collaboration and cooperation, they did not describe any examples where they
experienced collaboration being explicitly taught or modeled as a behavior or practice.

Cooperation is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2018) in two ways: “1: the actions of someone who is being helpful by doing what is wanted or asked for: common effort, and 2: association of persons for common benefit.” In the primary definition of cooperation, helpfulness is predicated on a request for assistance defined by another individual or organization, highlighting the transactional nature of cooperation. Ines, an operational leader, defined and gave an example of cooperation in this way: “. . . cooperation can be a bit more transactional. I think we can have cooperation on easy things, like, hey, you guys can use my space. We will attend your function or cooperate and sign a letter for you to get that grant.” (personal communication, August 14, 2018). In the second definition of cooperation, there is an expectation of common benefit, but the definition lacks elements of co-creation and shared work present in collaborative efforts. Mary, an operational level leader, summed up her thoughts about cooperation versus collaboration:

In cooperation, we can all cooperate with each other and be helpful to each other, but in collaboration we have, we’re sharing something that has value to us. It could be resources. It could be a similar customer, but we have more of a… we’re vested in each other’s success. (personal communication, August 13, 2018)
Martha shared her thoughts about the depth of cooperative and collaborative efforts: “I think in cooperation, people will agree to play together, but collaboration is a commitment to engage deeply and share responsibility for progress on common outcomes.” (personal communication, August 30, 2018)

The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2018) lists three definitions of the intransitive verb collaborate: “1: to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor; 2: to cooperate with or willingly assist an enemy of one’s country and especially an occupying force suspected of collaborating with the enemy, and; 3: to cooperate with an agency or instrumentality with which one is not immediately connected”. In the second definition of the word collaborate, there is a recognition of the interpersonal complexity of the work that speaks to the challenge of building trusting relationships. One participant in this study discussed collaboration as “…coming together and laying down the swords and trying to fix a problem or seize an opportunity” (personal communication, July 30, 2018) and another further explicated that in collaborative groups, stakeholders are advised to metaphorically “. . . leave your guns at the door.” (personal communication, August 3, 2018). In both cases, the references to weapons are symbolic for the individual agendas, strong opinions, and egos that can dominate a coming-together process, resulting in inequitable environments where not all voices are heard and valued. In phase one of this study, participants identified behaviors in the practice of collaboration that go beyond the foundational
definition to include specific participant behaviors in two broad categories: Committing to a Greater Purpose and Catalyzing Trust.

Moral Purpose: Committing to “Something Greater Than Ourselves”

Fullan asserts that “moral purpose is not a strategy” (2011, p. 1). In his book *The Moral Imperative Realized*, Fullan details the steep decline of U.S. educational attainment in general and identifies the moral imperative for addressing deep inequities in our current educational system. These inequities, according to Fullan, leave large sets of students un- and under-prepared to fully participate in the global economy as workers and to contribute as citizens in their local communities. Fullan further identifies a series of action steps focused on behaviors necessary to address this moral imperative. These include building relationships and developing the collaborative as well as being relentless in the pursuit of challenging and often difficult goals (Fullan, 2011). The first step in this effort, according to Fullan, is making a personal commitment to the complex work of changing our current educational system to better serve all students.

Participants in this research study identified two behaviors in collaborative practice that correspond to Fullan’s action steps. These are identifying and focusing on a higher purpose for collaborative work and engaging in reflection about collaboration.

Author Vineet Nayar (2014) discussed the importance of purpose in his article on shared purpose and collaborative efforts. Nayar described three
historical examples of collaboration underscored by an urgent and shared purpose, including the well-documented efforts to save the NASA Apollo 13 mission:

On April 14, 1970, when an oxygen tank on Apollo 13 exploded during the third manned mission to the Moon, it seemed that the three-member crew was doomed. Upon hearing the words, "Houston, we've had a problem," NASA knew that it had to abort the mission and find a way of bringing the three astronauts back 200,000 miles to Earth as soon as possible. Individuals, teams, and groups came together, poured over data, ideated on blackboards, in restrooms, and over water coolers, came up with solutions, tried to implement them, failed — and tried again until they succeeded. For two days, the goal of saving the three astronauts' lives became everyone’s purpose. (Nayar, 2014, p. 2)

Nayar’s description of the collaborative work centered on one urgent and important purpose shared by an entire team that required elements of shared ownership, communication, failure, persistence, and focus. Many of the collaborative partnership efforts described by research study participants in early interviews reflected the importance of shared purpose. Bill, an executive leader in the education sector, summed it up this way: “If you don’t have the ability to bring people together and identify some common ground, common purpose, and common focus and do that with great intention, then you are not going to be successful.” He further explicated that the purpose of the shared work in his
region is “. . . to improve lives and improve our community” noting that in “. . .
collaboration, there’s a greater purpose.” (personal communication, August 14,
2018). Jessica, an operational advisor, echoed the focus on shared purpose: “At
the end of the day, we're all in this for the greater good of the students, the
workforce, employer outcomes, and school district outcomes.” (personal
communication, September 13, 2018).

The focus on purpose for a collaborative group requires a collective
agreement on the outcomes that a group seeks to achieve. This collective
agreement benefits from the inclusion of multiple stakeholders in a process for
determining a shared focus and also demands the buy-in of both individuals and
organizations. Gail, an experienced educational leader, shared her experience
over time in collaboration and the sense of shared purpose developed in her
community:

Our collective work throughout the last decade is absolutely the reason we
are still here. Had it been the idea of one or two or a few in education we
wouldn't be here in the collaboration today with many stakeholders coming
to the table. Quite honestly, I think that we all became better managers in
the process because in years past, as educators we tend to work in silos,
and so we were around like-minded people and sort of made decisions in
that manner, but when you are opening your door and the table to people
from corporate America, governments, people from education…everyone
comes to the table with different needs and different strategies to make
decisions. If you truly, collaboratively come together to make decisions, to build consensus and live with it and know that we are going to do this for the good of students, if that becomes the center of our decision making, and we are going to be inclusive of all, then I think powerful things happen. (personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Sara, a nonprofit leader, summed up the higher purpose in her community coming together:

I think that just coming at the work from the mindset of yes, we're all different organizations, but we are all, we're literally here for the same reason, to make sure that our kids have the best possible foundation and then can launch and be the best possible workforce, best possible citizens for our community. (personal communication, July 27, 2018)

Creating Shared Ownership

Participants in this research study emphasized the importance of behaviors demonstrating commitment and ownership. In addition to recognizing the importance of committing to a “greater” purpose, participants similarly referenced a “shared ownership” of both collaborative work and accountability for such efforts. Topics discussed included committing to working together in partnerships and committing to shared decision-making. William, an executive in the educational sector, shared his views on committing to group collaboration: “I think it starts with that sense of being truly committed to working together and being truly committed to win-win partnerships.” (personal communication, August
Claire, an operational leader in the education sector, opined:

“Collaboration in education means really working better because you’re working together and being committed to that long-term” (personal communication, August 23, 2018). Maria, an operational leader with business expertise, echoed the sentiment expressed when she stated: “It’s a shared vision that our partners are better together and thrive by committing to regional strategies.” (personal communication, August 29, 2018)

A commitment to shared action requires some give-and-take among partners. Gabriela, an operational leader from the workforce sector, described the behaviors needed for collaborative work:

You really need to be flexible and be attentive and be committed to what the actual goal is. If you can't be committed to what the goal is it's really hard to be part of a collaborative team because you just can't get behind the work and support the partners. (personal communication, August 31, 2018).

Gail opined on the benefit of shared decision-making: “Collaboration, to me, is bringing multiple stakeholders around the table to get multiple points of view to enhance whatever decision we’re making.” (personal communication, August 3, 2018).

William emphasized the importance of shared decision-making in collaborative efforts: "I think it's about involving the voice of others in decision-making
processes on the front end and truly listening to those voices. It's about building collective ownership.” (personal communication, August 30, 2018).

While the need for commitment was a consistent topic of research study participant responses, hidden commitments were also surfaced as a concern in collaborative group work. Hidden commitments are identified in collaborative settings when personal and organizational agendas are pushed more than the collective goals and when collaborative actors demonstrate a lack of transparency in their actions and reasons for participation in a group. Jessica states: “Leaving your personal agendas at the door, that’s one we commonly ask, especially in a collaborative. It’s hard to let go of what you own or want to own and recognize that there’s something bigger here when you bring more ideas to the table. Being willing to lose your own personal stake or agenda at the door is key.” (personal communication, September 13, 2018)

Gabriela expressed a similar sentiment:

There needs to be a willingness to be able to take a step back and actually put the individual interests of that particular agency to the side while you listen to what the actual goal is and try to take in the perspectives of everyone who’s at the table, trying to accomplish the work.” (personal communication, August 31, 2018).

In varying ways, research participants expressed wariness in collaborative situations where people are holding to certain agendas and questioning why others are "... coming to the table."
Demonstrating Sacrifice and Persistence

The concept of give-and-take previously discussed included the potential loss of control and loss of resources when partners engage in a collaborative effort. Research study participants made two types of references to the concept of sacrifice in collaborative work. The first related to self-sacrifice:

I think you have to have the ability to sacrifice. Because ultimately, I'm not always going to get my own way in a collaborative environment. There has to be a willingness to give, give in, to appreciate other opinions. I have to be able to sacrifice my own thoughts and feelings at times in order to truly come to a consensus with a group. (personal communication, August 14, 2018)

Robert, an executive leader in an educational organization, discussed the importance of committing to sharing and aligning resources as an individual in a collaborative group:

I think that's just part of the environment that when you're going to partner with people you have to open up yourself, because you can't get your way all the time. It can't be your priorities. You have to share resources, you have to share your thoughts and I think that's just part of the process. (personal communication, November 2, 2018)

The second reference on sacrifice was relative to what individuals and organizations give to a collaborative effort, recognizing that large organizations
may have more fiscal or human resources to give to an effort as opposed to a small nonprofit or school district:

I remember that the theme was not equal gifts but equal sacrifice. And I think that’s something that’s also stuck with me. . . that smaller organizations might be looked at as lesser contributors. But in fact, if they’re giving a large percentage of what they do or contributing are giving all to that. . . what they’ve done- that’s a big sacrifice for them. (personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Persistence was recognized as an essential behavior in collaborating with others as collaborative work was frequently described as "hard" and "messy."

Bill, an executive in the education sector, discussed the behavior of persisting:

It's too easy for us in this world to give up when the going gets tough. We have a tendency… some people tend to give up, walk away. So, to me, collaborative work is tough, and if you don't get the right people, if you get a little pushback sometimes it's easy to back away, move away, walk away. And to me, you've got to be persistent, say “I know we're struggling.” But wait a minute, why are we trying to do this, to begin with? And make sure that you overcome that adversity. (personal communication, August 14, 2018)

Greg, an operational level leader, discussed the persistence necessary to make collaboration work long-term:
Collaboration is like a long-term investment. You just have to hold the course. And that's really hard to do in today's world where everybody wants to have immediate feedback. They want to have immediate recognition and I don't think it happens like that in collaboration. You've got to be willing to weather a few storms along the way, and sometimes fight off your own internal politics. And it's because we live in these times where everybody wants to get immediate results because they've got an election next year or they've got a new job coming. It's hard to get people in for the long haul, but collaborations are worthwhile because once they are working, you can use them over and over and over again. (personal communication, August 10, 2018)

William, an executive leader in education, shared his experience with persistence in a collaborative group:

We've had a nice dynamic of core people that are truly leaders among leaders in the business community and the community that have been consistently a part of this work. Those are the heroes of this work, in my opinion, that are always there. They've seen it through from beginning to end, and no matter what hat they're wearing they're moving the world forward. (personal communication, October 9, 2018)

**Sharing and Aligning Resources**
Participants in this research study recognized that sharing and aligning resources is an essential behavior of both individuals and organizations participating in a collaborative partnership. On an individual level, participants identified a willingness to contribute resources as a commitment to the work. At an organizational level, participants recognized that practicing stewardship of resources requires a collective commitment among all partners to focus on changing behavior around resource allocation. Lisa, an operational leader in the education sector, discussed a big opportunity to strengthen her collaborative group’s commitment to sharing resources:

We attracted a federal grant. We didn’t have to apply for it. They came and pretty much laid a multimillion-dollar grant in my lap and said, here you go. Then they asked well, who will do it? I said, well, I don’t work like this. I’m not going to decide this on my own. We are going to go to the collaborative, but first I need to understand your goals. It turns out that they really wanted districts that have been participating in the collaborative and that have a growth mindset and that would benefit significantly. We went through the criteria, and three districts were selected, and I tell you everybody’s so excited for them, everybody. And now they’re all looking forward to the next opportunity and how they might fit and how we’ll work into it. So, I’m kind of seeing this attitude of “okay, we’re better together, we attracted this and eventually I’m going to have a turn when it’s something that’s a fit for me.” The three districts that got the grant are so
needy and I think everybody recognizes that they really needed that support. (personal communication, November 16, 2018)

Alan, a cross-sector leader at the operational level, shared a story of his experience with resource allocation at the organizational level:

I got pretty excited when our organizations got together, and everyone was coming to the table with resources- I'll give this, another organization will give that, and I totaled up all the contributions, and it was a big number. When I went to tell my boss though, he reminded me that the number was a "drop in the bucket" compared to what was truly needed to make the collaborative successful, given the large numbers of students to be served. I realized then that resource allocation is really a commitment in action. Even if an organization puts resources into the pot to say that they are collaborating, are they truly "all in," or are they just trying to look like they are part of the group but not wholly committed to the shared effort? (personal communication, September 14, 2018)

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

A commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion was identified by Equal Measure and Harder and Company as one of nine characteristics of effective systems leaders ("Cultivating Systems Leadership," 2017). This commitment was described as applying a diversity, equity and inclusion or DEI lens to collaborative work, and includes catalyzing action to address systemic inequities. It also highlighted the need for "deep passion for and commitment to social
justice” (p. 9) by collaborative leaders. The inclusive approach taken by communities in implementing systems of college and career readiness was highlighted by several research study participants who also recognized the inclusive nature of their efforts as a way to address equity. Lisa stated:

> When I think about equity our focus has always been that the pathways—that is really an equity strategy. We use the term all means all, and we really mean that this model is for all students, not just for the smart students. It’s not just for the at-risk students, it’s not for everyone except the special education kids or except the kids who are English learners. It’s for everyone. And so, we do the work with equity. Loud and clear at the forefront of what we’re doing, and that’s sort of an understood thing. We don’t even have that conversation anymore. (personal communication, October 17, 2018)

Catey gave a similar view about addressing equity through inclusive efforts:

> Our way of addressing equity right now is making pathways wall to wall and raising the question to communities- who are you going to leave behind? Who doesn’t deserve to be in this and why? That usually gets the conversation going. (personal communication, October 31, 2018)

Mary shared her view from the postsecondary level about the challenge of inclusion:

> You think about people coming to class. It’s easier to serve the ones that make it through the door. What about all those students that had any
number of barriers and there was nothing to help them overcome those barriers and they just never made it through the door? I really, really hope that we become more intentional and purposeful about that in a meaningful way. I don't know what it is. I truly hope that we get there.

(personal communication, October 17, 2018)

While participants discussed both inclusion and equity in varying ways, less attention was paid to the topic of diversity. Catey opined: “There's got to be diversity in the teams. They need to reflect what the district looks like, so, we really push for that.” (personal communication, October 31, 2018). Another example, shared by Mary, provided insight into the need for future work to be done in her region:

I was at an event today, and there were pictures of these young men who had gone through this program at a local manufacturer. And it was such an inspiring program, but what I couldn't look away from and what struck me is that it was all boys and I didn’t see any girls. And I'm like, wow. You know, we have to be intentional about that. There was racial diversity, but there was no gender diversity. I think we need to become much more intentional and purposeful. I think it's important. (personal communication, October 17, 2018)

In addition to the need for inclusive and diverse collaborative partnership efforts, the moral imperative to address equity and to close persistent achievement gaps includes the need for clear set of plans and strategies to begin
with action that is different from previously unsuccessful efforts ("A Guide for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education", 2017). Research study participants recognized equity as a topic that is frequently surfaced in their respective communities and/or professional networks. Study participants also expressed a variety of perspectives on the importance of equity and how it is being addressed as part of their collaborative partnership efforts. Greg, an executive leader in the nonprofit sector, was curious about the focus on equity in his community:

I go away to meetings and events in other spaces and I hear equity. I don’t know why, but it’s not a topic that comes up with our leadership or has not yet come up. We totally understand it, we hear people talk about it. I think there’s a belief in our world that equity is the why...why we’re doing this work and that college and career means equity. That’s how I’ve viewed it. I’ve wondered that same thing. Well, everybody brings this up and it’s an agenda topic and you look at all kinds of students- are they better off with what we are doing? (personal communication, October 18, 2018)

Mary expressed concern over the intentionality around equity: “We often just give it lip service. I really believe with equity, you have to be very purposeful. You have to constantly be on your toes, and you have to be very intentional about being equitable.” (personal communication, October 17, 2018). She also provided an assessment of where her community is on addressing equity in efforts to date:
Equity is a part of our DNA and mindset, but I think we could do better job with that. Do I think that our pathways have open access and an equal opportunity and are meeting kids where they are? I will say, in most cases, yes, that is an area of work- I really do. Trust is in our regional vocabulary, but I don’t think equity is in our regional vocabulary. I think equity needs to be a bigger part of our conversations. We have a management retreat and there’s three big ideas that I want to put forth in terms of considerations for next steps and the equity piece is… just messaging and understanding it and what does that mean, and how do we view it? I think we’ve got to have those conversations. (personal communication, November 16, 2018)

Florence gave a personal testimony to how her collaborative work has changed her perspective on diversity, equity and inclusion in her community:

I think it’s forced me to really examine and understand how my work both impacts and is impacted by long-term institutionalized racism. It has been somewhat of a personal journey, because if somebody had said that to me two years ago, I wouldn’t have really understood what that meant. I completely believe at this point that most of the issues that we’re dealing with in our community are generational products of some very real structural things like redlining how neighborhoods were created, forced desegregation and busing in the schools. All of the things that come to play in many, many communities. And I’m convinced now that just understanding that passively is only perpetuating this problem. I know that
I would not have come to this point, had I not been exposed to so many perspectives, so much diversity of thought and experience through my work in a collaborative. And I think it's impossible for us to ignore. Now I see it absolutely everywhere. I'm ruined in a good way. I can't stop saying it and it's difficult...certainly not something that can change overnight. And I'm not saying that I personally have the power, but I don't have the luxury of ignoring it. And so, that's why we're having a lot of these conversations with our board. Some people on our board do not like it because it's challenging their power. Some people are saying it's about time. And so, I had sweaty palms a lot of the time, because race... I think it's still a very, very difficult thing to talk about, especially for a person of privilege. I've experienced the benefits of structural racism, but I'm growing more comfortable and confident in having those conversations and realizing that we're spinning our wheels. We can throw all the resources at this and do all the things that we want to do. But ultimately, the world won't be any different for the young people until we have the courage to talk about these things. (personal communication, September 21, 2018)

Catalyzing Trust: Behaving as a "Conspicuously Reliable Partner"

The topic of trust frequently appeared in research articles, popular literature and participant interviews as a necessary component of successful
collaboration. Covey and Merrill, authors of *The Speed of Trust* (2008) defined trust as confidence in the abilities and integrity of another person. They further claim that suspicion (through distrust) is the opposite of trust. Suspicion of others can be based on their agenda, capabilities, record of performance or their integrity. Covey and Merrill claim that the feeling of high-trust versus low-trust relationships is "palpable" with people either reporting feelings of ease and efficiency in work or difficult and draining environments when trust is low or absent. Megan Tschannen-Moran (2014) defines trust in her book *Trust Matters* as “…one’s willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable and competent” (p. 20). She further asserts that trust is essential in "situations of interdependence" where an individual cannot achieve his goals in isolation. Interdependence creates vulnerability among collaborative partners seeking to achieve common goals that transcend their individual and organizational agendas. The trust-building behaviors discussed by study participants are detailed in this section through the lens of five facets of trust defined by Tschannen-Moran (2014) and further explicated through alignment to Covey’s “13 Behaviors of a High-Trust Leader” (2008).

The first of the five facets of trust as described by Tschannen-Moran (2014) is benevolence. Behaviors noted by study participants in the realm of benevolence include practicing servant leadership, humility, and empathy. Corresponding behaviors identified by Covey (2008) are righting wrongs and
extending trust. Righting wrongs includes admitting errors and wrong-doing, apologizing, choosing to do the right thing over pride and demonstrating humility.

One executive level leader emphasized her learning around benevolence: “I’ve learned a lot of humility. A lot of humility.” (personal communication, August 15, 2018). Another leader at the operational level shared her perspective as a self-professed “servant leader”: “I really don't care about accolades and I'm not looking to have a plaque erected, a statue erected in my image or anything like that. I just want to do good work while I'm here.” (personal communication, August 13, 2018). Alan, an operational level leader, discussed servant leadership and humility in collaborative work:

> It's checking your ego at the door, checking your ownership and becoming humble, sort of a servant leadership role. I'm going to serve and lead my department to come together and serve together and collaboratively with others. It's definitely just being humble. And putting yourself in a servant role versus happy to be out there in front of everybody and saying hey, hey, look at me, look at me, look at me, look at me. It's really about don't look at me, look at the work. We're all in this together. (personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Covey (2008) discussed the importance of “righting wrong”, encouraging leaders to admit mistakes and not to let pride get in the way when mistakes happen. Carla, an executive leader in the technical assistance
sector talked about leaning in to her initial discomfort about making mistakes in the context of this work:

I don’t want it whispered about. I want to take away the shame. I want to be able to say, here’s where we goofed or fell short. I want to name it and be comfortable in it and own it. I’m going to talk about it out loud and take away some of the power of our cultural orientation around failure, particularly in our professional world. (personal communication, October 18, 2018)

Alwin shared a different experience from his collaborative partnership and the stigma regarding mistakes:

I think about Thomas Edison and the light bulb. It took 1001 trials and failures to get to the right filament to actually have a working light bulb. That is learning, right? But for some reason we’re so afraid to make a mistake and admit we made a mistake and debrief and think about what that mistake was and learn from it and move on. (personal communication, November 1, 2018)

The second facet of trust identified by Tschannen-Moran (2014) is demonstrating honesty, which was described by research study participants to include being authentic in collaborative settings and practicing integrity in their interactions with others. The integrity necessary for building strong relationships in collaborative work was underscored by Mary, who shared her ideas on working with others:
You have to believe that others are in it for similar reasons, that they're willing, that they're trustworthy and they're honest and they have integrity and they're not going to throw you under the bus, so to speak. And you know people who will take responsibility for what they say they're going to do, responsibility and follow through. But ultimately, for me, it’s about trust.

(personal communication, August 13, 2018)

Alan discussed the importance of honesty as a behavior for successful working relationships:

I think one behavior that is important that I'll throw in here is a level of honesty. It’s that level of honesty that says, “Hey, I don’t have this right, and I need help. Let’s come together and let’s work on this together.”

(personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Three aspects of authentic behavior—accountability, avoiding manipulation and being "real" rather than merely playing a role were highlighted by Tschannen-Moran (2014, p. 27) in further explicating the factors contributing to trust. Several of Covey's "13 Behaviors of High-Trust Leaders" (n.d.) aligned with Tschannen-Moran's facet of honesty, including leaders who demonstrate respect, talk straight, show loyalty, and confront reality. Michael, an executive leader in education, personified this behavior in his comment: “I think on a broader basis, our ability to collaborate with one another should open up avenues where we can be more respectful of one another” (personal communication, August 14, 2018).

Linda, an operational leader in a nonprofit, offered her thoughts on behaving with
others in a collaborative environment: “The one thing I think we’ve done a really
good job at is respecting each other’s organizations and missions while we do
the work we do, and in showing respect towards the culture of that work.”
(personal communication, September 11, 2018). Martha, an operational leader in
a nonprofit, shared her experience in helping to lead a collaborative group:

I think we’ve been successful in establishing this culture of mutual respect
and collaboration and ensuring that all voices are heard. We honor that
differentiated approach between our partners. That has, I think, helped
create that culture of collaboration and the result has been friendship and,
you know, promoting it sounds hokey, but we talk about kindness and
forgiveness and I think we really model that behavior. That helps
transform those relationships and interactions. Creating that culture is
what’s helped change the way that our partners interact as part of the
collective. (personal communication, September 11, 2018)

At the executive level, Robert reported relationships developing as a
response to a circle of executives regularly meeting and confiding about
what is working, and what doesn’t:

I think our every other month meetings are good because we always
review the ground rules- like what we say in here, stays in here. So, I think
that is starting to develop more of that trust where at the beginning I think
people probably were tighter lipped about things they were doing. And it
seems to be getting a little bit easier to talk about things and it seems that
those things are kept in confidence in that circle. So, it's a theme that's under development. (personal communication, November 2, 2018)

While many groups reported success in the development of behaviors that support collaborative cultures, some were wary of claims around efforts in their own communities. Mary, an operational leader in education, worried about local initiatives that did not seem to be what they initially appeared:

When you strip away all of the fluff, all of the public relations pieces that they want people to see... I have found over a period of time that people will talk about this great thing that they're doing, but when you really drill down, often it's all about how they look externally and it's really not there. (personal communication, August 13, 2018)

While some participants worry about the lack of transparency in collaborative efforts, others champion the transparency and openness identified by Tschannen-Moran (2014) as the third facet of trust. Participants in the study discussed the behaviors of communicating clearly and sharing decision-making and power in collaborative groups. Corresponding behaviors identified by Covey and Merrill (2008) include creating transparency, clarifying expectations and listening before speaking. Study participants referenced variations of behaviors, including "being open," "openness" and practicing "open-mindedness". Comments around the concept of being open in the context of collaborative behaviors included references to openness to sharing, changing an opinion, or
direction, and opening up to new ideas. Florence, an executive leader for a community-based organization, expressed:

I think that it's an openness to change while also being able to stay true to a mission or vision or an ideal; however, you want to define it…it's balancing with the need to stay true to that (mission/vision/ideal), but still, figure out new and different ways of working with each other to accomplish those things. (personal communication, July 31, 2018)

Participants discussed openness both concerning the behaviors of others and about their behaviors. In discussing the behaviors of others, openness was connected to being honest, sharing, flexible, vulnerable and trusting. Andy, an executive leader, shared:

I think the behaviors that are important are being open-minded. Being vulnerable, trusting, like-minded, in the sense that you're trying to solve a problem, not necessarily an individual or organizational problem, but a regional problem. And being willing to roll up your sleeves and get to work. (personal communication, August 29, 2018)

Carla asserted that openness leads to other productive behaviors in collaborative group settings: “In instances where folks are open, you see their work evolving more productively- the sharing of leadership, the improved communication, the shared experiences, and you see a lot more progress and a lot more cohesion.” (personal communication, September 17, 2018). Lisa identified ways that her own behavior has changed as a
collaborative group leader: “I think it's caused me to be more open, although I've always thought I was an open person. I am more open and I've definitely, become a stronger leader, I believe, because of it.”  
(personal communication, September 4, 2018)

The behaviors discussed by participants in this research study also aligned with reliability, the fourth facet of trust as defined by Tschannen-Moran (2014). Behaviors related to reliability noted by study participants include being dependable and depending on others. Covey and Merrill (2008) identified the leadership behaviors of keeping commitments and similarly practicing accountability. Marco, an operational leader representing employers, discussed collaborative practice:

You understand that you as an individual or an organization may not have all the answers or resources to really tackle an issue. And so, you need to depend on others to help address either individually or if you're working with an institution, collectively, some of the issues that we face.”  
(personal communication, August 10, 2018)

Dionne, an executive working in a nonprofit, shared her thoughts:

You have to be dependable, in many ways, and you have to be willing to give and understand that the whole crux of collaboration is the relationships and the partnerships, and their behavior has to be consistently reliable, and it has to be authentic.  
(personal communication, August 15, 2018)
Alwin summed up the importance of reliability: “I think it's essential that you actually do what you say you're going to do when you say you're going to do it.” (personal communication, August 28, 2018)

The final facet of trust identified by Tschannen-Moran (2014) is competence that encompasses both doing a job well and flexibility in finding ways to accomplish necessary work. Research study participants cited flexibility as an important behavior related to competence in collaborative practice.

Gabriela stated:

I learned in this work that I needed to be realistic about the goals that were set and the incremental goals along the way. I needed to be persistent, and I needed to be flexible, depending on whom we were addressing at the time.” (personal communication, August 31, 2018).

Covey and Merrill (2008) recognized that persistence as they similarly identified delivering results as a high-trust leadership behavior, and also identified the concept of continuous improvement or “getting better” as a key behavior for establishing trust. Florence, an executive level leader, opined about the opportunity to grow and learn in collaborative work:

What is fun and challenging and I think keeps me energized around it is, first of all, seeing the impact and knowing that it's making a difference, but also continually improving our own practice, which for me is the fun part. I think it is fun for our collaborative, too. (personal communication, November 1, 2018)
Catey emphasized the importance of thinking about how to improve: “We've made mistakes, we've corrected and quickly modified. We operate with a continuous improvement mindset” (personal communication, July 30, 2018).

Alan shared an experience with a school leader focused on improvement:

I spent an hour with Nate before he spoke in front of a group of 80 some-odd teachers and he was just like- “Alan, hey as soon as the dust clears here, I want you in- let's talk this through. How do we move this thing to the next level? I know we've got some gaps. I know we don't have every principal really believing in this yet. And how do we help them? What kind of mentorship and support can we provide to our principals? I want you to help me think that through.” (personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Linda recognized the importance of continuous improvement in keeping the work moving forward: “I think it is always keeping that continuous improvement cycle moving. They're tapping on your shoulder saying, don’t forget me. We don't want to get too comfortable here.” (personal communication, August 3, 2018). Michael talked about his quest for continuous improvement: “I guess the thing that I'm constantly curious about is how I can continue to learn and get better?” (personal communication, August 14, 2018)

Building on Early Themes: Interviews in Phases Two and Three

In interview rounds two and three, participants responded to 21 total questions that were increasingly focused on the behaviors of executive and operational level leaders in collaborative settings. These questions explored
behaviors related to the development of successful collaborative practice including discussions on risk, failure, vulnerability and the role of love in collaborative group work. Participant interviews also captured some of the same or similar codes and themes that appeared in phase one interview responses. New codes provided opportunities to further develop themes and categories in phases two and three. The interview responses represent three additional categories: Crafting Powerful Partnerships, Communicating for Impact, and Leading from any Chair.

Crafting Powerful Partnerships: Connecting With Others

Relating to and partnering with others were consistently referenced by research study participants throughout the three phases of the interview process. Participant responses centered primarily on relating with others and used the term partnership to describe the behaviors and activities that they engaged in and observed in their collaborative groups. Among study participants, there were responses to the importance and value of building strong and trusting relationships in collaboration, prioritizing relationships, and committing to strengthening relationships over the long-term in support of collaborative practice. Participants similarly used the term partnership, discussing the importance of committing to a collaborative partnership, and the significance of building and solidifying partnerships. In phase two and three interviews, relationship challenges were discussed as related to risk, failure and competition.
Concepts of vulnerability and love were also explored in phase three of this research study, generating ample data on the joys, successes, and challenges of collaborating with others.

Building Relationships

Building relationships in organizations happens through formal and informal interactions, often in the same office building or school space. Building relationships among a collaborative group across physical locations and sectors requires intentional creation of opportunities for interactions to occur. A category that emerged throughout the three phases of interviews was the importance of behaviors for building, strengthening, and sustaining relationships. Research study participants discussed a variety of thoughts on relationships, including the need for structure, time and opportunity to build and strengthen relationships, the importance of trust in relationships, and the role of conflict in relationships. Relationships between executive and operational level leaders were also discussed in this section. William, an executive in the education sector, discussed the way that his community uses relationships as a foundation for collaborative work:

I think it's all about taking these relationships that the business community and the school community want to be strong and building systems and processes and people who are dedicated to making sure that those partnerships grow and are strengthened. (personal communication, October 9, 2018)
Linda, an operational leader, discussed the development of relationships in her community’s collaborative efforts:

    Early in the process, we did lots of relationship building and team building. And really, we continue to do that now. It’s more of the norm and we probably don’t consciously say okay, we’re doing team-building activities to maintain trust and commitment and loyalty and communication. It’s now part of the norm of how we communicate with one another. (personal communication, September 11, 2018)

A few participants in this research study mentioned the impact of time on developing relationships. One said: “Taking the time to get to know one another and I think it’s important to break bread together.” (personal communication, September 20, 2018) Another respondent noted:

    Well, it takes a lot of time. It doesn’t come easily. I’d say I’d probably learned that it takes a lot of trust and sometimes you have to be careful to not let your mind go too far, or think poorly of your co-partner, or that they’re trying to...so it’s kind of keeping a positive attitude and expect/believe that everybody is in this together and that it’s not a dog eat dog world. (personal communication, September 14, 2018)

Catey stated:

    I think it’s like any relationship. It takes time to build relationships. I have really good relationships with many of the partners that I work with, and it has taken me shooting off emails and saying, “Hey, do you have some
time this month just to chat? How are things going? What's going on in your world?” So, it is prioritizing the relationships—those kinds of moments when people you collaborate with and who are important to you pop into your head. I haven't talked to so and so or I've been thinking about somebody a lot, and I reach out. I just think it's about building that kind of relationship with someone. (personal communication, July 30, 2018)

Participants in this research study also discussed the challenge of turnover in organizations, and the effect of turnover on both individual and organizational relationships, citing the challenges of “starting over” when a new leader comes on board. Linda discussed the process in her collaborative group:

And there are certain times, you know, a good example is when a major partner…there's change in leadership and maybe someone's role changes and someone new is coming on the team. And so, there is a period of time where you're building as you would with any team. You're looking at those key benchmarks with team development and trust being two of those. You go back to a development phase and certainly as you're working with a team and you feel like one smaller group within that team is fading or the relationship isn't where it needs to be, then you move back and forth around what you're working on, but that trust is absolutely something that's built and must be intentionally built. It doesn't just happen. (personal communication, October 17, 2018)
Tina, an operational leader in education, shared how she experienced the change as turnover in leadership occurred:

I think that in the beginning of the collaborative work everybody had trust with each other because they were all so new to it, and everyone was trying to do similar things. So, it was that bond of ownership and need and survival in some cases. And now many of those players are not in the positions that they were in. I mean, I still think there is trust. But it's not the tight knit family group that was before. (personal communication, October 23, 2018)

The challenges of turnover in leadership reported by participants in this research study extended beyond individual relationships, impacting the work of the collaborative groups. Alwin shared the difficult impact that turnover had on his group:

I think the most profound difference, honestly, is that if you're truly in something that is a multi-agency collaborative, that when there are personnel changes it has a geometric effect. It's not simply like somebody leaving an organization. It's somebody leaving, quite frankly, multiple organizations at once because it not only impacts the place that that person works or the role that that person had at one particular entity, but it's now all those other…I mean it's…you pull one string out of a web and the web may still stay attached, but there is there is a large hole and the fidelity and strength of that whole web has diminished far more than just
what one might think of relative to one strand and then when that becomes more the norm than the exception. It becomes so compounded, it is so difficult to keep the work moving forward, that I think that's something people should really take into consideration. I think it bodes for why organizations that are entering these kinds of arrangements need to spend time defining roles and functions, not in terms of person and organization, but in terms of that entity, right- in terms of the collaboration and know how they're going to onboard and exit folks and how they're going to spend time building trust and doing the different things because more than I realized it's just it's really, really fragile and it becomes really challenging to maintain the momentum as there are changes of players, there are always changes in the environment or what you're working with on and there are always challenges and constraints there, but the one that I think has far more potential deleterious effects is personnel changes. (personal communication, November 1, 2018)

Marco, an operational leader in the business sector, reflected on the challenges of relationship development in general when people are viewed as objects to be manipulated to achieve a desired outcome: “Collaboration is about people, and if we would treat them as relationships, I think we'd get a lot farther than we sometimes do” (personal communication, August 10, 2018). Alwin discussed his experience in relationships at the operational and executive levels, and the difficulties experienced in making progress in that environment:
I mean nobody was ever disrespectful at the operational level. I can't say that I felt that way about the executive leaders. I felt like they were very disrespectful to the operational leaders because they never really responded to most of the requests we had, and far too often they were trying to insert members of the operating board in as stand-ins for them on executive board. That's why I think they never made progress because they didn’t spend enough time together in the same room to make things happen, and I thought that was really, really disrespectful to continue to expect us to do the work and get things done, but it wasn't even worthy of their time to find out what we needed to be successful. (personal communication, September 20, 2018)

**Bringing People Together and Making Connections**

Collaborating requires two or more individuals or groups to come together to work on a common project, idea or problem (Mattessich et al., 2001). Study participants recognized that an important role that collaborators play in creating a successful partnership is convening and making connections among "usual and unusual suspects" as expressed by one study participant. Collaborative leaders at the executive and operational levels demonstrate the ability to act as "dot connectors," identifying and inviting individuals from multiple sectors who may have an interest in collaborating for mutual benefit. Richard, an operational leader in the education sector, made a distinction between cooperation within organizations and institutions and cross-sector collaboration when he shared:
“…to me that differentiation is really around whether or not it’s connecting you outside of your normal roles and normal processes” (personal communication, August 28, 2018). Catey, a highly-involved leader in a longstanding initiative, stated: "Collaboration is a deeper commitment to look for ways that you can advance the work and finding ways to make further connections." She also identified "…a willingness to look for points of connection and partnership" (personal communication, July 30, 2018) as an essential behavior in bringing people together and making connections.

Communicating for Impact

Kania and Kramer (2011) identified continuous communication as one of their five essential conditions for collective impact. They further described continuous communication as frequent, transparent and structured for the purposes of creating trust, assuring achievement of shared objectives and developing a common motivation for success. References to communicating as a collaborative behavior were generated through multiple questions throughout the three phases of interviews. The research study participant responses to these questions appeared in both broad, general statements about the importance of communicating within a collaborative partnership and around one major sub-theme: listening. Participant responses also addressed the need for collaborative group members to use common language as a tool to develop shared understandings.
Interpersonal communication is frequently viewed in a sender-receiver model, implying that communication is a one-way and discrete act. Communicating is most often a two-way process, with both senders and receivers simultaneously giving and receiving messages, including both verbal language and non-verbal cues (*Interpersonal Communication*, 2011). In the context of collaboration, the act of communicating serves several purposes, including developing relationships, providing information, and creating shared understanding. The use of interpersonal communication as a tool in building connections between members of a collaborative partnership was identified by research study participants as an essential behavior for collaboration. Catey identified communication as a foundational behavior for collaborative efforts: “I think it’s really about good communication, good honest communication” (personal communication, July 30, 2018). A study participant who serves as a mid-level manager in an educational organization shared about the importance of meaningful communication in collaboration: “. . . it’s communicating beyond message transmission. Really communicating in order to create a shared vision, shared reality, shared understanding of what you’re doing together” (personal communication, August 14, 2018). Marco reflected on his learning from working in a collaborative group. When asked what he had learned in his collaborative work, he opined: “. . . the value of communication” (personal communication, August 10, 2018). Carla shared her thoughts on communication in the context of collaborative groups:
I think one piece of this is assuming that communication is about like marketing or messaging and not also thinking about it from the perspective of creating shared understanding and shared experiences. Building patterns of engagement with one another as well as both the acts of talking and listening, the actual concrete acts that encompass communication body language, written, verbal- getting groups to lean into all forms of communication, especially as they’re trying to actively listen or be heard, or push new ideas or whatever it might be. (personal communication, September 17, 2018)

Development of effective communication within a sector requires understanding of the sector-specific language, gestures and culture of a workplace or industry. Development of cross-sector understanding requires not only knowledge of one’s own industry sector, but the ability to communicate across sectors. Words, acronyms and concepts that are commonly referenced and used in educational settings may not have an equivalent business, government or nonprofit meaning, making the identification and development of a common way to share through language an important component of collaborative group work (Bates, 2013). Ines, an operational level technical assistance provider, discussed the importance of developing common language for use among partners in a collaborative group:

It’s important to spend time developing a language across the partners for what you actually mean when you say pathways. What you actually mean
when you say dual enrollment, what you mean when people are talking about work-based learning across the partnerships? We've learned that that's the best way that we've seen people communicate across sector. Because they take those loaded words and they kind of almost find maybe almost become jargon. So, they find simple and explicit ways to communicate the main intent. If my goal in talking to you about work-based learning is really about internships, then I'm probably going to say internships because that's what will resonate with you. If my goal in talking about dual enrollment is really about accelerating a students' progress along the pathway, I'm probably going to talk about, oh, here's the thing... dual enrollment being one of them that we are trying to use in order to move students through more quickly. So again, simple and explicit.

(personal communication, October 2, 2018)

Robert shared how his group's common language developed: “By taking the time to understand each other’s data and their priorities, we’ve developed that common language among us, so we understand what each other is saying” (personal communication, September 14, 2018).

Kate discussed her collaborative partnership’s common language development:

I think there is a commonly shared language. Yes. And how did it develop? I think hard work and I would say at least three or four years of regular communication and relationship building and returning to what the
vision and specific differential activities that this collaborative was doing that really caused us to sort of congeal around and create the culture of a common voice around education and career readiness and local students in jobs. It's become kind of a, not fully common lexicon, but it is used widely enough and even, I would say even if nobody uses that language, a lot of people use the language of what we're doing is bringing this region together toward common achievement, they may not even use the terms in the plan and in our alignment. We all know that we're working toward an aligned approach to solving problems. (personal communication, October 16, 2018)

Listening

In this research study, listening was frequently referenced as an essential behavior in effective communication among collaborative group members. Comments from participants included references to listening for understanding of the goals and relative positions of others, a willingness to listen and listening as an inclusive practice. As one participant noted: "In order to collaborate, I feel like you have to hear everybody's voice..." (personal communication, July 30, 2018). Robert shared: "I think it's about involving the voice of others in decision-making processes on the front end and truly listening to those voices." (personal communication, September 14, 2018). Alwin affirmed the importance of listening: “I think there's a lot of other interpersonal skills like listening, truly listening to hear what somebody is saying not to figure out what you're going to say next.”
Among the references to listening, a “willingness to listen” was frequently identified as a key to successfully collaborating with others. Research study participants recognized their own growth in the area of listening. Alwin: “I got a lot better at listening through the processes.” (September 20, 2018). Amanda also identified the way that she has developed her ability to listen:

I’m learning how to be a better listener. If somebody says, do you have something ABC? I can easily say, Well, yes, we do. We have ABC but I’m trying to not say, Well, yes, we do. We have ABC. Instead, I’m trying to say- tell me, what features are of most interest to you in ABC and using that as an opportunity to really unpack what they mean by that, before I jumped to why yes, we do have ABC and let me tell you about it. So, it’s a stretch muscle for me. So, it’s something that I practice daily, and I’m not always good at. Sometimes I do jump to the D and jump to the yes, we do here’s ABC, but I’m trying to be more aware of listening- really listening.” (personal communication, October 18, 2018)

Carla summed up her experience in collaborative partnership and the role of listening in moving the work forward:

I am learning how to listen better, how to authentically value the contributions of my colleagues and my partners. Or others- anyone. It’s easy to, I think, have a vision and a picture of what you’re trying to move and not leave space for anyone else to authentically contribute to that
because you consciously or subconsciously, are holding tight to your picture of what the future looks like or what the work is and it’s easy to default to you know, dismissing or in-authentically asking for feedback, but not really being able to hear it in a way where it can inform the development of the initiative. (personal communication, August 15, 2018)

Leading From any Chair

The “Collective Impact Principles of Practice” (Brady & Splansky-Juster, 2016) highlight three principles aligned to leadership that include: identifying of unique leadership skills of systems leaders; sustaining a collective focus; and highlight the essential nature of trust and relationship building in collaborative efforts. Research study participant responses addressed these topics with two distinct frames of reference: those who considered their collaborative groups as being successful, and those who considered their collaborative groups as struggling or largely unsuccessful to date. This research study did not evaluate the relative success of collaborative group efforts; responses are documented solely based on the perceptions of research study participants and are not reflective of any evaluation of the groups represented or experiences described in this research study and will be characterized to throughout this section as successful or struggling collaborative groups.

Brady and Splansky-Juster’s fifth principle of practice (2016) identifies the unique skills of systems leaders that are necessary for success in a collaborative environment. Among these unique skills are abilities in effectively convening,
managing and facilitating groups. Leadership behaviors related to this principle include committing to working and engaging in collaborative group efforts. At the executive board level, research study participants reported that executives in successful groups were deeply engaged, acting as advocates, driving the collective effort and modeling collaborative behavior. Ines, an operational leader, recognized the importance of executive leadership: “I think the executive leaders, that role is hugely defining for a collaborative.” (personal communication, October 2, 2018). She further discussed her observations of executive level behavior in successful and struggling groups:

If the executive leader can tell you what they're learning or if an executive tells you what it's supposed to be, that is indicative of the depth of the partnership and with systems leaders, which we've learned are really poised to do well when working across institutions and complex, place-based initiatives. System leaders, you can ask them a question like, who are your key partners and what are their main barriers in the shared work you have they'll be able to answer that question. Whereas, maybe executives that aren't as deeply engaged or maybe still have that organizational- the old hat on. When you asked them that question, they'll struggle to name the specific kind of pain points of their partnership. And they tend to really be more deeply aware of their institution or organization's challenges or even their field. (personal communication, October 2, 2018)
Linda, an operational leader, discussed the role that executive leaders play in their collaborative group: “We have some heavy hitters that basically said, this is what we’re going to do together. . . . and they are our advocates because of their influence. They are writing op-eds for the newspaper. If we get a new school administrator or elected leader, they’re out lobbying for our collaborative before anyone ever thought about having those conversations.” (personal communication, September 11, 2018). One executive described the makeup and responsibilities of his group:

The governing board is largely made up of highly engaged CEOs and some of the leaders of our government institutions. They are there to ensure that the overall system is supported, and it works and that there are both the volunteers and the funding that are necessary to “keep the trains running on time” and ultimately to monitor the overall performance of our group in supporting the school district’s needs. (personal communication, October 9, 2018).

Similar sentiments on the engagement and commitment of the executive leadership were shared by Daniel, an executive in a large collaborative group:

I would say that what needs to happen is it needs to start at the executive level in any organization. This is not something where you can keep hands off. The executive, or the CEO has to be a part of this if it’s going to be successful. Not necessarily in the weeds, but they must create a system or a structure to where they can constantly check-in, or their people can
check-in and update progress on the initiatives that the organization is pushing for and for people to have an opportunity to say, “here's what I need”. (personal communication, September 13, 2018)

The need for executives to model collaborative behavior was highlighted by both participants and by Ibarra and Hansen (2011). Angela, an operational level leader, spoke about her observations in one collaborative partnership:

There are groups that I've seen that have made very good progress with the traditional kind of governance structure at the executive level. In their context the structure just really spoke to the collaborative. There was an imperative around the collaborative nature of the work and as executive leaders, they were able to model how important the collaboration and the trust building piece is which I think does more for again trust-building, for partnership building, for buy in from various stakeholder groups. (personal communication, September 25, 2018)

Conversely, participants in struggling groups expressed frustration and concern over executive efforts in their collaborative groups, reporting that executives lacked commitment and failed to lead the collaborative effort adequately. Jacqueline, an operational leader, expressed her frustration: “So, the executive level is just, you know, it's necessary. But it can be a hindrance if it’s not working collaboratively and it's not fully committed.” (personal communication, September 25, 2018). Marco, an operational leader, expressed
concern over lack of leadership: “I think that the executive board in a lot of ways relies more on recommendations from the operating board as opposed to driving a shared vision from the executive level. And I've found that in a number of different initiatives that the executive boards in our region are really taking a more “wait and see” attitude as opposed to committing to driving a common agenda.” (personal communication, September 21, 2018). Daniel, an executive level leader, also expressed concern over disjointed collaborative efforts: “I don't know what the final version of the shared agenda is or who is in charge of what because at one meeting some people attend the executive meeting and at another meeting of the same initiative other people go as the “executives” and sometimes it is the same people, but often it's not.” (personal communication, September 13, 2018)

Research study participants noted a distinctly different role for operational leaders versus executive leaders in a collaborative environment. While operational leaders are also tasked with effectively convening, managing and facilitating groups at their level, frequently referred to by participants as the “boots on the ground” level of work, they also have challenges that are markedly different from their executive counterparts. One executive described the differences this way:

At the executive level the difference is getting buy in and adoption of common goals for the region in an environment where they also have all their own organizational responsibilities to take care of and accountability
structures. I'm thinking specifically of K-12 and business partners. They often have competing priorities, even within their institutions. So, at the executive level, the role is really to open the doors and to connect the dots between what is happening inside of their institutions to the larger regional picture. And at the operational level. I think the role is to execute on this concept of working in concert with one another, aligning and coordinating resources. And I think that's a little tougher. (personal communication, October 16, 2018)

She further described some of the challenges of work at the operational level from her viewpoint as an executive leading a collaborative group:

I don't know that at the executive level, we always translate down properly or really communicate what that shared vision is for the group, but there are a lot of great things happening at the operational level. Oftentimes at that level you're really relying on “points of light” as those champions who get it and who are very collaborative in nature and they are the ones who are helping drive this thing forward. (personal communication, October 16, 2018)

Jacqueline, an operational leader, supported Kate’s assertion about the work of the operating board, and expressed frustration over the interactions between the operating board that led to difficulties in accomplishing the work:

The operating board was really the key to getting everything done. I think we could have done a better job had we, as the working group, had more
commitment from the decision-making body (executive board). I think to a certain degree, the decision-making body created stalls for us and roadblocks that were actually imaginary. They didn’t really exist but trying to convince individuals that they had to step back and widen the lens of what they were looking at, or sometimes change the lens that they were looking through... that took a long time. (personal communication, September 25, 2018)

Widening “the lens through which to view the work” allows both executive and operational leaders to span boundaries, engage other organizations and work across sectors with shared opportunities to improve educational outcomes for all students. Brady and Splansky-Juster’s sixth principle from the “Collective Impact Principles of Practice” (2016) focuses on strategies at the collective, rather than programmatic or organizational levels. The responsibilities of executive leaders in addressing this principle include coordination and communication among organizations to foster change in behaviors, policies, and practices resulting in shifts in social and cultural norms. Lisa, an operational leader, discussed the collective work happening in her area’s collaborative group:

We’re talking a lot about doing whatever we can to support the alignment between education and the workforce. Some of the examples of policy and advocacy work we are doing include presenting at the state workforce board on why we need to have funding to sustain our career pathways to prepare a future workforce. When we are presenting at a
state level, we’ve got our community college president. She’s very well respected. We also bring members of our education consortium, and they are very well-connected in the political realm and with policymakers. We’ve also had people testify in support of our shared work. (personal communication, October 4, 2018)

The experience of moving the work beyond what are often traditional boundaries was underscored by Alwin in discussing his work at the operational level:

We were all thinking beyond our individualistic roles or individualistic organizations and thinking more about how do we build pathways of quality for all students by working together and across sectors? And how can we create something together that is sustainable and scalable and actually changes the economy of the region and human economy? (personal communication, September 20, 2018)

A recurrent theme in research study participant responses was the importance of all students and all voices. The inclusive nature of systems change efforts undertaken by the individuals and organizations participating in the research study, and the equity imperative in the work, was discussed by study participants in varying ways. Alan shared his thoughts: “The one thing that I realized pretty quickly in this work, reflecting back on my own experience is you’ve got to involve everyone” (personal communication, September 14, 2018). Jacqueline reflected a similar sentiment:
I think that the technical assistance providers and the other outside organizations that were behind us supporting the work, I think they were instrumental in helping us to understand that it had to be about a level playing field for everyone’s voices to be heard. I think they did a really good job of helping all of us to understand that. (personal communication, September 25, 2018)

Reflecting on the Collaborative Partnership Experience

Research study participants expressed an interest in reflection as part of the self-development necessary to be successful in collaborative settings. Alton, an executive leader in the educational sector, shared:

The thing that I'm curious about is: How do leaders self-reflect about their role and how they have to change themselves as their situation changes? I don't think many leaders really think about that. I think they are just kind of there in the moment. Hey, I’m doing this, and they don't think about how their relationships change and how they have to constantly reflect on what they’re putting out versus what they’re getting in. I just don't think people think about that all the time. (personal communication, August 7, 2018)

Other partners expressed a need to reflect on self-development in the context of collaborative practice, but none of the research study participants expressed that they consciously or regularly devoted time to the activity of reflection. Lisa, an operational level leader, reflected on her growth through collaborative work: “I am more open and I've definitely, become a stronger leader, I believe, because of
the collaborative work that we are engaged in.” (personal communication, October 4, 2018). Angela, an operational level leader, discussed her reflections on collaborating and modeling collaborative behavior in systems change:

I’m internalizing some of the principles that we talk about through our work—these pieces about collaboration, about networks, about how hard it is to change, how important it is to change systems, and how hard that is and through my own practice and thinking about how do I practice some of these in my day to day? How do we model systems change and then do everything exactly the same way? We’ve got to do it too. And we know it’s good because we see it happening. So how can we adapt and use what we see working? (personal communication, September 25, 2018)

Catey, an executive leader, highlighted the challenges of vulnerability and openness in the collaborative context when trust is not present:

I’m trying to be more open…it’s really forcing me to have conversations with people. There’s an organization that we work with that is not very collaborative, and it’s really not the organization itself—it’s the leadership. It’s just not collaborative and the partnership isn’t strong because of that. I struggle between wanting to be supportive and helpful and helping them “get it” and just walking away. And when I reflect on why it’s important to collaborate and I know that if we could work together, we could get some great work done together, I keep trying. Then some other conflict or slight happens, and I feel like I have to protect myself and my organization
again. I try to think about what I am doing or what we are doing that might cause them to act that way. Almost all of our relationships with our partners are really, really good. Why is this one so difficult? (personal communication, October 4, 2018)

Research study participants also reflected on the relative success or struggles of their collaborative partnerships. While many identified ways that they were seeing real outcomes as a result of their collective efforts, some expressed disappointment and frustration over the work to date. John shared his experience at the end of a funding cycle:

You know, I think there were some areas or pockets of success, but I don't feel, oh, wow, we did great work down here. I mean, I feel in light of all things it we did what we could with everything we had, but I don't feel that we didn't necessarily deliver on what we had originally set out to accomplish. (personal communication, September 20, 2018)

He later reflected on both his work, and his decision to ultimately leave the collaborative group:

I don't feel we’ve hit it out of the park. I don't feel that we did anything wrong, necessarily. I just feel we fulfilled the role we could fulfill in light of where we’re at. But it's not bad. For me, I need that shorter gratification, knowing, hey, I'm having a more immediate impact. (personal communication, September 20, 2018)

Mary considered the lasting impact of the work:
When I think about all the projects I've been a part of over the years, it's hard to see what's different now from five years ago, or 10 years ago. It's very difficult. I would say for every project, I can't tell you how many times I've been in in a collaborative group where there's a new consortia or other collaborative group. We're starting these things- we start them over and over and over again. (personal communication, August 13, 2018)

Alwin reflected on his work in a collaborative group that continues to struggle with forming and acting on a common agenda:

I don't know... I have spent a lot of time thinking about what I could have done differently, and I don't know what it was that was in my personal control. I'm just frustrated that like so many projects like this it's, there was a lot of really heavy-duty investment of time and talent and even fiscally and I'm so afraid is just going to all slide right back to normal because the key things we needed to make it transformational are the very things that were missing. (personal communication, September 20, 2018)

Michael acknowledged the difficulty in achieving success in collaborative endeavors, and also acknowledged the reward of such work:

I just don't think that any organization or initiative can succeed without strong collaborative efforts, but I also believe that finding collaborative success is extremely challenging from a leadership perspective, it's, it's the hardest work I've ever done. But also, it can be the most rewarding
work when you find that place where it's all coming together. (personal communication, October 22, 2018)

Reflecting on the collaborative partnership work helps partners to see the incremental success made over time. Amanda framed her experience in working with a collaborative partnership as a technical assistance provider:

I get the beauty of sitting at the top of the tree looking down at the community while they're in the thick of it. And I often pause them while they're living and breathing the daily challenges. I find that I get to pause them and say, look where you were a year ago from today look at and I'll point out some of the amazing things that have happened over the year (personal communication, October 18, 2018)

Michael expressed a similar sentiment about his collaborative partnership:

Whenever I'm at one of our steering committee meetings now, instead of me being the one dominant voice, I'm talking very little. We have students and staff and community leaders talking and contributing. I sit back, and I listen and there's tremendous pride in seeing that the vision that you had is becoming a reality and you're seeing all of these great people that are so willing to be passionate about the work. It's sort of hard to think about doing it any differently. All the time and effort and sacrifice have been well worth it when you start to see that experience. (personal communication, September 26, 2018)
Florence considered the future of her organization’s efforts in supporting schools:

How do we respond if we truly believe that we have a role in improving public education? Do we tell the education experts well, here’s what you need to be doing, or does that mean that we come alongside our educational partners, roll up our sleeves and dig in and say, you know, we’re ready to take more of the responsibility for helping to educate students? (personal communication, September 21, 2018)

While many of the reflections focused on the work of collaboration, some focused on both personal and global aspects. Alwin considered how his experiences helped him to hone his ideas about collaborative work:

I probably have a deeper understanding of my own passion as well because I think it was during this whole process that I kind of really put it together for myself that what really interests me is creating systems that truly improve life and outcomes for people not just getting degrees, not just this, that, or the other thing, but really what can we do to truly create systems that play to people’s strengths, that identify people differently, not from deficit mentalities and those kinds of things. But really, how to take the good things that are happening and create cycles of growth from that. (personal communication, August 28, 2018)

Beverly expressed concern about the need for people to work together in light of the country’s current political environment:
It also makes me think about even what's going on in our country and just how divisive everything is- a lack of empathy. I think that's what we're seeing now. Which is not new. Obviously, we've had contention and there's been party lines and them versus us and us versus them for many, many years. But I just think that we're in an interesting time where folks are very tribal and as a result of that tribal and territorial way of being people are just mean. So, that's all I've really given thought to is just how much of the collaboration and working together and communication is just so vital to everything that we do as human beings, how we connect with one another is everything. (personal communication, October 8, 2018)

Michael also noted both the personal reward and societal benefit from collaborative efforts:

I have been very blessed from the perspective of I get a chance to get to know people from all kinds of career endeavors. You know, I have grown in my respect for what everyone does to try to help our society, and I think it continues to open my eyes to the fact that there are so many people out there that are trying to do great things. (personal communication, September 26, 2018)

Lisa summed up her learning as a result of her work in collaboration:

I have learned so much. I've learned that when people do come together and they have a passion and belief for something which is our kids, and you see the significant need in our region as it is all over the state and
nation, you know that if you can harness the passion and the energy, bring others together, build partnerships, build trust, and really tackle something together, in a collaborative way you can make a significant change.

(personal communication, August 29, 2018)

Summary

This chapter detailed the behaviors employed and observed by leaders across multiple sectors in executive and operational leadership roles in the context of cross-sector collaborative partnerships. The experiences and observations captured in Chapter Four established the foundation for the recommendations and conclusions discussed in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER FIVE
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This research study used a constructivist grounded theory approach to investigate the behaviors of executive and operational level behaviors in cross-sector collaborative partnerships leading to successful and sustained efforts to improve educational achievement. This chapter details the research findings, implications and recommendations to be considered by executive and operational level representatives, funders and technical assistance providers representing and supporting cross-sector collaborative partnerships in the development and improvement of such efforts. These findings represent a comprehensive review of the literature and the shared experiences, feelings and reflections of collaborative partnership members from a variety of sectors, including those in business, education, government, nonprofit, funder and technical assistance provider roles at both the executive and operational levels of leadership.

The first section of this chapter details findings from this research study, organized by the four findings that contribute to the developed substantive grounded theory. The second section provides a discussion of the conclusions of this research study regarding implementation of collaborative behaviors in partnerships that lead to the development of conditions necessary to improve educational outcomes for all students. The section also provides the theoretical and practical implications of this research study, including recommendations
regarding promising practices for emerging collaborative partnerships. The final section of Chapter Five shares the limitations of this research study and suggests directions for future research on collaboration.

Overview

The genesis of this research study was the urgent need to improve educational outcomes for all students. In 2011, Kania and Kramer’s seminal article, *Collective Impact*, galvanized action across the United States around the concept of cross-sector collaboration in support of improvements in a variety of sectors, including health care, housing and education. Many such partnerships were already forming and working in new ways across public and private institutions, businesses and agencies, with the goal of improving some form of service or outcome. In the education sector, serious and persistent achievement gaps for students of color and in some areas of the country left large swaths of students un- and under-educated with resulting impacts to health, public safety, housing and economic prosperity for generations of families. The notion of bringing multiple sectors together who are impacted by and can benefit from solving the achievement gaps provided renewed hope for tackling a complex and intractable problem that had, to date, vexed schools and communities with relatively few examples of improved student outcomes. While the promise of cross-sector collaboration and the development of collaborative partnerships seemed to provide an easily explained solution via Kania and Kramer’s five conditions of “Collective Impact”, the reality of implementation led to power
struggles and inconsistent implementation of collaborative efforts in many communities and across sectors. Eight years after the original article, the achievement gap persists, and work remains to catalyze the action necessary in policy and practice to create the change needed for all students to be successful.

The literature review in this constructivist grounded theory research study developed throughout the data collection and analysis process consistent with the conceptualization of such studies by Charmaz (2014). Early sensitizing concepts explored in the literature review were collaboration and leadership. In collaboration, the development and structures of collaborative practice were explored to provide a foundational background for this research study. The challenges in collaboration were also discussed, providing ample evidence of the difficulty and inconsistencies of implementation of such efforts. Collaborative behaviors were detailed through an extensive analysis of existing literature and frameworks, resulting in the identification of three areas of behavior to be explored in further detail: trust, communication, and relationships. Among the literature and frameworks, and across the data collected from research study participants, there was consistent identification of these three topics as most salient and useful in collaborative practice. Gaps in the literature and research study participant responses regarding behaviors necessary for collaboration to occur led the researcher to find additional behaviors that may improve collaborative partnership practice are discussed in the findings and implications in this chapter.
The literature on leadership provided important information on the behaviors adopted in a variety of leadership styles generally considered conducive to collaborative practice. The behaviors of leaders in the various leadership types were largely congruent with the behaviors identified for collaboration. The inclusion of critical leadership, not referenced in the literature on collaboration reviewed in this study, represents an opportunity to consider how all voices contribute to the collaborative solutions necessary for improving educational outcomes. Additional literature reviewed for this research study addressed a variety of aspects of practice and foundational background to ensure a thorough analysis of identified collaborative behaviors and to investigate potential gaps in the literature to date.

In the data collection and analysis phase of this study, over 70 semi-structured interviews were conducted of up to one hour each covering 30 total questions around collaborative understanding, behaviors, practices and experiences. Observations and analysis of document and multimedia materials was also completed as needed to develop understanding of each collaborative partnership explored in this research study. Memos were generated that helped to identify areas for further exploration and consideration based on observations, interviews, document and multimedia analysis and the literature review. Data was analyzed using a constant comparative method, generating early themes that were developed and further refined into categories. The researcher continued to access and add to the relevant literature review throughout the data
collection and analysis process consistent with the constructivist grounded theory approach used in this research study and necessary to inform the findings of this study.

Findings

Finding One

Collaborative partners must demonstrate resolute moral purpose and dedicate time and attention to deeply understand how to create equitable outcomes for all students. Fullan discussed the importance of urgent and effective action improve educational outcomes for all students in his 2011 book *The Moral Imperative Realized*. Fullan states:

> The moral imperative, of course, has widespread urgency in all areas of human life—in finance, in politics, and in all aspects of how we treat each other. It is at the heart of the well-being of the individual, the society, and the global world. It is not about religion, but about the purpose and fulfillment of human and social life. (2011, p. 9)

Participants in this research study alluded to moral purpose in their collaborative partnership work and were consistently focused in their interview responses on how shared commitment to the work is key in systems change. Participants also identified the need to further explore the role of equity in their collaborative partnerships. In reporting the need to do so, participants responded regularly along a theme of “more could be done”. Carla states: “Sometimes it’s not the first focus, but it’s always there.” (personal communication, October 18,
2018). Catey shared her thoughts on equity in her collaborative partnership view: “Equity is very important to us. But I will tell you that we’re not doing nearly what we should be doing” (personal communication, October 31, 2018). Florence provided an assessment of her collaborative partnership’s equity work to date: We’ve always said that equity has been a part of our work. But I don’t think we’ve always behaved that way. I think it’s a journey. And it’s the kind of thing that if we aren’t intentional, if we just say it and hope for it, then we’re not really working toward that. So, now we’re actively working on it, and we’re a little bit further. (personal communication, November 1, 2018)

Martha expressed the way that her leadership team is thinking about equity: It’s an area where I think we’re constantly trying to be students. What have we not thought about? What more could we do? Are there structures or other constructs within our system that are not advancing equity? We’re not perfect at it, but it’s something we aspire to continue to put at the forefront of our work. (personal communication, October 10, 2018)

The statistics on the persistent achievement gap across the nation and presented in Chapter One of this research study remained largely unchanged over decades (“The Condition of Education”, 2018). The moral imperative, as Fullan argues, requires both a sense of urgency and the ability to forge strong and durable relationships that can weather the challenges of difficult conversations about race, privilege and power structures. Catey opined:
The work has always been about equity, but it’s tricky. It’s a hard conversation to have with people sometimes. I would imagine that there are a lot of organizations that feel the way that we do- that we could be doing even more, but it’s top of mind and we’re not letting it go. We’re taking steps, and we’re feeling more comfortable in those conversations. (personal communication, October 31, 2018)

While some collaborative partnerships recognize and respond to the need to address equity in their work, others have lingering worries about the effectiveness of their shared efforts. Alwin shared:

I think that equity remains a primary concern. How to make the opportunities equitable for all students. I think credence was always paid to not making it something that you could only participate in if you’re in the right zip code, or the right neighborhood. The intention is to make sure that everybody has equal opportunity and the structures and scaffolds to get to that if they needed it. I don’t know that we were 100% successful, but I think that was always the intention. (personal communication, November 1, 2018)

Fullan argued that moral purpose is not fully realized if it is confined to intention and hope for the best for all students, and that it requires possessing the necessary skill to successfully catalyze action around moral purpose, ultimately accomplishing the outcomes needed for systems change (2011). He describes the leadership behaviors necessary for fostering change in education,
including persistence, clarity of purpose and a personal commitment
“accompanied by optimism that progress can be made even in the most troubled situations” noting that “All effective leaders combine resolute moral purpose with impressive empathy” (2011, p. 5,6). The shared purpose in one community was described by Martha, a leader from the nonprofit sector: “You know, every single person on our team and many of the companies I work with firmly believe in this and will do everything in their power to help continue to make it be successful.” (personal communication, October 10, 2018). Linda described the urgency that catalyzed action around a shared purpose in her community:

Everyone’s why is different. Our why was so urgent because we were failing, and the state recognized that, and we were about to be taken over. We had to, we almost felt like the ship is sinking and we're all going to jump on this lifeboat and we're putting all our chips on this number, so to speak and I'd say that was the impetus. I tell people this all the time. Everyone’s why is going to be different. But what you have to do is stay the course. You have to constantly remind yourself and your partners about the why. Why we’re doing this, why it matters. It’s staying the course and not giving up. (personal communication, September 11, 2018)

Barber and Fullan (2005, p. 1) also discussed the context of systems thinking and systems change in making lasting improvement in education. They write: “Many have called for “systems thinking” in education. But we see little evidence of systems thinking that has led to systems action. Our call is for
systems action that is strategic, powerful, and pursued in practice." They later connect their thoughts on systems thinking related to moral purpose, where they propose that moral purpose become a “system quality” rather than an individually-held commitment. They further assert: “Moral purpose is the link between systems thinking and sustainability. You cannot move substantially toward sustainability in the absence of widely shared moral purpose.”

**Finding Two**

The second finding in this research study, based on the sensitizing concept of collaboration as identified in chapter two, is that collaborative behaviors and skills can and should be explicitly taught, adopted and modeled. Collaborative partners can improve both their efficacy in working together and the quality of their shared work by learning and practicing the behaviors and skills necessary for collaboration. This includes defining mutually-beneficial goals and outcomes, developing theories of action, and engaging in the development of deep, trusting and durable relationships necessary for sustained systems change efforts in the context of educational improvement.

As discussed in Chapter One, collaboration can be 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, Murray-Close & Monsey, 2001, p. 4). The idea of
collaboration is increasingly embedded into our problem-solving structures and processes due to the complexity of challenges in the 21st century and the inability of any one sector to unilaterally and adequately address those challenges (Smith & Becker, 2018). Given the inherent complexity in improving educational outcomes for all students, and the different sectors both implicated by and benefitting from a better system for preparing students for both college and career success, collaboration among a cross-sector group of actors in a defined community or region is necessary (Smith & Becker, 2018). Collaboration, however, is not consistently understood, taught and modeled as a behavior and skill set to be replicated among groups charged with behaving in a collaborative manner. In this research study, participants responded to questions regarding their understanding, training and experience with cooperation and collaboration, and while respondents were able to provide personal definitions and examples of both terms, none of the individuals who participated in this study could explicitly identify a formal learning experience, including workshops, retreats, or coursework where they had been trained in how to collaborate. Responses from 28 participants in phase one interviews primarily included narrative examples of learning how to collaborate on the job, with a few respondents highlighting experiences with family or that shaped their collaborative skills and mindset. Two representative samples of the types of narratives provided by research study participants underscore the largely shared experience of respondents in learning
collaboration on the job. Ines described her early career experience where she learned to distinguish between collaboration and cooperation:

In my pathways work, when I was trying to get a bunch of high schools and a college together to coordinate and align the programs of study and a high school pathway to create a teacher credentialing pathway. The big hurdle that we had to try to overcome was really in getting that leadership group, which was the principals and the college president to truly move beyond- “yeah, we partner with them, we’re all in the same area, we’re friendly, we’re professional and if you guys want to hold a meeting here, we can hold them in my space.” So, they were definitely cooperative, but in terms of that collaboration that was needed, which was how are you going to connect these programs, knowing that this is the scheduling and constraints of the K-12, knowing that they have these internships already happening at this stage in their senior year. How are we going to think about our program, how are we going to redesign our program on the college side to better compliment that and vice versa. So, they came in to cooperate. But when it came to that deeper partnership work that was needed, where they had to make changes in what they already do, it was moving them from “we already do that” because we just have to literally connect to, we have to understand what each other does better. And then we have to understand where the best opportunities for us to truly collaborate and what that would mean is that I would have to change
some of the ways that I would approach some things and that would have to change some of those things and align. And they're the first to line and create those extra bridges and links and probably the first time I realized, “Oh, you guys are not deep partners yet.” (personal communication, August 4, 2018)

Alan reflected on his learning on collaboration:

I’ll reflect back on my experience in a school district where we were trying to get some work done around college and career readiness. We were doing pathway work and there was a level of cooperation. The superintendent called together all of the different department heads and basically said, look, we’re going to support these three schools that are going to go through a transformation. They’re going to call the agenda and you all will support them, and you will get along. And it was really cooperation more than collaboration, initially. I think a few points we hit maybe a collaborative approach where departments realized, oh my gosh, I can get my work done if I cooperate and collaborate, and I can meet my objectives and meet my goals if I come together with this other department. And that's when collaboration began to occur, but I have to say it stayed at a pretty cooperative level because the superintendent at the time was such a I'll call it the “my way or the highway” philosophy of leadership that he could call people out when he felt they weren't serving the greater good, and they would squirm in their boots, because they were
they were fearful for their jobs and their security of their departments. And so, it really probably stayed at more of a cooperative level. But a few times, we hit collaboration. Now, when that superintendent left that agreement and even the convening together was lost, and I was like, oh my gosh, you know, we did we not, we did not get to collaboration. I learned a lot from that experience. (personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Finding Three

Trust is necessary, but not sufficient to support the development and sustainability of impactful and durable collaborative partnerships. Groups looking to build and strengthen their capacity for systems change should consider the role of psychological safety for all participants in collaborative work.

The role of trust in the development and sustainability of collaborative partnerships was clearly identified and described by participants in this research study as “foundational”, “instrumental” and necessary for progress in any collaborative effort. While trust is identified as an important behavior in leadership literature across multiple sectors, it has limitations in terms of its ability to unilaterally support and foster a culture of collaborative behavior leading to success in achieving the shared outcomes of a collaborative partnership ("Cultivating Systems Leadership," 2017). As such, groups seeking to build and strengthen their capacity for successfully leading systems change efforts should consider a larger set of behaviors and skills necessary to make systems change
possible. The development of psychological safety among collaborative group membership may provide a more complete set of behaviors to foster an environment conducive to collaborative systems change.

![Psychological Danger vs Psychological Safety](image)

**Figure 3. Experience of Psychological Danger Versus Psychological Safety**

This is the Way Google & IDEO Foster Creativity. (n.d.). Retrieved January 2, 2019, from [https://www.ideou.com/blogs/inspiration/how-google-fosters-creativity-innovation](https://www.ideou.com/blogs/inspiration/how-google-fosters-creativity-innovation)

Psychological safety supports development of the key collaborative behaviors necessary among collaborative partnership members to address the complex challenge of systems change by providing an environment where
individuals can take risks, ask questions and fail without being ridiculed, shamed or embarrassed by others in the group. (Edmondson, 2003).

Finding Four

The behaviors necessary for leaders to create psychological safety—treating challenges as learning problems, not execution problems; leaders’ acknowledgement of fallibility; and leaders’ modeling curiosity align with the Improvement Science approach developed by the Carnegie Foundation. Therefore, using an improvement science approach to frame systems change work will provide an environment in which partners can productively question, take-risks, be wrong, innovate and fail around the work necessary to improve educational and career outcomes for all students. While failure may not sound like the right way to achieve success, it is well-documented as necessary for innovation and finding good solutions for complex problems (Edmondson, 2011; Higginbottom, 2017; Fiore et al., 2010). The practice of intellectual humility is an approach that can benefit a collaborative partnership. The notion of exploring ideas through the lens of “possibly wrong, and definitely incomplete” allows all participants the opportunity to be curious about and to develop deep understanding of the system to be changed.

As discussed in finding two, collaborative behaviors and skills have not been explicitly taught, with most learning about collaboration happening on the job. Senge (1990) recommends the use of “practice fields” for building learning organizations. The concept of practice fields is predicated on Senge’s belief that
learning without practice is difficult, and that practice fields offer opportunities to fail, make mistakes, re-try and process their learning in real time. The implication of this on teaching collaborative behavior is that it must be taught in both theory and practice, not simply explained with a hope for the best in implementation.

Collaborative behaviors to be taught include those described by research study participants, and further identified through a review of 21 frameworks and journal articles that identify behaviors related to successful collaboration, leadership, collective impact, effective teamwork, trust, and 21st Century Skills. Commonalities among multiple frameworks and articles were compared, and the list was evaluated for gaps in collaborative behaviors based on research study participant responses and additional literature review. Based on the analysis of these research-based collaborative behaviors, input from research study participants and behaviors added from identified gaps in the lists, trust, communication and relationships rose to the top of the list.

When asked about the behaviors necessary for collaboration, research survey participants identified first identified trust as essential or important for collaborative partnership work. Communication was also highlighted multiple times by research study participants when asked about the behaviors necessary for collaboration. Two facets of communication- openness (also related to trust) and listening were specifically identified by participants. Building relationships was the third behavior listed by research study participants, and again, many participants related building relationships with trust. While participants identified a
large and diverse set of behaviors as necessary or important for collaborative success, psychological safety was rarely mentioned.

Psychological safety remains largely undiscovered as a potential catalyst for systems change. While Schein and Bennis (1965) and later Kahn (1990) wrote about the benefits of psychological safety in establishing a work environment characterized by the ability for teams to take-risks and learn from failure with one another without blame, shame or ridicule. Edmondson popularized the concept again in 2014 with a TED Talk ("Building a psychologically safe", 2014) highlighting the benefits of psychological safety in the context of high-stakes decision-making, notably in health care. The three components of psychological safety, as described by Edmondson include 1) Framing problems as learning, rather than execution problems; 2) Acknowledge fallibility, and 3) Modeling curiosity. A similar principle of improvement science as conceptualized by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is framing work as problem-specific and user-centered, using questioning, rather than solution-generation as an inclusive approach. Also aligned with the concept of psychological safety is Carnegie’s use of a Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle for improvement and closely related to the Deming or Shewhart cycle (“What is the Plan”, n.d.). Underpinning the use of PDSA cycles is the idea that groups should engage in rapid cycles of learning, failing and improving with an emphasis on learning from failure rather than being defeated by it or abandoning an initiative that is not yet yielding expected results using a mantra of “possibly wrong,
definitely incomplete” (Doctor & Parkerson, 2016). Psychological safety gained through the frame of improvement science may provide benefits by: 1) using the language of continuous improvement that is familiar for business, supporting common language development and innovation or creative endeavors, thereby; 2) providing a structure for all voices to be heard in the development of potential interventions for systems change; 3) providing multiple opportunities for partners to engage in systems change actions by identifying numerous small changes for conducting plan-do-study-act cycles; 4) supporting the development of intellectual humility among collaborative partners, ultimately resulting in greater opportunities for change (Fullan, 2011); 5) lowering anxiety around risk-taking, failure and innovation necessary to implement, refine or abandon change efforts; 6) provide a venue for using data to deeply understand the problems that the collaborative partnership is trying to solve within a specific local context.

Substantive Grounded Theory

The substantive grounded theory developed through this research study is that if collaborative behaviors are explicitly taught, modeled, and adopted (including trust, communication and relationship-building); if psychological safety and resolute moral purpose are demonstrated at all levels of leadership, then a foundation is set that allows for collaborative partnerships to be productively engaged in accomplishing their shared outcomes.

This research study concludes with a theoretical model that proposes the following: 1) The presence of each identified collaborative behavior (trust,
communication, relationship) demonstrated in a collaborative partnership comprised of two or more individuals has a synergistic effect on the interactions between individual partners resulting in greater efficiency and efficacy in doing shared work; 2) The underpinning of effectiveness at both the individual and the group levels of analysis is resolute moral purpose demonstrated by partners in the collaborative, particularly at the executive leadership level; 3) The presence of psychological safety at the group level, principally at the operational level as related to accomplishment of the “on the ground” work, has an acceleration effect (Pronin, Jacobs & Wegner, 2008); 4) the presence of any combination of the key collaborative behaviors (trust, communication, relationships), moral purpose and any degree of psychological safety will improve collaborative partnership interactions at both individual and organizational levels, and the improvements will increase the efficiency and efficacy toward achieving shared outcomes in a synergistic manner; 5) conversely, the absence of any of the key behaviors, moral purpose, or psychological safety will have a limiting effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of the collaborative partnership in achieving shared outcomes.

Discussion and Recommendations for the Field

“Every system is perfectly designed to get the results that it gets.” is a quote often attributed to W. Edwards Deming, a systems-thinking expert.... (“Like
Magic”, 2015) though recent research evidence points to Dr. Paul Batalden as the author of the quote that was slightly altered from Arthur Jones (“Like Magic”, 2015). Batalden discussed the often-used quote in the context of system improvement efforts:

The observation invites personal reflection and awareness—the place where the lasting improvement of quality usually begins. By directing people’s attention to design, the words offer a powerful invitation to deeply consider how the present situation was created and invites its re-creation. (“Like Magic”, 2015)

This observation underscores the need for thoughtful evaluation and for reimagining our current educational and workforce preparation systems if college and career outcomes for all students are to demonstrate wide-scale success and close persistent achievement gaps. Our ability to transform the complex systems of education and workforce preparation in the future will rely on our behaviors as systems leaders working together across multiple sectors. Cross-sector collaboration will persist as a strategy to address complex problems across a variety of sectors in the foreseeable future and will require leadership that understands the importance of developing and maintaining a strong network of professional and personal relationships and the role of trust in catalyzing action among partners. Leaders must model the collaborative behavior that they want to see in the partnerships that will best address their identified outcomes. Leaders must also invest the time and attention necessary to establish psychological
safety in collaborative environments to spur innovation, reflection and the
development of the deep understanding of the current systems to be changed.

**Recommendations for Policy Makers, Funders and Technical Assistance Providers**

Policymakers, including elected officials and school boards, should recognize the opportunity for improvement of educational outcomes for all students using a cross-sector collaborative partnership approach and must be realistic about both the time and resources required for such a venture. Current challenges for participation in such initiatives include the dizzying array of responsibilities in the job descriptions of educational leaders. Business leaders must balance time with the return on investment generated (or not) by their participation in a collaborative group. Public agencies are often challenged with limited staff to participate in such groups. Policymakers who recognize the opportunities for long-term improvement to education and workforce systems to address long-standing achievement gaps must invest in the long-term proposition of such initiatives by providing adequate human and fiscal resources for these efforts. This includes the leadership and staff necessary to spend dedicated time on these efforts (not “other duties as assigned”) and the fiscal resources for meetings, events, professional learning, coaching, data system alignment, curriculum alignment and other related expenses that will be incurred over a multi-year period. Policymakers must fully commit to learning and adopting the key collaborative behaviors, creating psychological safety and demonstrating
resolute moral purpose as participating or de facto collaborative partnership members. Policymakers should set policy that protects and supports such efforts and the leaders engaged in such efforts from the ebb and flow of political campaigns, elections, public opinion and varying funding levels. They should recognize the time needed to develop and mount a successful cross-sector collaborative partnership and avoid the temptation to focus largely on quick wins. Policymakers should also empower the executives under their direction to create conditions (as described in findings one through four) that will encourage the risk-taking, innovation, failure and deep understanding of the systems to be changed. By setting a course for 7-10 years of continued investment in such an endeavor, policymakers will provide a foundation upon which the collaborative partnership can begin to address changing educational outcomes for all students.

Funders and technical assistance providers who support collaborative partnerships should also consider the long-term investments necessary to develop and sustain collaborative partnership work. Funders and technical assistance providers should continue to explore ways to model the collaborative behaviors and practices that are expected of funded partnership efforts in order to fully appreciate the challenges and nuances of collaborative partnership work in the field. Funders and technical assistance providers would be well served by fully committing to learning and adopting the key collaborative behaviors, creating psychological safety and demonstrating resolute moral purpose as active supporters of collaborative partnerships.
Executive and Practitioner Recommendations

Executives should fully commit to learning and adopting the key collaborative behaviors, creating psychological safety and demonstrating resolute moral purpose as active and engaged leaders of the collaborative partnership. Executives should investigate their own capacity and tolerance for risk-taking, failure and innovation; engaging and resolving conflict; long-term investment of resources at their district, school, business, agency or other organization; and ability to manage and successfully navigate political concerns from boards, policymakers and the public for engagement in such efforts. Executives should also seek feedback from trusted peers and honestly assess their capacity to abandon image management in leading a collaborative partnership; an executive who cannot drop their own agenda for the greater good or withstand “looking bad” if things don’t go as planned will likely struggle in leading a collaborative partnership based on the behaviors necessary for success in such efforts.

Executives should enter a coaching relationship with a seasoned collaborative leader to navigate collaborative partnership development, ideally with peers at the executive level to engage in “practice fields” for leadership of collaborative partnerships. Executives should consider the role of critical leadership in addressing equity at the systems-level.

Practitioners, including leaders at the operational level and staff responsible for implementation of collaborative partnership efforts should consider their role in improving educational outcomes for all students and adopt a
position of 100% responsibility for the outcomes currently being produced. If each collaborative partner fully commits to learning and adopting the key collaborative behaviors, creating psychological safety and demonstrating resolute moral purpose as participating or de facto collaborative partnership members. Practitioners should engage in rapid prototyping and innovation to generate solutions to address educational outcomes via an Improvement Science approach, implementing PDSA cycles and scaling promising solutions, refining, adopting or abandoning as data is collected and analyzed. Practitioners must also support executive leadership direction by providing information on practices that show promise in scaling, and by managing resources and time spent in collaborative partnerships in a transparent and honest way. This will allow executives to course correct at their level when needed, and also allows executives to provide necessary support to remove any policy, structure or process barriers that will impede implementation of promising practices.

**Recommendations for all Groups**

Policymakers, executive and operational level leaders responsible for the development and implementation of collaborative partnerships formed to improve educational outcomes for all students are engaged in systems change that has been unsuccessful in addressing achievement gaps over decades. Leaders should manage expectations for such a complex undertaking when all previous efforts to date have shown little progress in changing the systems of education and workforce development and must simultaneously demonstrate hope in the
face of daunting challenges. Leaders should also recognize the messiness and complexity of human interactions and the development of relationships that can weather conflict, adversity, criticism and slow progress. Collaborative partnership work is not for the “weak of heart” or those without resolute moral purpose that all children should be prepared for future success in college, career and life. Collaborative work was compared as “a marathon, not a sprint” in multiple instances by research study participants. As such, collaborative partnership leaders must also practice self-care, recognizing the emotional labor involved in such an effort, and making sure to manage personal, physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Leaders should also be intentional about taking time for self-reflection as identified and discussed in Chapter Four. Finally, collaborative partners must remember to celebrate and support each other along the way, recognizing big and small wins, personal accomplishments and awards, daily and longer-term progress over time.

As noted earlier in this chapter, research study participants reported collaborative work as challenging, messy, complex and exhausting at times. It is, however, worth it based on the responses of research study participants:

I just don’t think that any organization or any initiative can succeed without strong collaborative efforts. I also believe that finding collaborative success is extremely challenging from a leadership perspective, It’s the hardest work I’ve ever done. It can also be the most rewarding work when
you find that that place where it's all coming together. (personal communication, September 25, 2018)

Recommendations for Future Research

Four recommendations for future research emerged in the process of this research study. First, a study that could validate the substantive grounded theory developed and proposed in this study. Second, an investigation into the experience of psychological safety in existing collaborative partnerships that would provide evidence to confirm/disconfirm the importance of psychological safety in collaborative partnerships. No evidence of a study of psychological safety in the context of collaborative partnerships was located in the literature review. A third and related study could examine which tools, resources, processes or practices are most helpful in developing psychological safety. Fourth and finally, an investigation on how leaders can shift a culture from one of certainty to one of intellectual humility and curiosity, recognizing the role of both intellectual humility and curiosity in psychological safety and continuous improvement efforts such as those developed through the practice of improvement science. This study could inform efforts to develop an integrated model that combines and potentially adds to the behaviors needed to successfully implement collaborative partnerships.

Limitations of the Study
The limitations of this study are consistent with those identified in studies conducted utilizing a grounded theory approach. First, the study generated a large set of data, making it difficult at times to pare down and focus specifically on the purpose of the study and avoiding other interesting and important potential areas of findings. Kathy Charmaz, widely recognized as a leader in the development of constructivist grounded theory, states: “Quite often, we discover that our work suggests pursuing more than one analytic direction.” (2014, p. 18). The data generated in this study provided multiple potential directions and challenges in the application of constant comparison and analysis.

Second, the researcher is a novice in the use of grounded theory. This has provided many opportunities to learn and grow as a researcher. Grounded theory is not commonly used as a research approach within the California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) Ed.D. in Educational Leadership program. Given that fact, there was limited access to material on the topic of grounded theory and how to conduct a constructivist grounded theory study with few good examples of successful dissertations using this approach available for review. This was not unique to CSUSB, as the examples available through the ProQuest Dissertation and Theses database were often situated in healthcare, rather than in the field of education. International examples were often structured much differently than is required at CSUSB.
Conclusion

The moral imperative to change our current system of education and workforce preparation for all students is clear. Data collected over time in the United States shows persistent achievement gaps, with large numbers of students remaining unserved, uninspired and disengaged. This challenge is not solely a problem for educators to fix; all sectors, from business, to government and non-profit organizations, share in the success or failure of any effort to improve education. Despite strong evidence and persistent rhetoric, leaders in these sectors at both executive and operational levels have failed to implement successful systemic change that supports all students in achieving success for college, career and life.

In this research study, participants shared their knowledge, thoughts, hopes, frustrations and aspirations about their work in collaborative partnerships from across the United States in order to develop understanding about what is and is not working in creating the systems change that each collaborative seeks to attain. While every participant’s context, background and experience were different in many ways, commonalities in the types of behaviors needed for success emerged. Three key themes, including: 1) crafting strong relationships; 2) building trust; and 3) communicating for impact emerged based on data collected through interviews, materials, multimedia and literature reviewed in this research study. A constant comparison approach provided opportunities to compare and find commonalities among the responses, prompting additional
inquiry into the behaviors that lead to increased success in collaborative partnerships. What also emerged in this grounded theory inquiry was the team-level construct of psychological safety that has only recently been discussed as a consideration in collaborative partnership development. Aligned to the notion of psychological safety is the practice of continuous improvement, where the concept of intellectual humility and the implementation of improvement science were considered as strategies to develop psychological safety in a collaborative setting. In the final chapter of this research study, recommendations for all collaborative group participants included practices of reflection and self-care and recognizing the importance of taking time to celebrate successes along the collaborative journey. As many of the study participants noted, collaboration is “hard” and “messy” work. Despite that observation, not one of the participants in this study would go back to their old way of working in silos or regretted their experience working in a collaborative partnership. Leaders at both the executive and operational levels of collaborative partnerships charged with improving educational outcomes for all students must act with resolute moral purpose; develop relationships, trust and communication in an honest and transparent manner; provide the conditions necessary for psychological safety to develop and be sustained, and practice intellectual humility, eschewing ego for a greater good. The behaviors of executive and operational level leaders in collaborative partnerships are key to the success or failure of our shared efforts. Children,
families and communities are depending on all of us to act with equity in mind to ensure that all students have opportunities for success in college, career and life.

Margaret Wheatley wrote:

We need leaders who recognize the harm being done to people and planet through dominant practices that control, ignore, abuse, and oppress the human spirit.

We need leaders who put service over self, stand steadfast in crisis and failures, and who display unshakable faith that people can be generous, creative and kind.

(Wheatley, n.d.)
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROTOCOL
Each participant will complete one to three semi-structured interviews. Before each interview is conducted, ensure the following:

1. A signed informed consent form is completed and reviewed
2. Remind the interview participant that the interview will be recorded and affirm that the participant agrees to recording
3. Ensure that the recorder is working properly and utilize a backup recording device
4. If the interview is to be conducted via online conference, ensure that the conference software is recording online

When ready to begin the interview, complete the following:

1. Provide the participant with a personal introduction and basic information on professional background and status as a doctoral candidate
2. Share the purpose of study
3. Provide interviewee with the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns before recording begins

The following questions will guide the first interview:

1. What is the purpose of your collaborative group? (or insert learning community or network in each case depending on how they define themselves—will refer to as “group” for the remainder of the questions)
2. What is the greatest opportunity for this group? What is the greatest challenge?
3. Why do you think so many people and groups are trying to work in a collaborative way?
4. How do you feel about the process of participating in the group?
5. Where would you place your group on a continuum from mandated cooperation to collective impact? What evidence supports your choice?
6. How would you describe the momentum of your group in moving toward achievement of your group’s goals? What could be done to increase the momentum, if anything?
7. Does your collaborative describe itself as practicing “collective impact”? If so, how is collective impact defined by the collective group participants?
8. Is collaboration the best way for your (community or region) to get to the goal of increasing educational attainment? Why or why not?
9. How do you stay “on the same page” with your executive or operating level leader regarding this work?
10. What are the differences between work happening at the executive and operating levels? What is similar?

11. What have you learned from your work in this collaborative group? Is there anything you are curious about in doing collaborative work?

12. Is there anything that you’d like to add that we haven’t discussed today that would help me to understand collaborative work?

The following questions will guide the second interview:

1. Is there anything you’ve thought about since our last interview around your collaborative group (or insert learning community or network in each case depending on how they define themselves—will refer to as “group” for the remainder of the questions) that you’d like to share at the start of our time today?

2. What does collaboration mean to you? How do you differentiate between collaboration and cooperation? Where or how did you learn this difference?

3. What are the behaviors that you think are important for collaboration?

4. What are the communication practices that help or hinder your group’s progress?

5. Is there a commonly shared language among group members? If so, how did it develop?

6. How would you characterize the interactions between executive and operating level people in this group? How would you characterize the interactions among your (same level) group?

7. If you could provide feedback to the (executive or operating) level on what they could do to help your group, what would you say?

8. How has your group evolved over time, if at all?

9. How would you describe the power dynamics in your group?

10. Have relationships among members changed since you started participating in this group? If so, how?
11. Do you experience any frustration in doing this work? Is there anything you think the group should stop doing?

12. Are there training or learning opportunities that would help this group to do this work better?

13. How are you working and approaching work differently in your workplace as a result of your participation in this collaborative group, if at all?

14. How would you describe the understanding of and "buy-in" for your collaborative work back at your workplace? Do others participate in the work, or is it primarily "your thing"? How is understanding/support evidenced?

15. What is true about this work?

16. What assumptions have you made in participating in this work?

17. If you could start over, how would you do this collaborative group work differently, if at all?

18. Is there anything that you’d like to add that we haven’t discussed today that would help me to understand collaborative work?

The following questions will guide the third interview:

1. Is there anything you’ve thought about since our last interview around your collaborative group (or insert learning community or network in each case depending on how they define themselves-will refer to as “group” for the remainder of the questions) that you’d like to share at the start of our time today?

2. What beliefs have you developed about leading and engaging in collaborative work as a result of your experience to date?

3. Are there leadership challenges in this context that are different from your usual way of leading? If so, what are they, and how are you addressing them?

4. What is the role of trust in your group, if any? Have there been any intentional efforts to develop trust? If so, what were they? Is there the same level of trust between the different levels (executive to operating and vice versa) of the group as there is in the role-alike group you belong to?
5. How are successes identified and acknowledged? Who gets credit when success is achieved?

6. What role does public recognition play in your collaborative group? Who gets credit or blame? Who doesn’t?

7. Is there competition among group members for resources or recognition? If so, how does it appear, and how is it handled?

8. Is there risk in the work that you are doing? If so, what is it and how does the group manage it?

9. How are mistakes handled in the group? Can you provide an example of a significant mistake in the group? How was it handled and resolved?

10. Has any conflict developed in the group? If so, was it resolved, or if there is ongoing conflict in the group, how is it managed?

11. What is the group’s experience, if any, with failure? Is failure tolerable in this work? If so, how much? What kinds?

12. What role, if any, does vulnerability play in this work?

13. What is your greatest worry in relation to this work?

14. Has equity been a focus area of the collaborative? If so, how?

15. What role does love play, if any, in this work?

16. Is there anything that you’d like to add that we haven’t discussed today that would help me to understand collaborative work?

At the conclusion of each interview, thank the participant for his/her time and share next steps (next interview to be scheduled and timeline).
APPENDIX B

CONSTANT COMPARISON PROTOCOL
Constant Comparison Protocol
Based on Boeije, 2002

Step 1:  Comparison within a single interview (identifying consistencies and inconsistencies in a single transcribed interview).

Purpose:  Look for consistencies, inconsistencies in answers; determine “core message” of the participant

Questions:
  1. Which codes are used to label categories in this interview? Are there fragments with the same codes? If so, are there commonalities in those codes?
  2. What is the “core” message of the interviewee?
  3. Is the description consistent? Are there any contradictions in the responses? Are there relationships in fragments of the descriptions?

Step 2:  Comparison between interviews within the same group (executive-and operating-level leaders).

Purpose:  To further develop the conceptualization of the subject. Search for indicators and characteristics for each concept in order to define that concept.

Questions:
  1. Is interviewee A talking about the same experience as B? What do both have in common? Differences?
  2. What combinations of codes & concepts occur? What interpretations exist (close-in and far-out)?
  3. What are the criteria underlying these comparisons?

Step 3:  Comparison of interviews from different groups (implementers, TA providers and funders).

Purpose:  Triangulate ideas for themes and categories among three different participant groups.

Questions:
  1. What do the three different groups have to say about the identified themes? Are there similarities and/or differences in their responses?
  2. Which themes appear in one group but not in others and vice versa?
  3. Why would each group view issues differently or similarly?
4. What nuances, additional detail or new information does each group supply about the other group(s)?

**Step 4:** *Comparison in pairs (in this case the pair would be one executive-and one operating-level leader within the same organization).*

**Purpose:** Gain information on variation in perspectives from executive- and operating-level pairs from the same organization to identify any uniqueness in context that could also show variation in the group, variation by sector participation. Greater knowledge about interactions between partners and in relationship.

**Questions:**
1. What is the relationship like from both perspectives? How can it be summarized?
2. Are there contradictions between participants from the same organization? Do they agree with each other on some/most issues?
3. What are the central issues that are unique to this pair, if any?
4. What codes are in common for this pair?
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER
Dear __________:

Hello! My name is Debra Mustain and I am a doctoral candidate at California State University, San Bernardino. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project entitled “Playing Nice in the Sandbox: Sustainability Factors in Cross-Sector Collaboration” (CSUSB IRB-FY2017-52). The purpose of this project is to learn about the executive- and operating-level behaviors in cross-sector collaborative groups.

You have been identified as a potential participant given your current role in or supporting a collaborative group. Your name may have been provided by a colleague in a collaborative group, technical assistance or funder organization.

Please note that your participation is completely voluntary. The extent of your participation would include up to three individual interviews of up to 60 minutes each. The exchange of information will be conducted in a format that is most convenient and preferable to you.

I am available to conduct face-to-face interviews beginning the week of July 9, 2018. If you are unavailable for a face-to-face interview, but willing to participate via web-based conference call (e.g. Skype, Zoom) or telephone call, I am available beginning June 24, 2018.

With your permission, the interview would be audio recorded and transcribed. You could also be conducted via email or telephone with any follow up questions or clarification after the interview. You, your work organization and collaborative group will be assigned a pseudonym.

If you are willing to participate, please email me at 005814051@coyote.csusb.edu. Dr. Jay Fiene is my dissertation chair and co-investigator on this project. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact him at jfiene@csusb.edu or (909) 537-5645.

Thank you for your consideration. Your time is greatly appreciated!

Debra Mustain
APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT
INFORMED CONSENT
The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate executive- and operating-level behaviors in cross-sector collaboration. This study is being conducted by Debra Mustain, Doctoral Candidate under the supervision of Dr. Jay Fiene, Dean, College of Education, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: This research explores the executive- and operational-level behaviors in collaborative groups using career pathways as a key strategy to improve educational attainment. The primary objective of this study is to develop a theory regarding the key behaviors in cross-sector collaboration for creating measurable and sustainable improvements in educational attainment.

DESCRIPTION: You will be asked to complete one to three individual interviews. Each interview will be scheduled for up to 60 minutes. The interviews will be conducted in the format that you prefer, including in-person, online (using a computer and conference software such as Skype) or by telephone. The time and location for each interview will be scheduled at your convenience. With your permission, all interviews will be audio recorded. You may additionally be observed during participation in a collaborative group meeting or event. Videotaping may occur during observations if permission is granted by all participants. Documents and multimedia materials that are publicly-available from your collaborative group will also be collected and analyzed as part of this study.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate in this study, and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may skip or not answer any questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time.

CONFIDENTIAL: I will take all reasonable precautions to protect your confidentiality. Specifically, your name will never be used in any dissemination of the work (e.g. articles and presentations). Both you and your organization will be assigned a pseudonym. In addition to using pseudonyms, specific titles will be further disguised. For instance, an Assistant Superintendent would be referred to as an executive-level leader in the education sector. Also, demographic information such as gender, race, and ethnicity will not be collected or revealed. Lastly, in efforts to protect confidentiality, all data collected will be kept under lock and key and in password-protected computer files. All audio and video recordings completed for this study will be destroyed three years after the project has ended.

DURATION: The extent of your participation would include one to three interviews of up to 60 minutes each. It may also include being observed in a group setting. Following the interviews and/or observations, you could be contacted via email with follow-up or clarifying questions. Such an exchange would require no more than ten minutes time.

RISKS: I am not aware of any risks to you in this research study. Should you find any of the questions uncomfortable in any way, you can decline to answer. You and your organization will not be identifiable by name in the study.
BENEFITS: While there is no direct benefit to study participants, this research may provide useful and replicable information on the activities, structures and processes that collaborative groups engage in to be successful and sustainable over time. The researcher intends to disseminate the results of this study to all interested collaborative groups via webinars and in-person presentations at meetings, conferences and through publication in journals.

AUDIO: I understand that individual interviews will be digitally recorded. Initials: __________

VIDEO: I understand that this research may include videotaping of group observations. Initials: ________

CONTACT: If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Debra Mustain at mstain@hotmail.com or (562) 253-2537. You may also contact Dr. Jay Fiene, Dean of Education, California State University at (909) 537-5645 or jfiene@csusb.edu. You may contact the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board Office at 909-537-7588.

RESULTS: Results of the completed study and dissertation will be shared with study participants to inform discussions among collaborative group members and the development of future professional learning activities to improve the sustainability of collaborative group efforts. The completed and approved dissertation will be available online through ProQuest and the library at California State University, San Bernardino.

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT: I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in your study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in this study.

SIGNATURE: ___________________________ Date: ___________________
APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
June 12, 2018

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Expedited Review
FY2017-52
Status: Approved

Ms. Debra Mustain and Dr. Jay Fiene
Doctoral Studies Program
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Ms. Mustain and Prof. Fiene:

Your application to use human subjects, titled “Playing nice in the sandbox”: Sustainability factors in cross-sector collaboratives has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The informed consent document you submitted is the official version for your study and cannot be changed without prior IRB approval. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended using the IRB Cayuse system protocol change form.

Your application is approved for one year from June 12, 2018 through June 12, 2019. Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is up for renewal and ensure you file it before your protocol study end date. Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years. Please notify the IRB Research Compliance Officer for any of the following:

1) Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your research protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research,
2) If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,
3) To apply for renewal and continuing review of your protocol one month prior to the protocols end date,
4) When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Research Compliance Officer.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Donna Garcia

Donna Garcia, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

DG/MG
APPENDIX F

RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANTS
Table 1. Research participants (pseudonyms) by sector and leadership level (executive or operational level).

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APPENDIX G

COMMONALITIES AMONG FRAMEWORKS
Table 2. Commonalities among models, frameworks and articles referencing behaviors for collaboration and/or teamwork.

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