

Latinos Participating in Multiethnic Coalitions to Prevent Substance Abuse: A Case Study

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SUMMARY. This paper presents a case study of a neighborhood based coalition formed by two major participants, a neighborhood association formed by white and older neighbors and a school based parents association formed by younger Latino neighbors. Differences in their communication and organizational sales emerged after an external agency brought them together to form a substance abuse prevention coalition. This paper explores emerging themes as two different communities attempt to organize around shared community concerns.

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[Haworth co-indexing entry note]: "Latinos Participating in Multiethnic Coalitions to Prevent Substance Abuse: A Case Study." Marsiglia, Flavio Francisco, and John Michael Daley. Co-published simultaneously in *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* (The Haworth Social Work Practice Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc.) Vol. 5, No. 3/4, 2002, pp. 97-121; and: *Latino/Hispanic Liaisons and Visions for Human Behavior in the Social Environment* (ed: José B. Torres, and Felix G. Rivera) The Haworth Social Work Practice Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc., 2002, pp. 97-121. Single or multiple copies of this article are available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service [1-800-HAWORTH, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (EST). E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com].

Challenges and guidelines for developing multiethnic urban coalitions are also provided. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <getinfo@haworthpressinc.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> @ 2002 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

KEYWORDS. Coalitions, White/European Americans, Latinos, substance abuse

INTRODUCTION

The city government of a large southwestern community and the local state university were the initiators of a wide partnership to strengthen community based efforts towards substance use prevention among youth. Local projects, Community Initiatives, organized at the neighborhood level were funded and evaluated by the partnership. This article documents the process of forming a Community Initiative (CI) that attempted to form a neighborhood based interethnic community coalition.

The proposal for the formation of the neighborhood base CI was developed by a social service agency (i.e., Behavioral Services) with many years of experience in the field of prevention. The agency staff adjusted their regular school based intervention model to the needs of the neighborhood, expanding the model to include a stronger community involvement. The CI design followed an empowerment approach (Wiel, 1996). The strengths of children, their families, and other community residents were seen as resources to be identified, supported and utilized (Saleebey, 1997). The participants' cultures were identified as sources of pride to be enhanced and to be utilized as a resource in the process of developing a community wide prevention program. The intervention aimed at narrowing the gaps between children, their parents, and other community members in order to enhance their communication and allow for an improved community spirit. The underlining hypothesis was that a more unified community based on mutual respect and an interest in the common good of all children would be able to delay, diminish, or eliminate the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) among its youth. These efforts were envisioned to be lead by a multigenerational and multiethnic coalition of community members.

COMMUNITY COALITIONS

The community practice literature has attempted to understand the role coalitions play in community change. Weil (1996) discusses sev-

eral key elements of contemporary models that have their basis in events over the past century such as the Settlement and Charity Organization Society movements at the turn of the century and the civil rights movement and social upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s. The complexities of social problems were recognized and scholars and practitioners acknowledged that broader strategies would be necessary to resolve such issues. Direct organizing for social justice issues, social action, and advocacy planning were seen as ways to empower people (Wiel, 1996). Weil goes onto identify coalitions as one of eight models for community practice that have been influenced by these antecedents.

The community practice literature often addresses coalitions' abilities to promote a cause or to improve or protect public sector organizations and programs. Caplow (1968, p.165) defines a coalition as a combination of two or more actors who adopt a common strategy in contention with other actors in the same system. Mizrahi and Rosenthal identify coalitions as a group of diverse organizational representatives who join forces to influence external institutions on one or more issues affecting their constituencies while maintaining their own autonomy (1993, p. 14). Wiel (1996, p. 55) maintains that the purpose of coalitions is to build a multiorganizational power base large enough to influence social program direction and/or effectively demand resources for the purpose of responding to the common interests of the coalition.

Several authors describe coalitions as a way to improve or protect public sector organizations and programs. Weisner (1983) sees the formation of coalitions as a protective measure in response to fiscal uncertainty and waning public support. He contends that people join coalitions to advance their cause or maximize personal or organizational benefits and cites a variety of authors such as Riker (1962), Gamson (1961), Adrian and Press (1968) and Hill (1973) who have developed cost-benefit and exchange based theories of coalition behavior. Coalitions may increase the ability of different groups to access needed resources while avoiding a divide and conquer attitude generated by competition for scarce resources. Roberts-DeGennaro (1997, p. 92) believes that as resources become more difficult to obtain, coalitions can exert more power and influence and mobilize more resources than a single organization. Butterfoss, Goodman, and Wandersman (1993) describe seven ways in which coalitions are important: (1) enable organizations, to become involved in new and broader issues without sole responsibility for managing the issues, (2) demonstrate and develop widespread public support, (3) maximize the power of individuals and groups through joint action, (4) minimize duplication of effort and services,

(5) mobilize talents, resources and approaches to influence an issue more than any single organization could, (6) provide an avenue for recruiting participants from diverse constituencies, and (7) exploit new resources in changing situations.

Boissevain (1974) identifies five characteristics of coalitions that distinguish them from more structured organizations: (1) they are temporary, (2) they have both core and peripheral members, (3) they are formed for a limited purpose, (4) they imply the joint use of resources, and (5) resources are attached to each member and may be withdrawn at any time. In addition, Feighery and Rogers (1989) categorize coalitions based on type of membership. *Grassroots coalitions* are composed of volunteers that are brought together in times of crisis. Professional coalitions are formed by employees of organizations at times of crisis or to address ongoing issues to increase their power and influence. *Community based coalitions* bring together grassroots leaders and professionals to influence long-term health and welfare concerns.

Forming Coalitions Within Diverse Ethnic Communities

In recent years a variety of factors are making the need for multiethnic coalitions particularly salient. Dfaz-Veizades and Chang (1996) note the increase in interethnic conflict around the world. A large volume of work has focused on racial and ethnic issues related to the Los Angeles riots in 1992 (Yu and Chang, 1995). Calderon (1995) reviews a variety of topics such as Black-Latino political conflict, competition for scarce resources between ethnic groups, and conflict between immigrant and resident populations that are also garnering more attention. In the field of education, school populations are becoming more diverse and groups that were once considered minorities are becoming the majorities and demanding democratization in curriculum and course offerings (McCarthy, 1994). Nationalistic interests and the significance of ethnic group membership also appear to be contributing to inter and intra racial and ethnic group tensions (Brosio, 1997 Dfaz-Veizades and Chang, 1996; Kamasaki and Yzaguirre, 1991; Soto-Ortega, 1970). Oliver and Grant (1995) discuss the lack of common interests and a rise in competition among groups on issues such as jobs, education, housing, health care, crime, and the role of government. They also note a decline in the role played by mediating institutions such as churches, unions, and political parties in addressing community issues.

Coalitions may make an important contribution in addressing and mediating these issues and conflicts. As Dfaz-Veizades and Chang

write, the creation of cross-cultural alliances and coalitions may very well be an important step in decreasing the level of cultural and ideological fragmentation which characterizes many urban centers around the globe (1996, p. 681). Brosio (1997, p. 2) argues that such fragmentation and culturalist focus hide the real issues such as power, privilege, access, and wealth and that coalitions are a way to organize across group lines to address these inequalities. While differences in multiethnic and racial communities are important, coalitions can provide a mechanism to build action around common interest on issues such as employment, income, housing, and medical care (Dymally, 1970; Shingles, 1991). Oliver and Grant (1995) recognize that at the macro level, these differences may be impossible to reconcile. They suggest that brief and issue oriented multiethnic coalitions developing at the neighborhood level may be able to surmount these differences around smaller, more specific issues. Such coalitions are necessary to enhance the chances of less influential groups becoming incorporated in a locality dominant coalition. One strategy available to less powerful ethnic groups is to seek partnership with other groups (Browning, Marshall, & Tabb 1995).

Functional Elements of Ethnically Diverse Coalitions

Coalitions addressing a variety of social and health problems are becoming more common (Mayer et al., 1998) and the literature has begun to identify variables associated with effective coalition functioning. Butterfoss, Goodman, and Wandersman (1996) found leadership roles, staff-committee relations, organizational climate, decision-making influence, and community linkages to be associated with coalition member participation and satisfaction. Interestingly, these independent variables did not relate to the quality of the coalition's plan or the primary outcome for coalition activities. Kumpfer, Turner, Hopkins, and Librett (1993) identified an empowering style of leadership as contributing to member satisfaction, perceptions of team efficacy, and ultimately, team effectiveness. A case study of two health promotion coalitions found coalition effectiveness to be related to a number of factors. Included among these factors are: a grassroots versus a bureaucratic source of vision for the coalition; higher levels of staff time devoted to coalition activities and a less prominent role for staff in carrying out coalition activities; frequent and productive communication among staff and members, high levels of cohesiveness; complexity of coalition structure during the intervention phase; and training and technical assistance (Kumpfer, Turner, Hopkins, and Librett, 1993).

While the theoretical and empirical literature on multiethnic coalition building is limited, many explanations for coalition formation rely on the self-interest of individuals and groups and on the realization that cooperation can maximize benefits (Regalado, 1995). Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) present four requirements for coalitions: (1) the coalition must recognize the self interest of its constituent parties, (2) there must be a belief that each party in the coalition stands to benefit, (3) there must be an acceptance that each party has its own base of power and decision making, and (4) there must be agreement that the coalition must deal with specific and identifiable goals and issues. Shared views and ideologies have also been advanced as a prerequisite for alliance: development (Himmelman, 1991; Sonenshein, 1993). Oliver and Grant (1995) hypothesize that in addition to common interests, there must also be parity in group size, economic status, and social resources. Several authors suggest that divisive issues, such as nationalism and identity politics must be addressed before functional coalitions can be developed (Brosio, 1997; Dymally, 1970; Kamasaki and Yzaguirre, 1991; Soto-Ortega, 1970). As Chechoway (1997, p. 25) writes, multicultural change is a process that recognizes the difference between groups while also increasing interaction and cooperation among them, recognizing differences and building bridges at the community level.

Additional studies have identified issues related to nationalist ideology and ethnic solidarity as potentially limiting a coalition's effectiveness (Calderon, 1995; Diaz-Vezades and Chang, 1996). Cultural and class differences within a multiethnic coalition were found to have the potential of creating barriers between its members (Calderon, 1995; Regalado, 1995; Diaz-Viezades and Chang, 1996). Organizational aspects of coalitions such as staffing patterns, resources to accomplish coalition objectives, and a clear statement of the coalition's purposes have been also identified as prerequisites for the formation of a successful coalition (Lichterman, 1995; Regalado, 1995).

This study researched the formation of a neighborhood based multiethnic coalition. The main research question guiding the study was: How did this neighborhood-based coalition deal with diversity in the process of organizing and mobilizing the community towards a common goal? Due to the unique geographic, political, and cultural characteristics of the Southwest, this study aimed at furthering our understanding of multiethnic coalitions in the Mexican U.S. border region. Issues of language, social class, marginality, discrimination, representation, and power sharing were at the core of our research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We approached this study from a developmental perspective, focusing on the relationship between culture and human development. Vygotsky (1979) maintained that humans are active, vigorous participants in their own existence and at each stage of development they acquire the means by which they can competently affect their world and themselves. He spoke of auxiliary stimuli as components of a process experienced by humans for active adaptation. Auxiliary stimuli include the tools of the culture in which individuals were born or lived (practices, beliefs, and traditions), language, and other ingenious and indigenous means produced by the individuals as they communicate and organize.

The use of the developmental approach enhances our understanding of multiethnic group processes and the individuality of the group members. Guided by the principles of the developmental approach, this study explored how people of different cultures naturally organize and communicate and how different styles compete and perhaps complement each other. Paulo Freire (1994) calls these efforts "stepping back." Community members, through praxis, realize that they have some ownership over their lives and that they can together work towards creating a new reality for themselves. Community organizing is seen as a natural stage of development but not as a universal stage, each community may arrive to it from different experiences and through different means. Coalitions are necessary means to reconcile and integrate cultural differences towards achieving a common goal. From a developmental perspective we investigated how a particular inter-ethnic coalition was formed and how they integrated the auxiliary stimuli existing within each ethnic community.

METHODS

Intensive, semi-structured interviews were conducted by the first author, with a sample of twelve key members of the coalitions, at various locations, during the Spring of April 1997. The interviewees included the social service agency administrators (both Latinas) and the school principal (Latino); the project's two staff members (one African American/Latina and the other white/bilingual male); one school teacher (Latino); two members of the neighborhood association (both European American females), and four members of the parents' organization

(three Latinas and one Latino). Interview guides developed by the university based research team were used in gathering information regarding the perceptions of the key participants. Purposive sampling was used to identify an initial set of expert informants representing the partner organizations and the Community Initiative staff. Informants were selected based on their higher levels of participation and corresponding knowledge about the coalition. These expert informants (Dexter, 1970) were interviewed with the purpose of assessing the progress made during the first year of the Community Initiative. Informal interviews and participant observations were conducted with students and other community members of the project sponsored activities.

The participants' responses were recorded verbatim, by hand, in the language used by each interviewee. Half of the interviewees responded in English, while the others responded in Spanish. All data were later transcribed electronically. In addition, the Spanish language responses were translated into English to allow for comparison and analysis. The translation process sought to preserve the essence of the respondents' messages avoiding literal translation in cases that such procedure would have resulted in a loss of meaning.

The data gathered through the interviews were analyzed by looking for patterns to compare, contrast, and sort pieces of information into categories until a discernible thematic attitude, opinion, or behavior became identifiable. Once patterns emerged, they constituted a coding scheme for the data to be compared to the guiding theoretical model. Triangulation of data from various sources was the main tool used for clarification and verification of contradictory information and testing for validity.

FINDINGS

The Neighborhood and the Partners

The *Los Fresnos* neighborhood has experienced demographic shifts from older established white middle class families to predominantly younger Mexican and Mexican American families of generally lower socioeconomic status. All census tracts within the Los Fresnos school attendance area show a poverty rate of at least 51% (U.S. Census Bureau, 1996). Based on family income level, eighty-five percent of the students in the district qualify for the national school lunch program (Arizona Department of Education, 1998). Since 1990, the school en-

rollment has grown by 42% and available anecdotal data predicts a continuation of this trend in the future. This growth mirrors, an important ethnic and language shift. Forty percent of the district's students have been identified as limited English proficient. Eighty-one percent of the students are Latino, ten percent White, six percent are African American, two percent are American Indian, and one percent are Asian American. In addition, the families tend to have a high mobility rate. Older residents are predominantly white and English monolingual, whereas, the younger residents are primarily Latino and bilingual or Spanish monolingual.

The *Los Fresnos* neighborhood can be characterized as a community in transition. This condition provided an ideal opportunity for community development. As the CI began, there were multiple organizations and groups attempting to respond to various community needs in a fragmented and isolated fashion. Single need efforts were lead by particular ethnic and age groups. For example, the parents' organization was serving the needs of children and parents at school but only Latino parents participated. On the other hand, only older European American residents participated in the neighborhood association. Children and youth issues were not part of the neighborhood association agenda and neighborhood issues such as declining property values and safety were not addressed by the parents association. Interrelated issues between the two groups were treated as unrelated. An "us" vs. "them" mentality was blocking unified efforts to deal with local issues of violence, use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) and trafficking, gang activity, and poverty. Neighborhood activists described the difficulties they encountered in the past attempting to mobilize the different sectors of the community toward finding common strategies to meet these needs.

Los Fresnos Community Initiative (CI) as Proposed

The CI sought to mobilize the residents toward identifying local priorities and implementing interventions to strengthen the community and reduce the use of ATOD. In keeping with the mission of the city-wide partnership, the primary purpose of the CI was to assist the *Los Fresnos* residents build a safe and healthy neighborhood. There were three specific objectives established at the outset of the project: (1) To decrease ATOD consumption in the community (2) To strengthen partnerships between neighborhood organizations the city, the school, local businesses, families and youth in order to decrease risk factors while increasing protective factors in the community; (3) To revitalize and ren-

ovate the community by engaging the youth in community service learning projects and making intergenerational connections so that youth can work with elders on community projects.

The CI sought to strengthen families and communities as nurturing environments in which children and youth can live drug free lives. The project design was based on strength (Saleebey, 1997) and resiliency (Smith & Carlson, 1997) models. The strengths of the children and their families were seen as resources to supported and utilized in the community organization effort. The Latino culture of the youth and their families was identified as a source of pride to be enhanced and utilized as part of the ATOD prevention work. No evidence was found in any of the CI records about integrating the culture of the older residents involved in the neighborhood association.

Los Fresnos CI was a coalition of four stakeholders (i.e., interest groups). The first partner was Behavioral Services, a social service agency providing technical support (including hiring, training and supervising CI staff, project administration, resource development, fiscal and personnel management) and community capacity building. The second partner was Los Fresnos Neighborhood Association (LFNA), a five-year-old neighborhood based organization. The members of LFNA were European American, English monolingual, long term residents in the neighborhood, homeowners, mostly retired and elderly. Many had moved to Los Fresnos as young families and raised their own children in the neighborhood over a span of three decades. They had traditionally assisted the city in identifying neighborhood issues, recruiting new members, and participated in workshops on neighborhood issues organized by the city. The third partner was Parent, Students, and Teachers Together/Padres, Estudiantes, y Maestros Juntos (PEMJ), a newly created school based organization composed of Latino parents. Its main purpose was to mobilize parents to better serve the needs of their children. PEMJ sought to increase parent participation at school and make the school a more inviting place for these parents. The final partner was Los Frescos Intermediate School. The school was to be the site for many project activities. The parent organization and the CI staff (Community Mobilizer and a Prevention Specialist) were housed at the school.

As the project was being planned, Behavioral Services, the school districts' central staff and the neighborhood association played active roles. The school principal and the embryonic parents association were not involved. The host school principal supervised the parent Specialist who staffed the parents group and had a good working relationship with

the neighborhood association leaders. The principal might have played an important role as mediator among partners as the project was implemented. However, staff of behavioral services and the school district central office excluded the principal because as the social service agency representative said "he would have not understood." Key staff of the school district and the social service agency had a good working relationship and as a staff member said, "spoke the same language." Both staffs had good intentions but by playing a broker role did not allow a stronger horizontal communication to emerge between the two key coalition partners: the neighborhood association and the parents association.

Project staff was to focus their efforts on community capacity building. The neighborhood association, through its participation in the project, was expected to become connected to other organizations (including the parents association) and enhance its community organizing and advocacy capacity. It was also expected that the coalition would provide opportunities for individuals, groups and institutions to come together and, often for the first time, communicate about shared concerns such as substance abuse, drug trafficking, domestic violence, and other safety issues. Once this communication structure was in place and people began to dialogue and work together on common needs, it was expected that community conditions would improve.

You Are Invited to Our Table.... The First Year of the Community Initiative

Two elderly sisters were the facto leaders of the neighborhood association. They were respectively the association's president and secretary since the association's inception in 1994. The president explains how the Community Initiative evolved.

We (the neighborhood association) started the project. We went to Behavioral Services and asked them to write the proposal. They wrote it so it would be accepted. We put out what we wanted. No problems ... went well and smooth, an easy process.

The leaders of the neighborhood association perceived their participation level as high in the planning process of the community initiative. They were active in neighborhood affairs in general with a particular interest in safety issues. The CI Community Mobilizer said: "The neighborhood association leaders are involved in everything." However, one

year later they viewed their participation level in the CI as low. The president described the changes.

We are not very involved in the CI any more. Illness has something to do with it. The president of the parents organization is the current leader of the CI. If I am still the president of the neighborhood association, next time [we do](#) something like this I will be more up front. If I do it alone, I'll take the credit.

The secretary of the neighborhood association spoke with some resentment about the credit she perceived the president of the parents' organization was getting for the Community Initiative work. She further explained.

I wanted a survey to be done in order for us to get to know each other better. It never happened. We encouraged the project Community Mobilizer to get information from the principal regarding drug use by the students but he did not think it would work.

The neighborhood association leaders wanted data as a means to get to know the students and their parents. Students were administered a pre- and post-test survey, by the Prevention Specialist. The survey, focused on assessing the student's knowledge, attitudes, and behavior toward ATOD, was conducted on two occasions during the school year. The information was not shared with neighborhood association leaders because there was some fear that members of the neighborhood association would have used the information to feed stereotypical views of the youth and their substance use behavior. Ironically, an examination of the project outcome data shows low levels of self-reported ATOD use.

Neighborhood association leaders representing the neighborhood association, described themselves as founders of the coalition, and as having a messianic type of role in the community. Some of the narratives shared with the researchers spoke of a good neighborhood that started to change—for the worst as "different people" started to move in. When asked who these different people were, the neighborhood association leaders responded: "Mexicans."

The neighborhood association members perceived themselves as instruments of acculturation. They invited the members of the parents association to attend their monthly meetings. The CI did not have a separate advisory board. The initial plan was for the parents to be inte-

grated into the neighborhood association's structure. The neighborhood association meetings were conducted in English, following *Roberts' Rules of Order*, with agendas developed by the neighborhood association leaders, without consulting the members of the parent association. Spanish translation services were not provided. Parents attended two neighborhood association monthly meetings. Seventy-five members of the parents' organization attended the first meeting while the second meeting was attended by sixty-four. Approximately twelve (12) members of the neighborhood association participated in each of these meetings. The joint meetings were stopped after those two attempts. The project Community Mobilizer, who staffed these meetings, explained some of the reasons why the joint meetings were stopped.

The cultural issues are too big to bring people together. Anglos felt lost among too many Mexicans. Traditional (meeting) facilitation methods [Roberts' rules] did not work. I needed to put on a show to bring people together. We needed to let it go. I felt I was juggling too many things. We got negative feedback from the two groups of participants. Language was an issue. Spanish speaking people wanted simultaneous translation services, English monolingual members said things like we are in America, they need to speak English here.

Cultural and language barriers, misunderstandings, and stereotyping became evident as soon as the parents group and the neighborhood association members started to interact. One of the social service agency representatives described how she perceived the first interactions between the partners:

At the first meeting I was turned off by the lack of awareness about cultural diversity. Offensive terms and phrases were used such as: "Those people; they do drugs; illegals," and a lot of blaming came out. The second meeting was more positive. A more positive attitude evolved from the blaming to trying to do more. An additional problem was lack of experience.

These differences resulted in a strategic change in the way project staff would work with the two community partners. The social service agency administrators decided to have staff work separately with the neighborhood association and the parents association, rather than continue to bring them together.

The project Community Mobilizer and the social service agency administrators reported that, at the beginning of the implementation of the project with the parents' organization, the community's natural (culturally grounded) ways of organizing were not recognized. *Personalism* (Marsiglia & Zorita, 1996) was as an important cultural norm that recognizes and values the total person. In some ways this corresponds to the concept of primary group dynamics. Members of the parents association felt lost in the impersonal and rigidly structured meetings organized by the neighborhood association. Once this was recognized, more culturally appropriate, natural ways of organizing were integrated and an increase in effectiveness was noticed. For example, meetings for parents were held at family homes where food was shared and time for informal socializing was part of the meeting process. Topics identified for discussion by the parents included substance abuse, family violence, neighborhood safety, school absenteeism, homework, and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for parents.

The Community Mobilizer was fluent in Spanish and had a strong affinity to the Latino culture. He and the administrators of Behavioral Services naturally gravitated towards the parents association. Suddenly, the parents' organization became the focal point of the project. The leaders of the neighborhood association continued to play their traditional role of identifying community needs and effectively accessing city resources but they operated in isolation from the school-based activities. The neighborhood association's secretary explained.

All the seniors involved say they want to remain involved, but there is not much action. They need to find a common denominator. When the chairperson tells them it involves working with children, the seniors become defensive, saying they have already raised their own children.

One of the Behavioral Services administrators added her perception of the neighborhood association members' relationship to the project Community Mobilizer.

He is seen as the Messiah by the neighborhood association. They think that he should come in and fix things. They have unrealistic expectations and they are too dependent on him and the city. They have no concept of empowerment.

Behavioral Services representatives identified some of their own mistakes as the coalition was set up.

Our strategies were not right. Trying to bring both groups together, forcing it too soon. Now they are going at their own pace. The project Community Mobilizer is working with them separately. Groups were resistant to joining together because of different ideas and points of view. LFNA was feeling outnumbered by the Spanish speaking community. A fear of being taken over, losing power. There is an inability to extending themselves. In the joint meetings there were 100 Hispanics and 10 Anglos.

The premature attempts to bring the community partners together were in part externally dictated by the funding proposal. The funding was to be specifically used for developing community coalitions. In an attempt to follow the guidelines of the funding source, the Community Mobilizer attempted to support the creation of a coalition between partners that were not ready and in some cases were unwilling to come together in a collaborative, democratic way. In the case of the parents' association, its members were going through the group formation phase of development, naturally looking inward. The neighborhood association was already formed and its members did not want to lose their hegemony over the neighborhood affairs. Issues of difference that were latent were brought to the surface by the attempted coalition without adequately preparing the participants before their (forced) encounters. The frustrations of both groups with quality of life issues boiled over during the joint activities. Issues of power, communication and trust joined with frustration about property values and change of ethnic composition and from the parents' perspectives problems encountered as recent immigrants were not conducive to building a coalition.

Yet modest intergroup collaboration was possible and did occur. Three elderly male members of the neighborhood association participated in a bicycle rehabilitation project sponsored by the parents association. They met most Saturdays of one semester with many other Latino fathers and their children and fixed dozens of bicycles. Hands on activities appeared to have been more effective conduits for collaboration than formal meetings. The officers of the neighborhood association were informed about the progress made through the participating members and through the Community Initiative staff and had formed their own opinions about the project. The neighborhood association explained:

We have seen an improvement in the children's attitudes and the way they dress and even the relations between the young and the old have made a change for the better.

Apart from the results of efforts to bring the parents association and the neighborhood association together, there was some evaluation evidence to suggest that the Community Initiative was having a positive impact in the children and their families. The CI strengthened the parents organization, which has planned and implemented activities of significance to the community such as recreational and sport activities for children and youth, parent seminars about topics of interest, and cultural and arts activities. Many housewives were involved in the activities. Through the parent association parents became involved at the school and became more familiar with their children's teachers. But the CI has not brought together the different groups that it was set up to engage in the coalition.

"Thank you, but I prefer to stay en mi casa . . . " Lessons Learned.

After the first two joint meetings, the members of the parents' Association stayed away from the CI meeting called, by the neighborhood association and used their time and resources to organize themselves. They were in their initial stages of their own development and they were not able to confront or negotiate the obstacles they encountered in the coalition meetings. They needed more time as a group before attempting to form a coalition: The president of the parents association explained the reasons why their organization was needed.

Por la necesidad de la escuela de envolver a la comunidad. Porque los padres no vienen a la escuela. Para apoyar a las families. Unidos podemos evitar muchas de estas cosas que estan pasando. (Due to the need the school has to involve the parents. Because the parents do not come to school. To support the families. United we can prevent many of these things that are happening [e.g., drug use])

Other parents referred to the president as their leader and reaffirmed her definitions and comments. They constituted a very active group under her leadership. They made home visits as the main recruitment tool and held most meetings at families' homes. When asked how they were able to recruit over 150 members she answered:

A traves del con facto humano. Conozco a todo el mundo. Los padres quieren participar cuando les decimos que es para los niflos y que el proyecto es anti-drogas. (Through human contact. I know everybody. Parents want to join us when they learn that this is about children and it is a drug prevention project).

One of the most important outcomes of the CI has been the strengthening of the parent association. The CI through its Community Mobilizer has effectively supported the formation and development of the parents organization. The president praised the organizer by saying: *El nos ha abierto las puertas del conocimiento.* (He has opened the doors to knowledge.) Specifically the Community Mobilizer introduced the parents to available community resources, provided training on group facilitation, planning and organizing. He also assisted them in evaluating their activities and programs and deciding about their future course of action.

The parents have organized themselves while also planning and implementing important activities that benefited the whole community. They did not have a formal general monthly meeting. They met at families' homes and in smaller groups. Their influence was limited to the school and the neighborhood affairs such as "neighborhood watch" have been left to the neighborhood association. The president of the parents association commented:

Los hemos invitado a muestras reuniones y les traducimos pero ellos no vienen. Nosotros vamos a las reuniones de ellos pero no tomamos parte en las decisiones. Nuestra prioridad es los niflos. Nosotros conectamos la casa y la escuela. (We have invited them (the members of the neighborhood association) to our meeting and we offered translating for them, but they do not come. We go to their meetings but we do not take part in the decision making process. Our priority are the children. We connect home and school.)

Issues of cultural and language differences continued to block the formation of the coalition. The parent association offered English translation the neighborhood association members if they agreed to attend their meetings. The language used by both groups continued to describe and emphasize their own separate turfs, not a neutral overarching coalition.

The parents association's leadership evolved since the inception of the project and has gained confidence and effectiveness in its role. The

external evaluation of this CI found that the program has had a noticeable impact on the participating children and the community. Specifically, both the children and their parents are taking the initiative in planning and implementing various activities. For, example, the project Community Mobilizer shared the following vignette: "One girl said that once her mother became involved in the school, her grades went up because it made her see how much her mother cared about her." One of the teachers observed:

The children identify with the activities organized by the parents' organization and they like to belong. The parents are very determined and committed to the success of the program. The program delivery staff are very effective. Members of the *parents' group* have shown leadership skills. There is trust between the participants, they are eager to help each other, and they get along well. Challenges, however, remain for the parents' organization. The Community Mobilizer noted:

The active people are too involved. The president is trying to delegate authority because it is a new program and it is very labor intensive. Her leadership style makes it difficult to let go and delegate.

The president was exercising a traditional charismatic leadership style while a secondary leadership had not yet emerged. Parents were responding to her because she was a respected member of the community and because she had demonstrated commitment and care for their families. Personal and organizational efforts were directed inwards. The parents' organization needed its energy to build its own structure and deliver on its many projects rather than to open up and interact with a very different organization. The indigenous leadership structure was in need of support from the CI staff and it needed to be challenged toward a more democratic/participatory style and a broader leadership base. These challenges were typical of a new organization embedded in a traditional culture.

In summary, the CI had brought momentum and needed technical support primarily to the parent association and to a lesser degree to the neighborhood association. Students had benefited from its several programs and adults were gaining a renewed sense of pride and commitment toward their community. The school based parents organization was playing a key role in mobilizing the community. On the other hand, the neighborhood association was experiencing a sense of nostalgia for

a neighborhood they remembered with pride. Suddenly, through their participation in the CI, they found themselves baring "their table" with the new neighbors. The CI provided some limited opportunities for the two main partners to come together and overcome some of the barriers they were facing. The attempts to bring these two groups together into a community coalition did not succeed. The project staff was working separately with the two main partners, addressing their own needs according to their different stages of group development and mission. The CI assisted the neighborhood association to become familiar with additional community resources and to extend their neighborhood based network.

DISCUSSION

Although the CI had been established primarily as a coalition between the neighborhood association and the parents' organization, neither community-based organization was ready to venture into the coalition. The parents' organization was numerically large and vibrant while the neighborhood association was numerically small and stagnant. Historically, the neighborhood association had represented Los *Fresnos* in city hall. But they did not represent the Latino neighbors, who were the majority of the current residents. There was a clash of cultures, each organization wanting to operate in a manner that felt right and comfortable. The leaders of both groups were unable and in some cases unwilling to work with each other. Because of these differences it is difficult to identify the CI as a coalition did its traditional sense (Caplow, 1968).

The partners were not able to exert more power and influence and mobilize more resources together than separately (DeGennaro, 1997). The CI's attempt to form a grassroots coalition (Feighery & Rogers, 1989) started before the potential coalition members were ready to share a common table. In part due to the different stages of development of the two organizations, the premature encounters between the groups, instead of decreasing cultural and ideological distance or fragmentation (Diaz-Veizades & Chang, 1996) gave each group ammunition to remain separate. The neighborhood association was not ready to share its power, privilege and access (Brosio, 1997) and the members of the parents organization were too busy building their group to go to places where they were not welcome. Neither organization had leaders who recognized the potential benefits of a coalition to their group. The

neighborhood association could have benefited from the numbers and strength of the parents group and the parents could have benefited from the experience and connections to resources the neighborhood association had.

The organizational climate of each partner and the relations of each partner with the staff of the CI were positive but the groups linkages with each other were problematic (Butterfoss, Goodman & Wandersman, 1996). The two community based partners lacked a sense of common interests, were very different in size, had different economic status, differences in language use, different cultural backgrounds and organizational styles, and had different social and political resources. All these differences had been identified in the coalition literature as working against the development of effective coalitions (e.g., Oliver & Grant, 1995; Sonenshein, 1993; Himmelman, 1991).

This case study suggests ways in which community practice professionals might play a role in supporting ethnic minority communities in their participation in coalitions to prevent substance abuse. Minority organizations often need support as they attempt to catch up with years of discrimination, lack of representation, and exclusion from their communities. The Community Mobilizer in this case study had the complex task of bringing two very different main community groups together. He was hired after the grant proposal was written and after the externally based officials had initiated preliminary contacts between the partners. Probably the coalition meetings were started before the partners were ready to share a common table.

Mixed messages were given to the neighborhood association members about their role as gate keepers and leaders. They thought that the Community Initiative was exclusively their project and probably expected the parents to join their group. As the parents organization grew and increased its influence over the limited resources (such as the time of the Community Mobilizer), the neighborhood association felt marginalized.

We speculate that some of the prejudice and lack of communication across ethnic lines could have been lowered if the CI would have followed a different development plan, allowing each partner to develop its own internal strength before coming together with other partners (Vygotsky, 1974). As minority communities become the majority in many neighborhoods around the nation, they need to be represented as valued members in the new coalitions or alliances of minority groups. Should this not be realized, minority groups will be less and less willing to accept exclusionary organizations that do not represent nor serve their needs (Daley & Wong, 1994), or accept the expression of their

own auxiliary stimuli (Vygotsky, 1979). Bringing partners together prematurely may only accentuate old stereotypes and intergroup animosity. The proposed coalition reflected the fact that the community had changed. The Latino families were not only numerically superior but through their parents organization demonstrated organizational strength. At the time we concluded our data gathering efforts the two organizations have discontinued their relationship. The parents' organization continues to be strong and has developed a coalition with the school teachers and principal. All the teachers involved in the coalition are white, demonstrating that when the conditions are right multiethnic coalitions are possible. The neighborhood association continues to hold its monthly meeting, often with only a hand full of its members in attendance. They continue to consider activities that may lead them to rebuild the neighborhood to its perceived former glory ... those good old days when they and the neighborhood were perceived to have been young, active, and healthy. The idea of starting a new ethnically diverse coalition to improve community conditions continues to be in the minds of some neighbors.

Lessons Learned

As we reflect on the experiences of participants with this Community Initiative, several lessons might be drawn. First, as Daley (1998) has observed, antecedent conditions and contextual factors are significant factors in shaping the development of any community change episode. In the CI a number of antecedent conditions significantly influenced the development of the coalition. The two community partners lacked a history of collaborative work. Further, each had its own reasons for lacking trust in the other. The neighborhood association saw itself as losing ground in its efforts to return the community to its former glory and tended to blame the newcomers for the neighborhood's decline. The parents group understood their status as unwelcome newcomers and experienced the many indignities minority and recent immigrant groups experience as they settle in established neighborhoods.

Second, two key outside/external institutions (Behavioral Services and the school district's central staff), with the best of intentions for the CI excluded a key player, the local school principal, from the project planning and early implementation activities. The principal had trusting relationships with both partners and might have played a mediating role in bringing the groups together. At a minimum the principal might have

alerted CI planners and staff of the need to move slowly in forming the coalition.

Third, CI planners and implementing staff seemed either unaware or unconcerned about the antecedent and contextual factors including the role of ethnicity, language and social class differentials between the two community partners. In retrospect, the influence of these factors was monumental, yet ignored in the planning and early intervention activities. Without specific efforts to ensure a smooth initiation of the coalition relationships of these groups, the clashes that occurred were predictable. In our opinion, these difficulties were largely avoidable. Bringing two such different groups into a coalition requires specific community practice and group facilitation skills and careful preparation. In the CI for example, preparations might have included working with the leaders of each group independently to ensure that they understood the benefits and costs of involvement. Then preparation might have brought the leaders of the two groups together in a small informal setting to develop relationships and explore the implications of involvement in the coalition. These activities might have raised the level of trust and intergroup competence. We understand that this is a long and challenging process to address intergroup dynamics, yet we find no evidence that these issues were addressed prior to introducing the unprepared partners at large public meetings. We cannot explain why the professionals who planned and staffed the CI did not anticipate the clashes that were noted when the community partners met in the public meetings.

Fourth, the need to produce a specific outcome, the community coalition, may have influenced CI planners and staff to move too rapidly. The CI was part of a larger, city-wide prevention program. This larger program created CIs in response to expressed dissatisfaction from funding sources, evaluators, and community members with the slow pace in which the program was being implemented. This institutional need to show results quickly might have shaped the work of CI planners and staff-forcing community partners into a coalition before they were ready. Does the experience of this CI suggest that intergroup coalitions are not feasible, or even desirable? We think not. However, this case study does highlight the challenges involved with forming effective interethnic coalitions. As with much of professional practice, the development of intergroup coalitions requires practitioner sensitivity to local conditions and dynamics, facilitation skills in intergroup work, commitment to nurturing leadership and persistence. Despite its success, the at-

tempt to develop a coalition of diverse groups presented in this article, is remembered by some community members as one failed attempt that will hopefully pave the road for an inclusive and effective future coalition.

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