

The Construction and Impact of Power in Cross-Sector Partnerships: An Interpretive  
Phenomenological Study

Kimberly Allyn Walker

ORCID Scholar ID #0000-0003-1070-3765

A Dissertation

Submitted to the PhD in Leadership and Change Program of Antioch University  
in partial fulfillment for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

May 2020

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of PhD in Leadership and Change, Graduate School of Leadership and Change, Antioch University.

Dissertation Committee

- Lize (A. E.) Booysen, DBL, Committee Chair
- Donna Ladkin, PhD, Committee Member
- Kirk Emerson, PhD, Committee Member

Copyright 2020 Kimberly Allyn Walker

All rights reserved

## **Acknowledgments**

Completing this dissertation is the proudest moment of my life, and one in which I am acutely aware how much support was needed to get me here. I begin this dissertation with lots of gratitude.

To C16—Thanks for your friendship. What an incredible group to be a part of: our experiences together challenged and empowered me. Thank you for all the personal growth that you supported. Special recognition to Ashley Blackburn, Mike Bills, and Lauren Bullock, who have been my closest companions during this process. Mike, thanks for being a research buddy as well!

To my interviewees—Thank you for sharing your stories with someone who was a total stranger. I learned so much from you, have profound respect for the difficult and amazing work that you do, and really could not have done this without you!

To Lize—Thank you for being an advisor, and then a dissertation chair, who had to be part coach, part mentor, and part guide to me at every stage of my PhD journey. Your steady support throughout the program was exactly the support I needed to reach my goals. My dissertation could not have been in better hands. I've never seen someone provide high-level and detailed feedback so quickly with such ease. I stand in awe of your scholarship and am incredibly grateful for all you've done for me.

To Donna—Thank you for the massive amount of knowledge you've imparted throughout this process. I've really enjoyed our time working together. I've grown tremendously as a phenomenologist and an academic because of you, and truly discovered a new way of seeing and understanding the world. Every interaction with you during this process made me a sharper thinker. What a gift.

To Kirk—Thank you for your collaborative governance program, which hopefully will continue to generate folks invested in cross-sector problems to solve the world, as well as bringing your expert eye to my research. I've been honored to have your thought partnership and hope to follow in your footsteps as an impressive scholar-practitioner.

To Corrie—Thanks for being my constant cheerleader throughout this journey. I was so lucky to have you first as a professor and then as a mentor and friend. I know I'm not alone in having benefited from your wisdom and care.

To Norm—Thanks for unknowingly helping lead me toward this path and for teaching me how to have an impact on an enormous social issue. I use what I learned working with you every day and am grateful for your friendship.

To my grandmothers Tommie Lean Walker and Jean Patton, two of the strongest women I know—I hope I've made you proud.

To the friends and coworkers who kept me going through this process, encouraged me, and checked in: thank you for your unwavering support and your friendship before, during, and (hopefully) after my PhD!

To Jones—Thanks for being my couch or floor buddy for many a writing session. You're a good boy.

To my parents, Judy and Harry (the other Drs. Walker) —I owe all of this to you. Thank you for encouraging my education and modeling what hard work and service mean. I spend every day of my life benefiting from how I was raised. I wouldn't be here without your unconditional love and support, and I am fully aware of that.

And finally, to Markus, who had to endure and sacrifice more than anyone during this process: while doing this PhD is one of the best decisions I've ever made, marrying you is still

the very best one. As a good friend once told me, not everyone could handle being married to me. Congrats on pulling it off! And thank you for your patience and your support. I love you. Here's to post-grad life.

## **Abstract**

In the United States, cross-sector partnerships, a form of collaboration, are becoming increasingly common in practice (Gray & Purdy, 2018). However, questions remain regarding the effectiveness of these partnerships and if the many challenges of using them can be overcome. In particular, the intersection of cross-sector partnerships and power, which can deeply impact these partnerships, needs more attention. This study used interpretive phenomenology to understand, from the participant perspective, (a) the experience and construction of power, (b) the impact of power on participants, and (c) how power dynamics in these initiatives compare to dynamics in organizations. Seventeen participants from four homelessness-focused Collective Impact (CI) initiatives, a popular cross-sector partnership model, were interviewed about their experiences. In addition, I reviewed key documents about each initiative. Data was interpreted using a variety of theoretical lenses, including critical theory, as well as my own work experience in this area, and carefully analyzed through iterative re-engagement, reflexivity, and thematic analysis. The findings revealed that power presented in six different ways: resources, structures and processes, identity, resistance, formal leadership, and framing and communication. When examining the differences between collaborations, differences in these six areas, as well as the identity and ways of operating of the partner who began the partnership, seemed to influence the experience of power. Financial resources were a dominant form of power and provided some partners with disproportionate influence. Dominant partners were also able to stack power across these six areas. The impacts of power dynamics were largely negative. Other significant findings included that some partners did not experience power at all. Critical theory and positive framing may explain this outcome. I call for an expanded CI model with a sixth condition related to power. As part of this sixth condition, I

suggest communities make structural changes, such as, to honor discursive power more effectively, putting consumers in positions of power and rotating facilitation responsibilities.

This dissertation is available in open access at AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive, <http://aura.antioch.edu/> and Ohiolink ETD Center, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>

*Keywords:* leadership, power, power dynamics, cross-sector, collaboration, Collective Impact, absence of power, homelessness, interpretive phenomenology, IPA, interorganizational, critical theory, discursive power, resource power, identity, race, resistance, framing



## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	i
Abstract .....	iv
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Tables .....	xi
List of Figures .....	xii
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Purpose of the Study .....	2
Definitions of Key Terms.....	3
Collective Impact .....	3
Collaboration.....	3
Sector .....	4
Interorganizational or Multi-Stakeholder Partnership .....	4
Cross-Sector Partnership.....	4
Power .....	5
Power Asymmetry .....	5
Study Significance to Practice and the Cross-Sector Field.....	5
Significance for Theory .....	6
Theoretical Frameworks .....	6
Cross-Sector Leadership .....	7
Power .....	8
Critical Theory .....	9
Overview of Research Design .....	10
Scope and Limitations of the Study .....	13
Researcher Positionality.....	14
Outline of the Remaining Chapters.....	15
Chapter II: Literature Review .....	17
Collaboration.....	17
Cross-Sector Partnership Origins and Motivations.....	18
Origins.....	19
Partner Motivations and Initiating Factors .....	19

Characteristics of Cross-Sector Leadership .....	22
Comparison to Other Leadership Theories .....	24
Leadership Roles in Cross-Sector Partnerships .....	25
Leader Responsibilities and Skills .....	26
Leadership Structures and Governance .....	27
Challenges of Cross-Sector Partnerships .....	28
Power and Trust .....	28
Lack of Control or Familiar Power Sources .....	29
Difficulty Defining and Measuring Success .....	29
Lack of Alignment in Purpose, Commitment, or Goals .....	29
Change .....	30
Investment of Time .....	30
New Roles, Skills, and Relationships .....	30
Contextual Factors .....	30
Other Challenges .....	31
Benefits of Cross-Sector Partnerships .....	31
Micro-(individual) Level Benefits .....	31
Meso-(organizational) Level Benefits .....	32
Macro-(community) Level Benefits .....	33
Factors That Influence Success .....	33
Gaps in the Literature .....	34
Collective Impact .....	35
Common Agenda .....	37
Mutually Reinforcing Activities .....	37
Continuous Communication .....	37
Shared Measurement Systems .....	38
Backbone Organizations .....	38
Other Key Processes .....	38
Leadership in CI .....	39
Measures of Success and Outcomes .....	39
Challenges and Criticisms of CI .....	41

Collaborative Efforts to End Homelessness in the United States .....	42
Power and Cross-Sector Partnerships .....	44
Definitions of Power .....	45
Leadership and Power .....	45
Power Asymmetry .....	46
Sources and Presentations of Power in Cross-Sector Partnerships.....	48
Critical Theory and Related Frameworks .....	55
Steven Lukes and Critical Theory.....	57
Michel Foucault .....	58
Experiences of Power .....	59
Synthesis of Power Literature .....	60
Gaps in the Literature.....	61
Conclusion .....	62
Chapter III: Research Method.....	64
Research Philosophy and Approach.....	64
Phenomenology.....	66
Interpretive Phenomenology .....	66
Research Approach Justification.....	67
Research Design.....	69
Research Timeline .....	69
Participants.....	69
Participant Recruitment .....	70
Pilot Study.....	71
Overview of Semi-structured Interviews .....	71
Document Review.....	73
Analysis and Presentation .....	73
Research Design Limitations .....	75
Ethical Protections .....	76
Quality Considerations.....	77
Researcher Positionality.....	78
Conclusion .....	80

Chapter IV: Findings.....	82
Participant Demographics .....	82
Age.....	83
Race.....	83
Partner Type.....	84
Sector .....	85
Analysis Process .....	85
Presentation of the Findings.....	88
Discussion of the Three Case Studies .....	89
Community A Narrative.....	90
Constructions and Experiences of Power in Community A .....	94
Perceived Impact of Power Dynamics in Community A .....	97
Comparison to Power in Home Organizations in Community A .....	97
Summary of Community A.....	98
Community B Narrative.....	98
Constructions and Experiences of Power in Community B.....	101
Identity .....	101
Resources .....	102
Perceived Impact of Power Dynamics in Community B.....	105
Comparison to Power in Home Organizations in Community B .....	105
Summary of Community B.....	106
Community C Narrative.....	106
Constructions and Experiences of Power in Community C.....	108
Identity .....	108
Resources .....	110
Perceived Impact of Power Dynamics in Community C .....	110
Comparison to Power in Home Organizations in Community C .....	110
Summary of Community C.....	111
Conclusion and Integration of the Community Narratives .....	111
Themes from Interviews Across all Three Cases.....	113
Resources .....	114

Integration of Findings of Case Studies and Individual Interviews.....	130
Chapter Summary and Conclusion .....	131
Chapter V: Discussion .....	133
Reflection on Differences Between Communities.....	134
Review of All Themes .....	135
Experiences and Constructions of Power .....	137
Summary of Research Question 1.....	146
Perceived Impact of Power .....	147
Comparison to Home Organization .....	148
Collective Impact and Critical Theory.....	149
Significance of This Study.....	151
Implications for Leadership and Collaborative Theory .....	153
Findings That Align with the Literature .....	153
Findings That Did Not Align with the Literature .....	154
Recommendations for Action .....	155
Study Limitations.....	161
Lack of Definition of Power .....	161
Lack of Diversity in Interview Sample .....	161
Sensitivity of the Topic.....	162
Interview Format.....	163
Limited Responses to Some Questions.....	163
Areas for Future Study.....	164
Closing Reflections on Researcher Experience .....	165
References .....	168
Appendix A: Interview Guide.....	190
Appendix B: IRB Informed Consent Form.....	193
Appendix C: Email to Participants .....	197

## **List of Tables**

Table 4.1 Age Range of Participants .....	83
Table 4.2 Partner Type across Interviewees .....	84
Table 4.3 Sector Type of Interviewees .....	85
Table 4.4 Alignment on Coding.....	87
Table 4.5 Demographics of Each Community.....	90
Table 4.6 Unique Themes and Subthemes Highlighted in the Three Cases.....	113
Table 4.7 Themes and Subthemes Highlighted in All Three Cases .....	114
Table 5.1 Themes and Subthemes in How Power and Power Asymmetries are Experienced, Constructed, and Understood (Research Question 1) .....	136
Table 5.2 Interpreting the Findings Through Critical Theory .....	150

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1.1. Data Analysis Process.....	12
Figure 2.1. Collective Impact Model.....	35
Figure 5.1. Expanded Collective Impact Model.....	155

## Chapter I: Introduction

Current models for addressing intransigent social issues, where single organizations or single economic sectors (e.g., the nonprofit sector) decide on and implement solutions, are not sufficient to solve the challenges societies face (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006; Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Sun & Anderson, 2012). The social problems of the day are often “wicked” (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 160) and complex: “[m]any major public problems or challenges ... can be addressed effectively only if many organizations collaborate” (Crosby & Bryson, 2010, p. 211). Cross-sector partnerships—partnerships between agencies in different sectors (e.g., nonprofits, government, or the private sector)—are one form of collaboration that are increasingly relied upon to address these sorts of problems. Cross-sector partnerships are being implemented in a variety of fields, have “increased dramatically” in practice (Gray & Purdy, 2018, p. 3), and are of great interest to researchers spanning public health, economic development, and international development, among other fields. While research on the impacts on these partnerships is still emerging, some “cases indicate that cooperation across sector differences, power inequalities, and cultural differences can improve the quality of life of poor populations” (Brown & Ashman, 1996, p. 1476).

Studying cross-sector collaborations and providing guidance on how to execute them successfully is quite difficult (Bryson et al., 2006). Leadership in cross-sector partnerships requires a great number of skills. Challenges are plentiful, including having to wait years or decades for progress, lack of alignment among partners, inadequate resources, and issues resulting from unequal power (Cairns & Harris, 2011; Gray & Purdy, 2018; Page, 2010; Pearson, 2014). Difficulties with power can affect learning, communication, and trust (Choi & Robertson, 2013; Lee, 1997; Lotia, 2004; Purdy, 2012; Saetrevik, Ghanoisaber, & Lunde, 2018; Selsky &



Parker, 2004). Even though managing power dynamics is important for partnership success (Brouwer, Hiemstra, van der Vugt, & Walters, 2013), discussions about power in the collaborative literature are lacking (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Some studies have explored the effects of power and power asymmetries on cross-sector partnerships (e.g., Flestea, Curseu, & Fodor, 2017): however, few have focused on the effects of these partnerships on the individuals participating in them (Kolk, van Dolen, & Vock, 2011).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this dissertation is to increase collective understanding of how power is experienced and constructed by individuals working in cross-sector collaborations. Additionally, this dissertation explores how experiences of power in cross-sector environments compare to other settings and the impacts of power on individual participants. While this dissertation discusses the macro- and meso-level forces that individuals engage with (such as organizational and societal context), ultimately it focuses on how these affect the individual, and how the individual makes sense of them. This study also brings a critical theory lens to the study of power dynamics. The research questions for this dissertation were:

- How are power and power asymmetries experienced, constructed, and understood by individual participants in cross-sector partnerships?
- How do individuals perceive the impact of power dynamics on them and their work?
- How does the experience of power in cross-sector partnerships compare to their experience of it in their home organizations?

In line with the principles of interpretive phenomenology, the research method of this study, these questions focus on the experiences of participants in a specific context (cross-sector

partnership work) and do not impose *a priori* theoretical ideas on the phenomena under study (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 47).

## **Definitions of Key Terms**

Below, I define the key terms used throughout this dissertation.

### ***Collective Impact***

Collective Impact (CI) is a specific model of cross-sector partnership that is based on five conditions: shared measurement, continuous communication, a common agenda, a backbone organization that coordinates the partnership's work, and mutually reinforcing activities (Kania & Kramer, 2011). CI was first shared with the public in a *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (SSIR) article in 2011 written by John Kania and Mark Kramer, former Managing Directors at FSG, a social impact consulting firm. Participants in this study are all members of CI initiatives, though those initiatives subscribe to the CI model to varying degrees.

### ***Collaboration***

“Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to the domain” (Wood & Gray, 1991, p. 146). Collaborative partnerships happen for many reasons: they are used to advance a shared vision, to implement a short-term project (Huxham & Vangen, 2005), to scale impact (Pearson, 2014), to resolve conflicts (Gray & Purdy, 2018), and to address social issues (Blok, 2014; Jacklin-Jarvis, 2015). Interorganizational collaboration and cross-sector collaboration are specific types of collaboration, with cross-sector collaboration through CI being the primary focus of this study.

### ***Sector***

Sector refers to different economic sectors or segments within a country's economy. Sectors are typically defined by their profit structures (i.e., nonprofit, for-profit, etc.). The most frequently discussed sectors in this dissertation include the public sector (i.e., government agencies that provide services to the public), the private sector (i.e., privately owned for-profit companies), and the non-profit sector (i.e., charitable or public welfare organizations run primarily for a social purpose). Some of the cross-sector literature also identifies the broader public—community members or people directly affected by an issue—as a sector (Bryson et al., 2006).

### ***Interorganizational or Multi-Stakeholder Partnership***

Interorganizational partnerships are collaborations that involve multiple organizations (which may or may not be in the same sector). The term multi-stakeholder partnership is often used interchangeably with interorganizational partnership, and sometimes interchangeably with the term cross-sector partnership.

### ***Cross-Sector Partnership***

For the purposes of this dissertation, a cross-sector partnership is a collaboration between partners from at least three different economic sectors with the primary goal of making progress on a social issue. In the literature, the term cross-sector partnership describes a wide range of entities. Their characteristics and operating procedures can vary based on whether they are mandatory or voluntary, how many partners are involved, how many sectors are involved, how many countries are involved, and their goals. Cross-sector partnerships are a subcategory of interorganizational partnerships.

## ***Power***

Power can be defined in myriad ways: this exploratory study is meant to surface how participants in CI initiatives define and experience it in their cross-sector work. There are many theories, definitions, and conceptualizations of power, from within the cross-sector literature and outside of it, that are referenced throughout this dissertation. Hindess (1996) identified two definitions that have dominated Western thinking: one that describes power being “a generalized capacity to act” (p. 1) and another that describes it as having the ability and the right (or legitimacy) to act. Others view power as a means of influencing others (Schedlitzki & Edwards, 2014). Additional conceptualizations are explored in the theoretical frameworks section of this chapter and in Chapter 2.

## ***Power Asymmetry***

Power asymmetry is a perceived difference in power between two or more partners.

## **Study Significance to Practice and the Cross-Sector Field**

As the use of these partnerships continues to increase in the social change realm, so does the need to understand how they function. Cross-sector partnerships have been used and funded in a variety of forums, including the Blair government in the United Kingdom, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the Obama White House (Lotia & Hardy, 2008; White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation, n.d.). CI is a particularly popular model of cross-sector partnership: it fuels an annual conference and dozens of projects across the United States. A recent evaluation from Spark Policy Institute and ORS Impact (2018) of CI initiatives reported that most of the 25 sites studied “struggled with implementing inclusion strategies that ensured adequate representation and shifted power to the communities being

affected” (p. 70). This research signals that managing power is a challenge for this type of partnership. Additionally, there is “growing concern that MSPs [multi-stakeholder partnerships] ... will not live up to expectations if power dynamics are not managed in a more equitable and effective way” (Brouwer et al., 2013, p. 11-12). This dissertation, by illuminating experiences of power in CI initiatives, may provide clarity about different ways to approach or manage these initiatives more effectively and toward better outcomes.

### **Significance for Theory**

The current literature on cross-sector partnerships and power dynamics is limited, offering some information on how power operates and impacts partnerships, but far less on the impact it has on individuals (Kolk et al., 2011). This dissertation, by focusing on individual sense-making and experience, helps fill that gap. Better understanding the experiences of individual participants of these partnerships may help illuminate whether existing ideas and theories of power and cross-sector leadership hold true at the individual level. Additionally, many studies of cross-sector partnerships are case studies: using a phenomenological lens provides a different perspective than previous research. Finally, much of the research on interorganizational collaboration assumes it can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the organizations involved (Lotia & Hardy, 2008). This dissertation applies the lenses of critical theory as part of the analytical process that tests similarly positive interpretations of cross-sector work.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

This dissertation examines cross-sector partnerships through the lenses of leadership, value creation, power, and critical theory. Below, I include a summary of the major theories discussed in these four areas. In Chapter II, I provide more detailed discussion of the theories

below alongside information to ground the reader in the CI model and the issue of homelessness (the focus area of all the initiatives studied in this dissertation).

### ***Cross-Sector Leadership***

Cross-sector leadership is unique from other forms of leadership. Practitioners named differences between cross-sector partnerships and other organizational settings in the areas of organizational culture and decision-making, among other areas (Austin, 2000). Cross-sector leadership, however, is closely related to other types of leadership, including relational, complexity leadership (CLT), shared or distributed leadership, network leadership, and leadership-as-practice (L-A-P). Cross-sector leadership relies more on “soft power” and people-oriented behaviors to reach its goals than leadership within organizations does (Page, 2010; Silvia & McGuire, 2010). The focus on relationships and relationship dynamics (Uhl-Bien, 2006) in Relational Leadership Theory also applies to the world of cross-sector partnerships where group dynamics, identity, and power are all a part of the work. Complexity Leadership Theory (or CLT) is “about setting up organizations to enable adaptive responses to challenges through network-based problem solving” (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007, p. 304). Network leadership theory focuses on leading in “cross-boundary” settings (McGuire & Silvia, 2009, p. 35). Like networks, cross-sector partnerships focus on problem-solving among actors working together outside of organizations. In shared or distributed leadership, leadership is a process where multiple parties have responsibility for leading: leadership, expertise, and influence are spread among multiple people (Bolden, 2011; D’Innocenzo, Mathieu, & Kukenberger, 2016). Rather than focusing on the contributions, talent, or authority of one person, shared leadership theory acknowledges that leadership is carried by many and part of an emergent process. Cross-sector leadership also draws on the abilities, connections, and influence

of multiple people. These theories, cross-sector leadership included, are all examples of the “leadership-as-practice” (L-A-P) paradigm put forth by Joseph A. Raelin in his book *Leadership-As-Practice* (2016): Raelin himself claimed L-A-P “resonates” with shared, distributed, and relational leadership theories (Raelin, 2016, p. 4).

**Benefits of Cross-Sector Partnerships.** Researchers (e.g., Stadtler, 2016) have explored value creation in cross-sector partnerships at the micro-, meso-, and macro-level over time. Primarily meso-level benefits, such as increased technical expertise (Googins & Rochlin, 2000) and macro-level benefits, such as improved quality of housing (Otiso, 2003) have been discussed in the literature. One study of micro-level benefits showed expanded networks and new knowledge (among other benefits) for individual participants (Silver & Jansen, 2017).

### ***Power***

There are a variety of different ways of conceptualizing power. Many theories focus on sources of power, such as French and Raven’s (1959)’s ubiquitous theory that identified five: reward, coercive, referent, expert, and, legitimate power (Raven later added informational power, gained from access to information, in 1965; Raven, 1965). The literature largely represents power that comes from five sources: influence, resources, structures, identity and relationships, and communication and framing. Several definitions describe power as the ability to influence others (e.g., Schedlitzki & Edwards, 2014). Gaining access to resources including money and knowledge may be one reason that partners choose to participate in cross-sector partnerships (Gray & Purdy, 2018). For Foucault, acceptance of what constitutes knowledge is a form of power (Ladkin & Probert, 2019). Some frameworks focus more on how power emerges as part of the structures within the partnership, and how these can be used to control participation and voice of various partners (e.g., Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Identity is explored in this

dissertation due to its connection to how participants experience and construct power, and because power deeply influences identity. People's identities come with differing amounts of power—based on race, profession, etc.—that intermingle in the partnership (Foot, 2016). New identities are also formed in cross-sector partnerships. Forming a collective identity, “a collective's sense of itself ... that cannot be reduced to any particular individual,” (Koschmann, 2012, p. 62) within the partnership also contributes to individual identity construction and partnership success (Hardy, Lawrence, & Grant, 2005). Foucault posited the perspective that power is purely relational, existing solely in interactions between people (Ladkin & Probert, 2019). Communication and framing also have a role in shaping power. How questions are framed, and particularly how the problem to be addressed is framed, can have a great deal of influence on the partnership (Blok, 2014; Lotia & Hardy, 2008; Page, 2010). Discourse—the “historically and culturally variable bodies of knowledge embedded in structured collections of meaningful texts” (Foucault, 1979; Lotia & Hardy, 2008, p. 11) —is also a form of power (Hardy & Phillips, 1998; Purdy, 2012). Identity construction happens through discourse (Lotia & Hardy, 2008; Thomas, 2009).

### ***Critical Theory***

This study examines power and partnership from a critical perspective. Critical theorists examine social conditions, criticize the unjustified use of power, and attempt to free people from subordination and suppression (Scherer, 2009). As Lotia and Hardy (2008) described, critical theory and its researchers:

- show interest in identifying asymmetrical power relations and exploring how power shapes collaborative efforts, sometimes in hidden ways;
- acknowledge that collaboration can be used to protect certain stakeholders or help



them hold onto privilege;

- assume some partners are interested in exploiting their power;
- question whether power can be overcome or effectively managed.

Dr. Steven Lukes, a well-known theorist on power, has a framework aligned with critical theory (Hindess, 1996). Lukes' (1974, 2005) three-dimensional framework, which can be summarized as including invisible, visible, and hidden power (VeneKlasen, Miller, Budlender, & Clark, 2007) generally views power as "a sinister and insidious force" (Hindess, 1996, p. 81).

The work of Michel Foucault, which overlaps in some ways with critical theory, is also referenced heavily as part of this research. Foucault saw power as existing only as part of interactions between people and focused on how it was exerted through discourse (Ladkin & Probert, 2019). Foucault also saw power as existing solely in situations where freedom and resistance also existed: his view was that if someone was free, they always had access to power (Hindess, 1996). Power is also reversible to Foucault, and is not necessarily negative: it is domination, which restricts people's freedom too much, that is to be feared (Hindess, 1996).

Given that some of this study's contribution to the literature is partially based on its exploration of a power, taking a critical lens to the concept will bring perspectives not commonly discussed in the collaboration literature (Lotia & Hardy, 2008). Critical scholars go beyond interpretation and examine patterns of power and domination and demonstrate deep reflexivity, as I seek to do in this study (Alvesson & Spicer, 2014).

## **Overview of Research Design**

This study employs a constructivist and interpretivist approach. The research method is interpretive phenomenology using a critical theory lens. Phenomenology is a philosophical tradition focused on human experience (Taylor, 2013). In phenomenology, the unit of analysis is

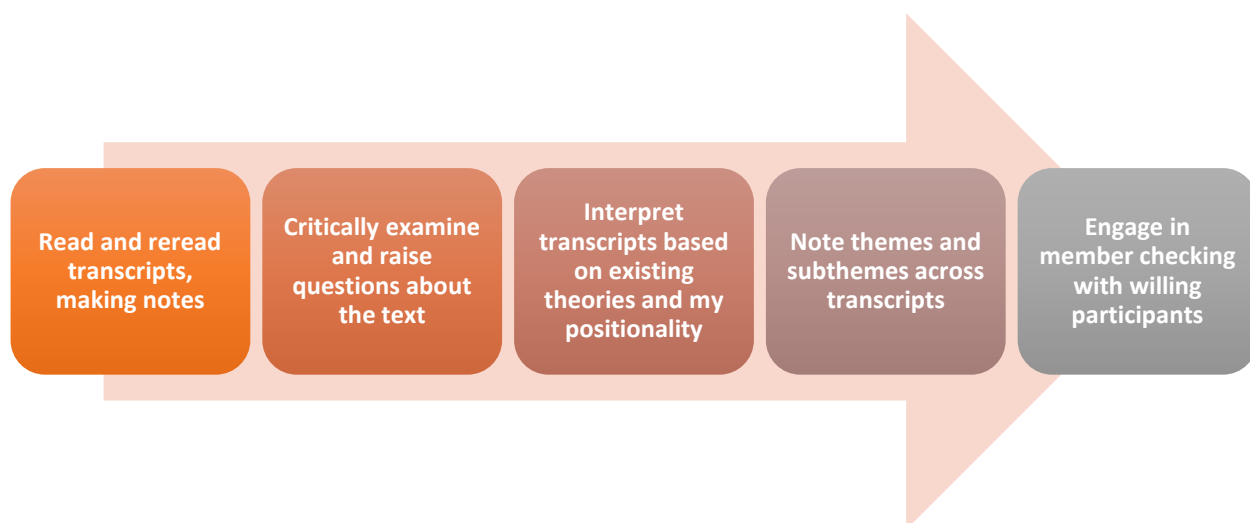
the lived experience of the participant being interviewed, and the goal of the research is to gather the participant's stories (Starks & Trinidad, 2007), understand their world, and describe it (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Interpretive phenomenology, unlike other forms of phenomenology, incorporates the broader context into the data analysis phase (Larkin et al., 2006). Researchers are also expected to bring their own perspectives to the research: “[i]n choosing IPA [interpretive phenomenology analysis] for a research project, we [the researchers] commit ourselves to exploring, describing, interpreting, and situating the means by which our participants make sense of their experiences” (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 110). Phenomenology aligns well with the proposed research given that it explores the individual experiences of participants and the socially constructed relationships and dynamics within a cross-sector context.

The research design includes semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 17 participants in four different CI initiatives focused on homelessness, though one initiative was excluded after only one participant could be interviewed. Outreach was conducted via websites and through snowball sampling, with the goal of reaching 5 – 7 participants in the three major economic sectors (private, public, and non-profit) across all partnerships. I talked to multiple people within the three partnerships under study in order to deepen my understanding of relevant context, get multiple perspectives on the same experiences, and analyze the data at the individual, partnership, and sectoral levels. Using interviews is common and the “traditional” way of collecting data in phenomenological studies (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 727). Talking to participants in the different sectors allowed me to determine if there were trends within each sector relative to research question three (about differences between experiences of power in an organization and in the cross-sector partnership). Thirty to 75-minute semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants in cross-sector partnerships after I receive their informed

consent. I also reviewed documents such as initiative websites, newspaper articles, and reports for additional data and context on each initiative. The interview questions, available in Appendix A, focused on how power presented in various cross-sector partnerships tasks, how it was experienced, and how it differed from other experiences of power. The interview stage ended when saturation was achieved, meaning no new major differences were noted in participants' stories, and a minimum of 15 participants had been interviewed. Participants were kept anonymous by using numbers instead of their names. Interview recordings were stored in a safe location in the cloud. Participants had the opportunity to review their transcripts and participate in member checking around the broader themes, which three of the 17 participants completed.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed to conduct the analysis. Analysis was informed by the theories reviewed as part of Chapter II of this dissertation and relied on a process of deep engagement and re-engagement with the data alongside thematic analysis and researcher reflexivity, as recommended by Smith et al. (2009). Analysis unfolded according to Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1. Data analysis process. Figure 1.1 depicts the iterative process I followed to analyze the data.



### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The scope of this dissertation focuses on participants in CI partnerships that involve at least three different sectors and are based in the United States. The literature reviewed in this dissertation is largely from Western countries: much of the cross-sector leadership research has been conducted in the United States and Europe (Chircop et al., 2015; Crosby & Bryson, 2013). As a result, most of the cross-sector leadership literature is likely biased toward Western ways of conceptualizing partnership, leadership, and collaboration. In this study, given my familiarity with the United States context, I have chosen to continue this trend, but am hopeful future studies will explore other geographic areas.

Additionally, this study focuses on one model of cross-sector partnerships, CI, and one topic area, homelessness. Part of this decision was made to adhere to the idea that interpretive phenomenological studies benefit from having a small but homogenous sample (Smith et al., 2009). Both factors may limit the transferability of my findings. Given that this research is

exploratory and not intended to be representative or generalized, I am willing to accept this limitation.

My data collection and analysis procedures also introduce limitations. Using semi-structured interviews at one point in time limits the number of experiences and the depth of information gathered for the study. Given that phenomenology takes the perspective that experience can change and seeks to capture experience in the moment, this is an acceptable limitation. I supplemented the interviews with some document analysis to help address this. Once the research was underway, there was a lack of diversity in the interview sample, some challenges to not being able to see participants' body language, and limited responses to some questions. Data collection was carried out sensitively to protect participants given the nature of the topic. I carefully catalogue how my data has been analyzed and share my positionality to satisfy the need for researcher reflexivity in Chapter III of this study.

### **Researcher Positionality**

In interpretive phenomenology, though it is acknowledged that the researcher can and should have a role in interpreting the participant's words, researchers are still expected to reflect on their relevant previous knowledge and experiences and be open about what the consequences of those are for the interpretive process (Smith et al., 2009). I bring a specific set of biases and mental models to my research efforts. This study is intersubjective, which means that meanings emerged in the moments of conversation between the research participants and I (Cunliffe, 2010). The experiences between us help bring the knowledge to life (Cunliffe, 2010).

I chose to study cross-sector social partnerships because I believe in their potential to drive large-scale social change. I have worked in cross-sector settings for years: I helped nonprofit service providers, government agencies, and foundations work together to create and

implement plans to end homelessness. During this work, I witnessed stakeholders collaborating and transforming in ways that made them more effective. However, I have also seen power dynamics slow or stall progress completely. That challenge made me to want to study power more deeply.

CI initiatives are also of special interest to me. When I was first introduced to the CI model by a former supervisor and mentor while working in homelessness, the idea of CI seemed like an idealized version of the work that I was attempting to do. While I view the model in a mostly positive light, through conversations and reading that I have conducted over the years (e.g., Wolff et al., 2017) I have come to examine the model more critically.

Because of my experiences, I view myself as somewhat of an “insider” in the cross-sector partnership field. This comes with disadvantages, such as a potential confirmation bias that supports my current views on cross-sector partnerships, but can also bring “more insightful, more comprehensive, more balanced (and more counter-balanced) understandings” (Bishop, Eury, Gioia, Trevino, & Kreiner, 2018, p. 42) to my research. I discuss my positionality and insider status further in Chapter III.

### **Outline of the Remaining Chapters**

In Chapter II of this dissertation, I review the literature on collaboration writ broadly, then move into the exploration of cross-sector partnership, cross-sector leadership, and other related leadership theories. Related literatures, such as that of interorganizational relationships (IOR), are used to supplement the cross-sector literature. I identify the gaps in the cross-sector literature before moving to introducing the CI model and homelessness in a cross-sector context. Chapter II continues with a discussion of power and power asymmetry broadly and within a cross-sector context. I also provide an overview of critical theory, which shapes both the research

design and data analysis in this study. The gaps in the existing literature delineate the need for additional research about the nexus of these concepts and how power is experienced and constructed in cross-sector partnerships at the individual level.

In Chapter III, I detail the interpretive phenomenological design with a critical theory lens I used in this study, including justification for employing this approach. I provide detail about the research design I employed, which relied on semi-structured interviews with a small sample of CI participants and review of key initiative documents. I then detail the multiple layers of data analysis and discuss the ethical procedures used to protect participants. The research design limitations, including its potential effect on participants, are discussed. That is followed by a discussion by how quality and rigor are addressed in this study. Chapter III also includes a more detailed discussion of my positionality as a researcher.

In Chapter IV, I provide information on the findings of the study, based on the 17 interviews conducted and additional information gleaned from supporting documents. The narratives within the three partnerships under study and themes that emerged from the interviews within each community and across communities are discussed.

In Chapter V, I make sense of the findings and discuss how they relate to the extant literature. I discuss how the themes connect to one another and explore the interconnected nature of different sources of power in these initiatives. I also discuss the implications for leadership theory and practice, making recommendations for extending the CI model, and recommend areas for future study.

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

This literature review begins by exploring the research on collaboration and cross-sector leadership theory and practice across a variety of disciplines. Cross-sector leadership's origins, purposes, characteristic processes and structures, relationships to other types of leadership, challenges, and benefits are all explored. I then focus on the specific topics of this dissertation, homelessness in the United States and the Collective Impact (CI) model. The review then shifts to examining power and power asymmetry. I discuss the sources and presentations of power, applicable frameworks such as critical theory, and experiences of power. In the cross-sector and power sections, I identify and discuss gaps in the research.

Literature for this review was drawn from a variety of different topics given the interdisciplinary nature of cross-sector partnerships. I relied heavily on peer-reviewed articles from several sources, including the PSYC Info and ABI Inform databases. I searched for articles that include cross-sector, multi-sector, and collaboration as key words as well as power and power dynamics. I have also included insights from the practitioner literature, particularly on CI and homelessness. This review supplements the exploration of cross-sector literature with insights from the interorganizational literature, which is much broader. Previous cross-sector studies have also frequently incorporated insights from interorganizational or collaborative literature (see Bryson et al., 2006; Ryan & O'Malley, 2015). First, I begin with a high-level discussion of collaboration.

### **Collaboration**

The idea of collaboration is an old one; “[p]eople have been working together to address shared problems since the beginning of civilization” (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015, p. 3). Interorganizational collaboration and cross-sector collaboration are specific types of



collaboration that happen between organizations and between different economic sectors, respectively. Wood and Gray (1991) defined collaboration as something that “occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to the domain” (p. 146). They excluded mergers, clubs without specific objectives, and blue-ribbon panels from this definition. In the academic literature, some of the earliest work related to interorganizational collaboration came from Eric Trist and his work on socio-technical systems. In 1983, Trist called for recognition that the issues of the time “are too extensive and many-sided to be coped with by any single organization” and recognized that society needed “advances in institution-building at the level of inter-organizational domains” (p. 270).

Collaboration exists for many reasons, reduced resources and a world of increasing interdependence being two of the primary ones (Wood & Gray, 1991). Trist (1983) recognized the roles of interdependence and complexity in the need for what he referred to as “referent” organizations and domains (essentially interorganizational collaborations). From a critical theory perspective, however, collaborations can also be “instruments of power and influence and a means for protecting individual organizational interests” (Lotia & Hardy, 2008, p. 8). I discuss cross-sector leadership theory and practice in more detail below.

### **Cross-Sector Partnership Origins and Motivations**

Cross-sector partnership is by nature a multidisciplinary field: it is researched in the academic disciplines of public administration, business, and leadership, among others.

Cross-sector partnerships are used to address complex issues that include sex trafficking (see Foot, 2016), unemployment, climate change, and disease (Crosby & Bryson, 2013),

homelessness, substance abuse, child poverty (Pearson, 2014), and sustainability (Gray & Purdy, 2018).

### ***Origins***

In the United States, cross-sector collaboration between government and other sectors began out of necessity. Government collaboration with other partners expanded significantly during World War II, when the government had a greater need for defense contractors to execute on plans and services, and then again during the Space Race (Kettl, 2015). Nonprofit organizations eventually also became part of this increase in partnerships between government and other sectors (Kettl, 2015). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, government initiatives such as “Modernizing Government” promoted coordination between multiple sectors to more seamlessly address citizen’s needs (Huxham, 2000).

The frequency of cross-sector partnerships has increased “dramatically” over the last few decades (Gray & Purdy, 2018, p. 3). Gray and Purdy (2018) attributed this to several factors: technology that makes the engagement of multiple stakeholders easier, increased awareness of the complexity of the problems society faces, and changes in institutions that have spurred new thinking about how important issues should be addressed.

### ***Partner Motivations and Initiating Factors***

Collaborative partnerships are used to:

- get desired results or solve an important problem (Bryson et al., 2006; Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Kindornay, Tissot, & Sheiban, 2014; Pearson, 2014);
- promote innovation (Gray & Purdy, 2018);
- resolve conflicts (Gray & Purdy, 2018);

- obtain better outcomes (Cairns & Harris, 2011);
- increase or gain control over resources (Gray & Purdy, 2018; Pearson, 2014; Wood & Gray, 1991)
- improve efficiency of resource use (Wood & Gray, 1991);
- scale impact (Pearson, 2014);
- acquire power (Lotia & Hardy, 2008);
- develop new solutions for social issues (Blok, 2014; Jacklin-Jarvis, 2015).

Partners may also embark on these cross-sector partnerships because of their doubt of the effectiveness in government when it operates alone (Bryson et al., 2006). Gray and Purdy (2018) categorized desired outcomes for participants into four different areas: creating a shared vision, designing and implementing a shared strategy, opening a dialogue, and negotiating a settlement. Huxham (2000) described potential benefits and drivers of collaboration as being moral (being the best way to address problems), financial (a way to generate cost savings), or based on opportunities to share learning. Crosby and Bryson (2010) presented achieving the common good as a reason for the formation of cross-sector partnerships, through critical theorists cast doubt on this being a true motivation (Lotia & Hardy, 2008). Other socially motivated reasons may include involving previously marginalized or excluded groups in processes or decisions (Cairns & Harris, 2011).

Specific issues may also lend themselves to collaboration more than others. Global issues felt on the local level, such as income inequality, environmental degradation, increases in extreme weather events, and large-scale involuntary migration, can also be drivers of collaboration (Gray & Purdy, 2018).

**Differences by Sector.** Motivations can vary by partner type. Private, for-profit firms may be seeking for opportunities to meet their triple bottom lines of people, profit, and planet (Blok, 2014). The visibility offered by these partnerships, as well as the access to information, may be important for nonprofits (Cairns & Harris, 2011). For both businesses and nonprofits, Gray and Purdy (2018) named four main bases of motivations: legitimacy, competency, resources, and society. Nonprofits may also be “resource poor,” making them especially eager to partner with for-profit firms (Gray & Purdy, 2018, p. 14). Nonprofits also want to increase their sphere of impact and to acquire additional skills (Gray & Purdy, 2018). Both businesses and nonprofits may want to work with government due to the latter’s role in creating policy (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2018).

**Enabling Factors.** Cross-sector partnerships are more likely to emerge when certain contextual factors are present. These elements include turbulent conditions, the presence of a convener (leader), agreement on a problem definition, and prior relationships or existing networks among the partners involved (Bryson et al., 2006). In their framework for collaborative governance regimes (CGRs), a type of collaboration that is typically cross-sector and focused on public policy decision making and management, Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) proposed similar drivers of CGRs: perceived uncertainty, interdependence, consequential incentives, and initiating leadership.

Participation is not always voluntary: government agencies or other partners may be required to participate in cross-sector partnerships by more powerful authorities (Cairns & Harris, 2011; Gray, 2009). CGRs may also self-initiate organically, be “externally directed” grass tops efforts, or independently convened by boundary spanning organizations (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). Cross-sector partnerships are often borne out of situations where difficult

problems must be solved, single organizations or sectors are unequipped to solve them, and systemic conditions direct stakeholders toward a more innovative approach.

**Wicked Problems.** Cross-sector partnerships are viewed as particularly effective tools to address pernicious social problems. As Rittel and Webber (1973, p. 160) defined them in their seminal article, so-called “wicked problems” are those that are ill-defined; cannot be solved, only resolved; are unique; and are symptoms of other problems. Wicked problems take place within ambiguous, uncertain settings (Dentoni, Bitzer, & Schouten, 2018). They feature “numerous stakeholders who bring different perspectives to the definition and potential resolution of the issue or problem” (Waddock, Meszoely, Waddell, & Dentoni, 2015, p. 996). By this standard, using a cross-sector partnership is a signal that the problem is a wicked one. Cross-sector partnerships can potentially address wicked problems more effectively than other methods by incorporating stakeholders with different types of knowledge and using deliberation and negotiation to work through differing definitions of the problem (Dentoni et al., 2018). It seems as if cross-sector partnerships are also driven by a specific type of leadership, as discussed below.

### **Characteristics of Cross-Sector Leadership**

Leadership is curiously understudied in collaboration research (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). However, there is empirical evidence that cross-sector leadership is distinct from other types of leadership or engagement. Cross-sector partnerships are typically not bound by formalized roles and hierarchies, and partner organizations tend not to have authority over one another (Sun & Anderson, 2012). These partnerships therefore do not fit with “Great Man” or other familiar leader-focused theories of leadership. Leaders can emerge at any point in many cross-sector partnerships, formally or informally (Sun & Anderson, 2012). Even a leader who is

part of a lead coordinating body within these partnerships (when such entities exist) typically does not have hierarchical authority over other partners (Sun & Anderson, 2012). Additionally, leaders with authority must often still use “soft power”, such as persuasion and negotiation, to accomplish their goals in these settings (Page, 2010). Silvia and McGuire’s (2010) survey-based study explored the differences in leadership behaviors in cross-sector and single-agency settings among 417 emergency county managers. The managers were asked to assess their leadership behaviors in government agency and cross-sector settings using a 5-point Likert scale to indicate the frequency with which they engaged in behaviors categorized as people-, task-, or organization-oriented. The authors found that there were “more statistically significant differences across settings than similarities” in the frequencies of the leadership behaviors between the two settings (Silvia & McGuire, 2010, p. 272). People-oriented behaviors were most common in the cross-sector environment; task-oriented behaviors were most common in the single-agency setting. In Austin’s (2000) research, cross-sector practitioners shared that they experienced differences between cross-sector and same-sector partnership settings in the areas of performance measurement, organizational culture, decision-making styles, incentive and motivational structures, and potential and process for value creation. From Austin’s (2000) assessment, “[c]ollaborating across the sectors is clearly not simply a question of applying standard operating procedures for collaboration with peer organizations” (p. 94). For these reasons and others, cross-sector partnerships are “phenomena that need to be understood as organizational forms in their own right, demanding their own specialist theoretical developments” (Cairns & Harris, 2011, p. 320).

### *Comparison to Other Leadership Theories*

Crosby and Bryson, the foremost researchers on the topic, have defined cross-sector leadership as complex, “fluid,” and “relational” and best understood as a set of interrelated practices (Crosby & Bryson, 2013, p. 62). This language highlights some of the commonalities between cross-sector and other forms of leadership. For example, leadership-as-practice (L-A-P) is “less about what one person thinks or does and more about what people may accomplish together” through collective action and recurring practices (Raelin, 2016, Leadership as Practice, para. 1). L-A-P has much in common with shared, distributed, collective, and relational leadership (Raelin, 2016). At the heart of Relational Leadership Theory (RLT) Uhl-Bien (2006) described is the idea that leadership “cannot be captured by examination of individual attributes” (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 671). This connects well with Crosby and Bryson’s (2013) earlier description of cross-sector leadership: the focus on relationships and relationship dynamics (Uhl-Bien, 2006) provides a natural connection to the world of cross-sector partnerships where group dynamics, identity, and power are at play. Similarly, rather than focusing on the contributions, talent, or authority of one person, shared leadership theory acknowledges that leadership is often an emergent process. Researchers have described shared leadership as a post-heroic approach (Bolden, 2011) because it is not centered on one individual’s traits or behaviors. Shared leadership may also come about through a “leader-identity claiming and granting process” (D’Innocenzo et al., 2016, p. 1970). Emergence is a key aspect to shared leadership, meaning leadership may come to fruition based on the needs and desires of the organization. Similarly, leaders can emerge at any point in many cross-sector partnerships, formally or informally (Sun & Anderson, 2012).

Complexity Leadership Theory (or CLT) is “about setting up organizations to enable adaptive responses to challenges through network-based problem solving” (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007, p. 304). Many social issues that cross-sector partnerships tackle (e.g., domestic violence, multigenerational poverty, economic inequality) are adaptive problems that require adaptive solutions, which require changes to our current ways of thinking and being (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Based on this, cross-sector partnerships may benefit from analysis through the lens of CLT.

Network leadership also shares characteristics with cross-sector leadership. A network is “an integrated structure that involves multiple actors – nodes – with multiple linkages, working on cross-boundary, collaborative activities” (McGuire & Silvia, 2009, p. 35), and is usually cross-sector. Network leadership consists of the behaviors members of the network use to effectively solve problems (McGuire & Silvia, 2009). Schreiber & Carley (2008) define networks as “leadership of change that enables emergent collective action and promotes learning” (p. 299). Some of the literature distinguishes between network leadership theory, which focuses on how a single individual works within the context of a larger system, versus collectivistic leadership, which examines influential relationships between members (Carter & DeChurch, 2014). In all of its theoretical iterations, network leadership shares a collaborative and emergent nature with cross-sector leadership.

### ***Leadership Roles in Cross-Sector Partnerships***

While sometimes positioned as examples of shared leadership, cross-sector partnerships may also incorporate hierarchical, top-down leadership. Individuals can either being formally appointed as leaders or become them by being recognized for other skills or abilities (Sun & Anderson, 2012). Common leadership roles in cross-sector partnerships include co-chairs of a



committee, project directors, or coordinators (Bryson et al., 2006). Host organizations for the collaboration may also take a leadership role (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). Other roles that are common across partnerships include conveners, who decide who to invite to the partnership (Gray & Hay, 1986), carry out key tasks such as assessing the readiness of partners to work together, oversee selection of partners, and mediate conflicts (Gray & Purdy, 2018). Dominant conveners can deeply influence partnerships, while weaker ones may leave the partnership without a clear direction (Huxham & Vangen, 2000).

Sponsors provide authority, legitimacy, and resources to support collaboration (Crosby & Bryson, 2013) and have prestige (Bryson et al., 2006). Champions, who have informal authority, bring passion and process expertise to the partnership and are involved in the day-to-day goings-on of the work (Crosby & Bryson, 2013). Both conveners and champions play a role in helping participants envision a desired future and frame issues differently (Crosby & Bryson, 2013). Leaders external to the partnership, such as mayors, may also influence the partnership (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). Each of the roles described above represent a type of leadership where power is concentrated with a smaller set of individuals, who may then make unilateral decisions (McCann & Gray, 1986).

### ***Leader Responsibilities and Skills***

Leaders may be responsible for initiating the project and helping others recognize their stake in the problem and the opportunities to resolve it (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Page, 2010). Page (2010) identified three broad “tactics” for leadership in collaborative governance settings based on the literature: framing the agenda, convening stakeholders, and structuring deliberation. The importance of managing the agenda was also echoed by other researchers (e.g., Huxham & Vangen, 2000). There are also things leaders should not do, such as impose ground

rules (Gray & Purdy, 2018). Each of these responsibilities can confer a great deal of power on the parties carrying out these tasks.

The ability to cultivate interpersonal relationships is crucial in cross-sector partnerships (Ryan & O'Malley, 2015). Leaders should be able to resolve tensions, represent their organizations faithfully, be empathetic, develop strong relationships with others (Ryan & O'Malley, 2015) and help all the stakeholders involved in the partnership develop a shared sense of meaning (Crosby & Bryson, 2010). Transformational leadership behaviors (individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation) are also relevant in cross-sector leadership settings (Sun & Anderson, 2012).

### ***Leadership Structures and Governance***

Structures are also forums through which leadership happens (Huxham & Vangen, 2005) because they shape who can influence an agenda, who has the power to act, and what resources are used in a partnership (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). Structure includes goals, specialization of tasks, division of labor, and rules and operating procedures (Bryson et al., 2006). Structures can be imposed by a lead organization, steering committee, or other authority or emerge from the partnership (Sun & Anderson, 2012). Cross-sector leadership structures include forums (e.g., task forces, meetings) used to build coalitions and foster systems thinking (Crosby & Bryson, 2013). Structure is discussed more as a source of power later in this paper.

Governance refers to “the act of governing, or how actors use processes and make decisions to exercise authority and control, grant power, take action, and ensure performance—all of which are guided by sets of principle, norms, roles, and procedures around which actors converge” (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015, p. 15). Governance and accountability are crucial for partnerships (Stott & Rein, 2009), particularly since collaborators may be imposing decisions

and structures on themselves (Gray & Purdy, 2018). Governance processes inherent to partnerships include designing and using governance structures and decision-making processes, influencing and authorizing decision makers (such as lobbying, bargaining, and negotiating), and enforcing and reinforcing formal and informal rules and norms (Crosby & Bryson, 2013). Governance represents another possible venue through which leadership and power can be exerted. Leadership or the lack of it can make cross-sector work more difficult: challenges related to this and other areas of this work are discussed below.

### **Challenges of Cross-Sector Partnerships**

Though cross-sector partnerships are rife with potential, they come with many challenges. As Bryson et al. (2006) noted, “[c]ollaboration—especially cross-sector collaboration—is no panacea” (p. 44). Huxham and Vangen (2004) used the term “collaborative inertia” to capture “what happens very frequently in practice: the output from a collaborative arrangement is negligible, the rate of output is extremely slow, or stories of pain and hard grind are integral to successes achieved” (p. 60). Below are some of the challenges commonly raised in the literature.

#### ***Power and Trust***

Power, a major focus of this study, creates challenges in cross-sector partnership work. Power struggles are one of many factors that can contribute to so-called “collaborative inertia,” and power differences can create and exacerbate conflict and lead to stalemates among partners (Gray & Purdy, 2018). A lack of trust can also be a major issue in partnerships (Cairns & Harris, 2011; Page, 2010): “*common practice* appears to be that suspicion, rather than trust, is the starting point” for them (Huxham & Vangen, 2004, p. 66). Powerful partners may seek control of the partnership, which can also cause conflict (Soubliere & Cloutier, 2015).

### ***Lack of Control or Familiar Power Sources***

It can be difficult to have authority or dominance (Page, 2010), which may frustrate some partners or slow the work. A feeling of lack of control may also create problems (Gray, 2000). As Page (2010) elucidated, “political dilemmas arise when multiple stakeholders share power to design or implement policies, making dominant coalition and authority hard to assemble - much less wield efficaciously” (p. 246).

### ***Difficulty Defining and Measuring Success***

Success in cross-sector partnerships is contextual and affected by many different factors (Barroso-Méndez, Galera-Casquet, Seitanidi, & Valero-Amaro, 2016). Even measuring success has proven challenging: “collaboration remains a somewhat elusive concept and few guidelines exist for how to ascertain whether and when it has occurred and to what degree it has been successful” (Gray, 2000, p. 2). While there is some evidence of success in individual case studies, it is still not definitive by most standards. Even with those successes, when tackling wicked problems – which they are supposedly well-designed for – these partnerships are “prone to failure” (Blok, 2014, p. 56).

### ***Lack of Alignment in Purpose, Commitment, or Goals***

Cairns and Harris (2011) named multiple challenges related to alignment, including lack of common understanding, differing expectations, lack of clarity of purpose, and having the wrong organizational representatives at the table. Partner perspectives and goals “are frequently misaligned or competing” (Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Gray & Purdy, 2018, p. 68; Page, 2010). A lack of shared agendas makes it difficult to reach agreement within the context of the partnership (Huxham & Vangen, 2004). Conflict arises from differing views of strategy and fights for control over partnership resources (Crosby & Bryson, 2010). Issues may also arise based on

how crucial the partnership is for an organization's goals (Huxham & Vangen, 2004). Lack of shared values may also create changes in the partnership (Barroso-Mendez et al., 2016).

### ***Change***

Collaborative partnerships evolve over time, meaning their purpose and the partners involved may change (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). These changes may be more rapid, frequent, and imperceptible than they are in other settings (Vangen & Huxham, 2003).

### ***Investment of Time***

It may take years to see a partnership's desired results come to life (Pearson, 2014), and partners may lose interest if they are not experiencing quick wins (Gray, 2009; Gray & Purdy, 2018). It may take years for partners just to feel like they understand the partnership (Vangen & Huxham, 2003).

### ***New Roles, Skills, and Relationships***

Partners may have to take on unfamiliar roles or behave differently than they would in other settings with similar partners (Pearson, 2014). Participating in the partnership may require new skills or the reshaping of old ones, as well as starting and successfully managing new relationships (Wood & Gray, 1991).

### ***Contextual Factors***

Jacklin-Jarvis (2015) described collaborations as potentially short-lived with ambiguous purposes and happening at the whim of changing political priorities, resulting in an experience of "fragmentation and frustration" (p. 286). Beyond conflicts between partners due to individual or organizational characteristics, the scope and scale of the problem, and other factors such as the regulatory structure the problem exists in, may also be sources of challenge (Gray & Purdy, 2018).

### ***Other Challenges***

Other challenges listed in the literature include exclusion of key actors (van Tulder & Keen, 2018), partnerships being large or complex enough that participants may not know who all the partners are (Huxham & Vangen, 2004), and a lack of money and key skills (e.g., communication and conflict resolution; Cairns & Harris, 2011).

As the literature shows, cross-sector partnerships come with many potential problems, many of which require time and immense effort to be solved, if they can be solved at all. However, organizations continue to partner because they believe in the benefits of these partnerships, which are discussed below.

### **Benefits of Cross-Sector Partnerships**

Partners come to the collaborative table seeking meaningful wins for their organizations and the social issues that they care about. Below, I discuss benefits from the literature that accrue at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels.

#### ***Micro-(individual) Level Benefits***

Unfortunately, “effects [of cross-sector partnerships] at the individual level (within and across organizations) have hardly been studied so far” (Kolk et al., 2011, p. 128), which is one reason for the individual focus of this study. In one of the few studies that have examined benefits at this level, Silver and Jansen (2017) interviewed 24 leaders who had had cross-sector experiences. Interviewees named benefits from those experiences that included expanded networks, new knowledge, practical skill development, insights into how other sectors or organizations think, broader perspective, and enhanced communication and persuasion skills. More research is needed to understand the full range of micro-level benefits to participants in these partnerships.

### ***Meso-(organizational) Level Benefits***

Beneficial changes in the partner organizations, what some scholars (e.g., Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Selsky & Parker, 2010) refer to as “meso-level” changes, are another way to measure cross-sector partnership value. The benefits of cross-sector partnerships at the meso-level include access to new knowledge, expertise, or networks (social capital); increased financial or technological resources; improved legitimacy, reputation, and name recognition; improved stakeholder relations (including increased employee morale and retention); reduced environmental impact; and increased consumer patronage (Clarke & McDonald, 2016; Murphy, Arenas, & Batista, 2014; Nowell & Foster-Fishman, 2011). Cross-sector partnerships can also build the capacity of organizations (Nowell & Foster-Fishman, 2011), though there is debate on how much they build capacity for non-profits (Shumate, Fu, & Cooper, 2018). Austin and Seitanidi (2012) identified four types of meso-level value generated from partnerships: associational, transferred resource, synergistic, and interaction. Associational value is the benefit organizations receive by being associated with the other partners, such as credibility; transferred resource value, as the name implies, is the value gained from resource exchanges between partners. Interaction and synergistic benefits come from the relationships developed by working together, including shared trust. Synergistic benefits are those that can only occur because of the partnership that enable partners “to accomplish more together than they could have separately” (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012, p. 731). Earlier versions of a similar framework from Austin (2000) include generic resource transfer (benefits accrued from common resources), core competencies exchange, and joint value creation (similar to synergistic benefits) as meso-level benefits.

Measuring value specific to partner type is another way to assess these partnerships at the meso level. Googins and Rochlin (2000) named benefits for businesses that include gaining volunteers and power, management training, and increased technical expertise and innovation.

### ***Macro-(community) Level Benefits***

Examination of macro-level outcomes is the most common in the cross-sector partnership literature (Shumate et al., 2018). The benefits that accrue to entire communities or systems vary depending on the issue being addressed. Much of the research on the outcomes of these partnerships is based on case studies (Barroso-Méndez et al., 2016) of a single partnership (Shumate et al., 2018). Case studies named benefits including improvements in quality of housing and greater access to services (Otiso, 2003), improved quality of life (Brown & Ashman, 1996), and increased numbers of active adults (Dawson, Huikuri, & Armada, 2015). While these outcomes are valuable, the scale of the impact involved and how attributable these outcomes are to the partnerships themselves is unclear. There is ample evidence of cross-sector partnerships' association with benefits and value creation at the meso- or macro-level when looking at individual cases. However, a definitive causal link has not been established, and many of the benefits at the individual level remain a mystery.

### **Factors That Influence Success**

A wide range of actions may help partners create the value they are seeking. Successful collaborations focus on continual learning and have enabling factors that include the focused attention of partners; frequent, effective communication; clear responsibilities for representatives within each organization; clear, mutually high expectations; and accountability (Austin, 2000). The perceived legitimacy of the partnership may also be a factor in its success (Bryson et al., 2006). Partners should be able to confirm their sense of their own institutional legitimacy or be



able to make themselves more legitimate through their participation (Gray & Purdy, 2018).

Having prior experiences with cross-sector partnership may directly affect the partners' ability to create value, as does alignment between partners (Murphy et al., 2014). Successful intersectoral collaborations in the health equity literature have good communication and feedback, team trust, and equality and use consensus-based decision making (Chircop et al., 2015).

Brown and Ashman's (1996) study examined 13 different international development partnerships in Africa and Asia, and then focused on five (in Lesotho, Pakistan, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Sudan) that had been especially successful as defined by the reach of their programs and the presence of resources that could be used to sustain the programs. The authors examined how the initiatives worked across three different dimensions of cross-sector initiatives: problem framing, direction setting, and implementing chosen solutions. Three of the five successful cases demonstrated high levels of grassroots voice across all three phases: the authors concluded "[l]ong-term success tends to be associated with higher degrees of participation and influence by grassroots partners and NGOs" (Brown & Ashman, 1996, p. 1476). These results reveal how important it is to draw on the power and influence of multiple partners and provides some evidence that having grassroots organizations exert influence consistently throughout a partnership is associated with positive results.

### **Gaps in the Literature**

Cross-sector partnerships are popular in practice and as topics of inquiry in academia. Leadership in cross-sector partnerships contains some of the familiar hierarchy of many organizations (through vehicles such as formal leadership roles), but also incorporates many of the qualities of more shared leadership models. Information is readily available about

cross-sector partners' many motivations and the potential challenges of cross-sector partnerships. There are also examples of how cross-sector partnerships can add value for participants and communities, in specific cases. However, evidence for the value of these partnerships is considered lacking in some fields, including sustainable development (Blok, 2014). Studies on micro-level benefits, as well as negative individual-level impacts, are extremely limited. Additionally, despite offerings from the literature about leadership processes and principles that are key to cross-sector partnership, knowledge of the "micro-moments" and day-to-day interactions within cross-sector partnerships are lacking from the literature (Chircop et al., 2015). These interactions are perhaps best understood by understanding how the people in these partnerships experience and interpret them, which is part of the goal of this study. Beyond capturing individual experience, more research is needed that includes a description and examination of how other factors, such as race, ethnicity, gender, and nationality of the participants involved in cross-sector partnerships may influence their experience of them. Identity is explored further later in this chapter. First, I provide an overview of the CI model, which is the primary cross-sector partnership model under study in this dissertation.

### **Collective Impact**

Collective impact (CI) is one model of cross-sector collaboration that became popular in the United States after being discussed in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* in 2011. Like other forms of cross-sector partnership, CI has experienced some momentum "no doubt due to the economic recession and the shortage of government funding that has forced the social sector to find new ways to do more with less" (Hanleybrown, Kania, & Kramer, 2012).

The CI model names five necessary conditions for CI: continuous communication between partners, mutually reinforcing activities, common agendas, shared measurement

systems, and a “backbone” organization that coordinates and keeps the collaboration running (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Each of these conditions are described in more detail below and displayed in Figure 2.1 below. CI has been discussed much more frequently in the practitioner literature than in the academic literature: much of the information below comes from practitioner-oriented periodicals (such as *Stanford Social Innovation Review*). Though these beliefs may not always be borne out in practice, participants in CI initiatives “have come to believe that collective impact is not just a fancy name for collaboration, but represents a fundamentally different, more disciplined, and higher performing approach to achieving large-scale social impact” (Hanleybrown et al., 2012, p. 3).

Figure 2.1. *Collective Impact Model*. This graphic reflects the five elements of collective impact (CI) described by Kania and Kramer (2011).



### ***Common Agenda***

A common agenda means there is a shared vision for change, a common approach to addressing the problem at hand, and an agreed-upon way of solving it (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Developing a common agenda requires time and commitment from the organizations involved (Salignac, Wilcox, Marjolin, & Adams, 2018). Participants in Salignac et al.'s (2018) study of Australian CI efforts stressed how important a common agenda was for their efforts. Key conditions for developing it included “(a) a focus on the issue targeted; (b) a ‘champion’ to drive the process, provide support and ensure inclusiveness; and (c) willingness of members to ‘stay at the table’” (Salignac et al., 2018, p. 99). In the most rigorous evaluation to date of CI, CI partnerships with the highest levels of implementation of common agendas were more likely to see policy changes and systems change (Stachowiak & Gase, 2018).

### ***Mutually Reinforcing Activities***

Stakeholders work together successfully when they each carry out activities that speak to their strengths, but do not duplicate each other and are well-coordinated (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Salignac et al., 2018). Activities of each partner should be working toward the same overall goals of the partnership.

### ***Continuous Communication***

Continuous communication comes by having regular meetings, which may include bi-weekly or monthly meetings between organizational leaders (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Continuous communication helps partners build trust (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Salignac et al., 2018), create understanding of motivations of other partners, and develop a common vocabulary (Kania & Kramer, 2011). It is also a prerequisite to developing a shared measurement system (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

### ***Shared Measurement Systems***

Shared measurement requires “collecting data and measuring results consistently on a short list of indicators at the community level and across all participating organizations” (Kania & Kramer, p. 40). Shared measurement systems are difficult to agree upon and implement (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). To maximize their usefulness, they should not just be used to determine the outcomes the partnership achieved, but to advance learning and course-correct over the course of the project (Hanleybrown et al., 2012).

### ***Backbone Organizations***

Backbone organizations are distinct entities, with their own staff, that coordinate the CI initiative (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Backbone organizations are crucial to the success of these initiatives (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Salignac et al., 2018; Stachowiak & Gase 2018). Backbone organizations have six key functions: providing overall strategic direction; facilitating dialogue between partners; managing data collection and analysis; handling communications; coordinating community outreach; and mobilizing funding (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). Recently, the original conditions have been updated, with the authors of the original article following up to claim that without a focus on equity, lasting systems change cannot happen (Kania & Kramer, 2015). These are discussed in more detail below.

### **Other Key Processes**

Three pre-conditions have also been introduced since the original article: the need for an influential champion, adequate financial resources (enough for at least two to three years), and a sense of urgency for change (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). There are also three key phases of any CI effort: initiating action (which includes conducting a landscape of existing players and work, collecting baseline data, and putting together an initial governance structure); organizing for

impact (developing common goals and shared measurements); and sustaining action and impact (pursuing action and collecting data; Hanleybrown et al., 2012). These first two phases can take up to two years, with the sustaining action and impact phase lasting for a decade (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). Relational qualities, such as development of positive relationships, working with local communities, trust-building, and honesty, are crucial for CI work (Hanleybrown et al., 2012; Salignac et al., 2018). CI will likely continue to evolve as a theoretical model and a practice over the coming years.

### ***Leadership in CI***

Not much has been written about leadership in CI. However, like other cross-sector partnerships, CI has some roles (such as the backbone organization and project champion) that are similarly well-defined and seem to exert some form of leadership. There are several places where a more hierarchical form of leadership seems especially important: for example, a steering committee with leaders of the partnering organizations that meets regularly seems important for success (Hanleybrown et al., 2018). Additionally, other authors referenced the need for different trainings for CI leaders and practitioners that “accentuate different skills and competencies” (Edmondson & Santhosh-Kumar, 2017). CI literature shows that hierarchy, or at least some specialization that differentiates the roles of leaders and practitioners, is part of the model.

### ***Measures of Success and Outcomes***

The literature highlights a number of factors that can help CI initiatives be successful. There are now ten principles of CI practice that are meant to provide this guidance, which include:

- design and implement the initiative with a priority placed on equity;

- include community members in the collaborative;
- recruit and co-create with cross-sector partners;
- use data to continuously learn, adapt, and improve;
- cultivate leaders with unique system leadership skills;
- focus on program and system strategies;
- build a culture that fosters relationships, trust, and respect across participants;
- customize for local context (Collective Impact Forum, 2014).

StriveTogether, the first CI initiative that has morphed into a technical assistance and national network entity for CI initiatives, has a Theory of Action with four key principles: build a culture of continuous improvement, eliminate disparities, leverage existing assets, and engage local expertise and community voice (Edmondson & Hecht, 2014).

Much like the case studies of individual cross-sector partnerships, there are many anecdotes of successful individual CI initiatives: reduced violent crime and more jobs in Memphis, reduced poverty levels in Canada, and new jobs for public housing residents in Chicago (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). One of the more rigorous studies of CI, authored by Spark Policy Institute & ORS Impact in 2018, sought to understand how and when CI leads to system and population change. The authors studied 25 CI initiatives in the United State and Canada that had operated for more than three years. The researchers found that success of the initiatives in reaching their outcomes could not be attributed to the work of the CI initiatives alone, but that CI “undoubtedly” contributed to changes at scale (Stachowiak & Gase, 2018, p. 2). Those CI initiatives that had more completely implemented the original five conditions of CI, had stronger capacity to engage in equity work, and had stronger implementation of equity-based actions were more likely to have success (Stachowiak & Gase, 2018). The report also found that only 9% of

the 25 sites were using equity, community feedback, and empowerment, activities often associated with sharing or rebalancing power, as a part of their overall strategies (Spark Policy Institute & ORS Impact, 2018). It is perhaps no wonder that “most sites struggled with implementing inclusion strategies that ensured adequate representation and shifted power to the communities being affected [by the social issue being addressed]” (Spark Policy Institute & ORS Impact, 2018, p. 70). Additional challenges are discussed below.

### ***Challenges and Criticisms of CI***

CI initiatives share many of the challenges that cross-sector partnerships have generally. Impact may take a long while to achieve: time between the start of the initiative and impact for eight of the sites from the Spark Policy Institute & ORS Impact (2018) study was between four and 24 years. It may be hard to bring partners to alignment on a common agenda or vision for the initiative (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). Power is an issue in CI as well. LeChasseur (2016) analyzed how CI was framed by Kania and Kramer in their original article and in subsequent literature and conducted focus groups with two existing CI initiatives. She found that “[s]ervice provider organizations are mentioned as having the power to influence or enact change substantially more frequently than individuals (three to eight times across the set of promotional articles)” and, when individual change agents are mentioned, they are primarily executives, which has “gendered, racial, and classed implications” (LeChasseur, 2016, p. 231). This latter point makes CI ripe for study at the individual level. Kania and Kramer (2013), who brought forth the idea initially, named challenges including bringing together people who had never worked together before, competition and mistrust, lack of agreement on shared metrics, local politics, and multiple self-anointed backbone organizations. The biggest obstacle, from their point of view, was the expectation participants have of implementing predetermined solutions



(where the solution already exists) rather than emergent solutions borne out of complexity (Kania & Kramer, 2013).

There are some challenges that are more unique to CI. One criticism often leveled at CI is that it has effectively colonized similar ideas that have existed for decades and used those ideas without crediting its originators (Spark Policy Institute & ORS Impact, 2018). Its “simplicity” and “marketability” have made it appealing even if it borrowed from earlier models (Wolff et al., p. 2). Wolff et al. (2017) found CI beyond repair and “heavily flawed regarding equity and justice” (p. 2) because of its failure to engage people in communities effectively, its inherently top-down model, and lack of engagement with the causes of social issues.

This research does not begin by taking a stance of the quality of the CI model, but rather recognizes that due to its recognizable conditions and framework, it provides ease of comparison across different collaborations and provides a common language to use with participants. Given that the literature in CI is relatively new and practitioner-based, this dissertation offers a way to expand our empirical knowledge of the model and what it offers to individuals, organizations, and communities. One area where CI and other collaborative approaches have been used and continue to be tested frequently is homelessness, the topic of this study and the section below.

### **Collaborative Efforts to End Homelessness in the United States**

Homelessness has rapidly increased in the United States since the 1980s. As defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the government agency that oversees homeless services, homelessness includes four categories of individuals: those who are literally homeless and lack a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence”; people who are at imminent risk of homelessness; people who are homeless under other definitions found in federal statutes, and those who fleeing or attempting to flee a domestic violence situation

(Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2012a, p. 1). More than 553,000 individuals experienced homelessness on a single night in 2018 (Henry et al., 2018). Unsheltered homelessness, which counts people not staying in a shelter or other short-term housing program, increased 2% between 2017 and 2018 (Henry et al., 2018). Despite its continuing existence, there has also been great progress made in reducing homelessness: between 2007 and 2018, families experiencing homelessness decreased by 23%, and the number of veterans experiencing homelessness was cut nearly in half (by 49%) between 2009 and 2018 (Henry et al., 2018).

Much of the funding for homelessness is passed down from HUD at the federal level. The connection between federal funds and local action comes through what are known as Continuums of Care (CoCs). These local collaborative groups represent and act on behalf of a specific geographic area (such as a city or county). CoCs are required to have cross-sector representation from agencies such as nonprofit homeless services providers, government, businesses, faith-based organizations, and people who currently are or formerly experienced homelessness (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2012b). CoCs initially came into being to coordinate a single application for funding among multiple providers (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2012b). They have since become more of a decision-making body. This history of cross-sector collaboration makes them ripe for study in a cross-sector context. Many of the CI initiatives under study may be tapping into an existing CoC model. Due to its cross-sector orientation and my background in the field (detailed more in Chapter 3), which allowed me to uncover additional meanings and more fully understand the context of conversations with participants, homelessness was selected as the topic of interest for this study. I now move to a discussion of power, the other main topic of this study.

## **Power and Cross-Sector Partnerships**

“Power is key to social change in every society around the world” (Lane & Pritzker, 2018, p. 4), and shifting power dynamics is also key to the success of CI (Ryan, 2014) and other cross-sector partnership efforts (Brouwer et al., 2013). Power also shapes the cross-sector partnership process: Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) named power relations as one of the system context conditions that “creates opportunities and constraints that directly affect Collaborative Governance Regimes (CGRs) at the outset and shape their contours as they evolve” (p. 39). Despite its significance, research on macro-level power (between organizations, networks, etc.) is “sparse” and “fragmented” (Huxham & Beech, 2009, p. 11). As previously discussed, the role of the individual in cross-sector partnerships has been neglected in partnership research generally (Kolk et al., 2011), and how those individuals experience or interact with power is no exception.

Perhaps one reason that research on power in this context is limited is that power is difficult to discuss, “as it may put powerful players ‘in the hot seat’ and evoke a defensive response” (Brouwer et al., 2013, p. 16). Facilitators working with multi-stakeholder partnerships found it was much easier to engage groups using words like “trust” and “interdependencies” rather than power (Brouwer et al., 2013). Power is also complicated to study: power dynamics exist not only between organizational partners, but between organizations and communities and within communities (Wadham & Warren, 2013), as well as between individuals. Another difficulty in studying, identifying, and managing power dynamics in collaborative settings is that power can shift over the course of the partnership (Huxham & Beech, 2009; Selsky & Parker, 2004). Additionally, different types of power are available to partners at different times, and the balance of micro and macro power may shift (Huxham & Beech, 2009).

Though power is often studied from the perspective of the complications it creates, power imbalances are also drivers of collaboration (Agranoff, 2012). Below, I explore the many perspectives, frameworks, and impacts of power in the academic literature, in organizations, and in collaborative partnerships.

### ***Definitions of Power***

It is difficult to find a consistent definition of power; many researchers chose not to define it at all (see Agranoff, 2012; Huxham, 2000; McCann & Gray, 1986). Generally, power is viewed as a use of some resource or source of power to influence others (Schedlitzki & Edwards, 2014). It can also be the relative influence partners have (Soubliere & Cloutier, 2015, p. 193). Foucault's more relational view, as something that exists in interaction but cannot be stored or accumulated, offers another perspective (Ladkin & Probert, 2019). Hindess (1996) identified two definitions common in Western thinking: one that focuses on power being "a generalized capacity to act" (p. 1) and another that focuses on having legitimacy. As Gray and Purdy (2018) defined it, stakeholders are legitimate when other stakeholders believe in their right and capacity to influence the problem the partnership is tackling (p. 75). Power is also something much larger: a source of freedom, happiness, status, and wealth (Knights, 2009).

### ***Leadership and Power***

Leadership literature does not adequately address the idea of power (Alvesson & Spicer, 2018; Gordon, 2002), yet "[l]eadership is imbued with the idea of power" (San Juan, 2005, p. 188). In traditional theories of leadership, power is central to the relationship between leader and follower (San Juan, 2005). Gordon (2002) highlighted that how power and leadership are intertwined also depends on the leadership theory or lens being applied. In more traditional theories, leaders are viewed as superior in an unproblematic way: "the superiority of leaders has

become a taken-for-granted reality” (Gordon, 2002, p. 155). He continued that “critical analysis of the relationship between leadership and power appears to have been considered unnecessary or, more to the point, overlooked” (p. 155). However, L-A-P research acknowledges that “process-oriented dynamics [such as those in L-A-P] would be rich in power dynamics” (Raelin, 2016, p. 8). One’s theoretical lens on what power is and what it contains seems to shape how closely related they seem.

Legitimacy and authority are two related concepts that reflect ways that leadership and power interact, as they are easily wielded by those in leadership roles. Authority may be derived through coercion or simple agreement that a certain organization or entity should have power over specific areas of the partnership (Purdy, 2012). The decision of who to invite to participate in the partnership at all is a source of power, one often wielded by the partnership convener, a leader and an authority figure (Gray & Hay, 1986). Some researchers tie legitimacy tightly to authority and view it to as influential (Alvesson & Spicer, 2018, p. 4). As already discussed, a desire for legitimacy, which is also defined as the perceived right to influence others, may be one driver for organizations to participate in cross-sector partnerships in the first place (Gray & Purdy, 2018). French and Raven (1959) name legitimacy as one of their sources of interpersonal power in their seminal framework. In fact, for Hindess (1996), legitimacy is power. Though not everyone defines it exactly the same way, legitimacy and authority are major venues for power.

### ***Power Asymmetry***

Power asymmetry—a situation where different individuals, organizations, or other units of analysis perceive they have different amounts of power—is inevitable in cross-sector partnerships “given the uneven distribution of power in society at large and organized representatives’ differences in resources and authority” (Foot, 2016, Chapter 2, Section 1, para.

15) and is often assumed to be present in interorganizational partnerships (Huxham & Beech, 2009). Power asymmetries shape how cross-sector partnerships function by affecting their structures, processes, the relationships within them (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Gray & Purdy, 2018; Huxham, 2000) and what partners gain from their involvement. Perceived power differences can affect negotiation processes, particularly if organizations' goals are not closely aligned (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Beliefs about power disparities can be damaging, even if they are exaggerated or otherwise not aligned with reality (Vangen & Huxham, 2003): “[t]hose [partners] who see themselves as disempowered often argue that the power disparity is an important contributor to their frustration and the failure of the collaboration to produce results that they regard as satisfactory” (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, p. 173). Power disparities can also decrease the quality of any decisions made by reducing their “relative acceptability” to different partners (Choi & Robertson, 2013, p. 500). Ansell and Gash (2007) named several other pitfalls of power asymmetry in collaboration, such as the collaboration being manipulated by stronger actors. For example, one actor may shape the agenda without input from others and exclude certain parties who they view as “troublemakers” from participating. Asymmetry can also spring from differences in numbers: individuals that do not belong to a specific group or organization may not be organized enough to wield power (Ansell & Gash, 2007).

Power asymmetry can also affect how willing partners are to ask one another for help. Lee's (1997) research on power motivation and help-seeking behaviors, though not conducted within an interorganizational context, provided some evidence that people are more willing to seek help when in equal status relationships with the person or people from whom they are seeking help. Both lower-power and higher-power partners are high on power motivation, defined as “an individual's concern for accruing and maintaining power” (Lee, 1997, p. 340). The

need to either maintain or improve one's level of perceived power would make it even harder for partners, no matter where they fell on the power spectrum, to ask one another for help that may be necessary to make the partnership successful.

A study of power asymmetry and collaboration by Flestea et al. (2017) used a simulation to determine the effect of power asymmetry on collaborative multi-party systems. High power asymmetry between partners was associated with higher conflict and a lack of psychological safety. Psychological safety has been named as a critical factor in team learning behavior and effectiveness (Edmondson, 1999; Google, n.d.). However, power disparities also reduced groupthink, which helped partners maintain focus on their tasks. Without groupthink at play, different viewpoints were shared and integrated into the decisions that were made, leading to "decision comprehensiveness" that may not have occurred otherwise (Flestea et al., 2017, p. 411). The authors concluded that power disparity is "a double edge sword" (Flestea et al., 2017, p. 411). While power asymmetries are not always negative, they appear to be impactful across many dimensions of a collaborative partnership.

### ***Sources and Presentations of Power in Cross-Sector Partnerships***

Sources of power in collaborative partnerships are not always easy to identify (Vangen & Huxham, 2003), but there are some themes in those that have been. A number of different characteristics or individuals and organizations may be foundations for power. I describe these sources in more detail below.

**Identity.** Identity issues are especially visible when people from different sectors interact (Maguire & Hardy, 2005), but have been under researched in the cross-sector literature (Beech & Huxham, 2003). Identity "includes not only 'who I think I am' and 'what I think others think I am' (individual and collective identity), but also 'how I act and who I become as a

being' (relational identity; Booyesen, 2018, p. 4). Individuals may have multiple organizational and individual identities at play at any given time (Maguire & Hardy, 2005). Cross-sector partnerships require the juggling of multiple identities by the individual. As Foot (2016) reflected:

Both particular organizations and the individuals who represent them bring their positions in societal categories (and the power associated with those categories) to the table. This introduces the power dynamics of each sector's historically rooted racial, gender, and status patterns and of each individual's profession, race, and gender. (Chapter 2, Section 1, para. 17)

Foot's (2016) quotation highlights not just the presence of these dynamics in cross-sector partnerships, but the potential for interaction effects between identity and power at the individual, organizational, sectoral, and partnership levels.

People enter collaborations carrying assumptions about their own and others' identities (Beech & Huxham, 2003). Members may identify themselves, and identify others, based on their roles in the collaboration or their previous or current jobs (Beech & Huxham, 2003). However, these identities can shift, as "each party experiences and interprets the acts—including speech acts—of others and shifts (or reinforces) their sense of the others' identities and their sense of how they are being identified by others" (Beech & Huxham, 2003, p. 37).

***Collective Identity.*** Collective identity comes into being when participants start referring to and seeing themselves as a collective rather than a set of disconnected individuals (Hardy et al., 2005). Collective identity is part of the process of constructing and understanding the participants in cross-sector partnerships, the problem at hand, and potential solutions (Hardy et al., 2005). It shapes how participants behave, contribute resources, and connect to the larger



collaborative group (Greer, 2017). Much of the literature on collective identity takes a discursive approach toward understanding it, believing it to be formed through discourse and language (Hardy et al., 2005; Koschmann, 2012). As discussed later, discourse is a form of power, and thus power influences the construction of collective identity. Collective identity is neither enduring nor distinctive (Koschmann, 2012). Achieving collective identity is “extremely difficult” (Koschmann, 2012, p. 62) given the competing values and interests of members and the fact that individuals must remain tied to their organizations while working within the larger collaboration (Hardy et al., 2005). However, collective identity is vital to partnership success, helping bring about joint action and successful problem-solving within the collaborative (Hardy et al., 2005). Developing a collective identity is also “perceived as beneficial for the members, and their communities, and as promoting resolutions and options for messy community problems” (Greer, 2017, p. 134-135).

***Conflicts Related to Identity.*** The process of building a collective identity can also lead to conflict. Organizations may be required to give up some of their “essential qualities,” particularly those that make it more challenging to reach a common conception of the partnership’s work (Blok, 2014, p. 67). It is the power of the actors involved that decides which essential qualities remain and which are discarded (Blok, 2014). Blok (2014) went so far as to conclude that “all partnerships are destructive for the identity of the partnering organisations” (p. 70). Beech and Huxham (2003) summarized this conflict well: “the process of identity formation that may be essential to making the collaboration work effectively may also make it ineffective in achieving the goals of the member organizations and vice versa” (p. 33). However, if there remains a solid common ground or collective identity, differences between partners can help lead to the innovative solutions needed to address the problem at hand (Blok, 2014).

Jacklin-Jarvis (2015) described a similar tension as distinctiveness versus incorporation, which names the challenges in managing one's organizational identity, contributions, and needs while successfully coordinating with other partners to solve the social problem at hand (Jacklin-Jarvis, 2015). Managing this balance becomes more complicated by the power relations at play (Jacklin-Jarvis, 2015). Participants can experience conflict amongst their identities due to conflicting accountabilities to their employer and to the collaboration (Huxham, 2000). Having a shared goal may help overcome a sense of competitiveness among individual representatives or their organizations (Greer, 2017). Sectoral identities, or institutional logics, of partners also factor into identity. These different "logics" —operating procedures for each sector—may lead to additional conflict between partners (Gray & Purdy, 2018).

**Resources.** Resources are a frequently discussed source of power in collaborative partnerships (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Hardy & Phillips, 1998; Huxham & Beech, 2009; Lotia, 2004). As discussed earlier in this chapter, the literature (e.g., Gray & Purdy, 2018) names access to resources as one of the primary motivations for partners to collaborate. Resource dependence theory (RDT) is one of the major theories discussed in the organizational, collaborative, and power-oriented literature. RDT's central premise is that organizational survival (and in the case of collaborations, partnership survival) depends on an organization's ability to obtain the resources it needs from its external environment (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005). Therefore, organizations participate in cross-sector partnerships (or other types of coalitions) to reduce uncertainty around the receipt of those resources (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005). Partners who are less resource dependent, or who have greater access to needed resources, are likely to have more power. Contingency theory similarly takes the view that power is a product of resources (Knights, 2009). Obtaining and using resources (Hardy &

Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998) or granting or taking away resources (Gray & Purdy, 2018) is one way that power presents in cross-sector settings. Funding, or “purse strings power,” is a dominant form of resource power (Huxham & Beech, 2009, p. 9).

Expertise or knowledge in specific areas may also be a source of power (Gray & Hay, 1986; Lotia, 2004). French and Raven (1959), in their renowned framework for power (discussed more comprehensively later in this chapter), included expert power as one type of power that a partner could yield. Knowledge may be viewed as a resource (e.g., as in Purdy, 2012), so may be assumed to be part of this category of power sources when not called out explicitly. How expert power is defined or understood is context dependent (Ladkin & Probert, 2019). While knowledge is a source of power, it itself is also constructed through power relations that determine what is accepted as knowledge (Ladkin & Probert, 2019).

French and Raven (1959) also introduced four other sources of power:

- referent (derived from a sense of identification);
- reward (derived from ability to reward others);
- coercive (derived from fear of punishment by others);
- and legitimate (derived from an internalized sense of the right to influence; Schedlitzki & Edwards, 2014).

Information power was added by Raven in 1965 (Raven, 1965). Though initially used to describe the relationship between two entities, these types of power translate easily to the organizational and cross-sector partnership contexts. For example, in cross-sector partnerships, a government partner may use their legitimate authority to help enact policy change to support the efforts of a cross-sector initiative, while a technical assistance provider may use their expert power to recommend and advocate for specific policies at partnership meetings.

**Partnership Structures and Artifacts.** As discussed earlier, structure includes goals, specialization of tasks, division of labor, and rules and operating procedures (Bryson et al., 2006). Structure more broadly is “an ongoing set of reproduced relations between particular social groups” (Layder, 1985). Structure may include things such as the hierarchy within an organization (Ladkin & Probert, 2019): it may also speak to something as large as the structure of society (Layder, 1985). The debate of the power and significance of agency (a person’s individual choices) versus structure in organizations is a dominant theme in the study of organizations (Reed, 2009). Much like it serves as a space for leadership (Huxham & Vangen, 2005), partnership structure serves as a playground for power. Huxham (2000) pointed to structures as clear examples of power in collaborative arrangements, contrasting more open, flexible structures that invite inclusivity with those that are more controlled and closed. Structure influences who participates in collaboration, how much power they have, and what makes it onto the agenda of a collaborative meeting (Huxham, 2000). Cook (2015) found that the most powerful actors in one Colorado collaborative—in this case, government and industry stakeholders—could dominate the collaborative process successfully through agenda control. The structure of the partnership may also influence power relations if one organization serves as the lead or coordinating body, for example (Huxham & Beech, 2009).

In contrast to the idea of a power-as-structure approach, Huxham and Beech (2009) offered a “points of power” framework. As they related it, “[t]he points of power notion therefore conceives of any person, group, or organization linked to an Interorganizational Entity (IOE) as having the potential to exert power through some of the points” (p. 13), which include naming the collaboration, setting the timing of meetings, and facilitating meetings (Huxham & Vangen, 2004).

**Framing and Discourse.** Part of the work of cross-sector leadership involves generating a shared vision among diverse stakeholders, or creating a frame, as Page (2010) put it. Frames “involve active struggles and negotiations over meaning before they can solidify and become institutionalized, triggering dynamic processes of meaning construction within and across groups, organizations, and fields” (Gray, Purdy, & Ansari, 2015, p. 116). Other conceptualizations of frames also exist, as researchers use the term frame differently (Gray et al., 2015). How frames are presented and contested affect the overall partnership (Page, 2010). Frames, including the frame used to define the problem the partnership is tackling, can be developed in ways that exclude people (Blok, 2014; Lotia & Hardy, 2008; Page, 2010). Framing can also create conflicts when there is an attempt to force one frame on the partnership or when too many are used at once (Klitsie, Ansari, & Volberda, 2018). However, cross-sector partnerships can operate successfully with multiple frames co-existing (Klitsie et al., 2018).

The concept of discourse, which also focuses on the constructivist power of language, is linked to framing. Discourse is composed of the practices and texts that construct an idea (Hardy et al., 2005). A discussion of discourse focuses on the larger context that a collaboration operates in and how that context affects them (Lotia & Hardy, 2008). The current discourse around collaboration is positive, presenting partnerships as good (Lotia & Hardy, 2008). Understanding discourse requires more than a focus on language, however: “[t]he study of discourse focuses on the ways in which actors draw on, reproduce, and transform discourses, and, in so doing, produce a social reality consisting of discursively constituted objects and ideas” (Hardy et al., 2005, p. 60). Discursive legitimacy is when an organization “draws its power from the status of the values of logic it represents” (Purdy, 2012, p. 411). Discursive power is an authority derived from representation and confidence that one’s viewpoint represents accurately the needs of a

specific group (Purdy, 2012). Identities may be constructed through discourse in the partnership process that determines how partners' ability to collaborate is viewed (Lotia & Hardy, 2008). Discourse also offers legitimacy: "[a] dominant discourse, which is taken for granted by people and hence is not challenged, thereby limits our knowledge and practices by dictating what is legitimate" (Duberley & Johnson, 2009, p. 15). Discourse is a central concept in critical theory, which is discussed in more detail in the section below.

### **Critical Theory and Related Frameworks**

Critical theory is often tied to the Frankfurt School of the 1920s and 1930s, which includes philosophers such as Jurgen Habermas, Herbert Marcuse, and Max Horkheimer (Scherer, 2009). Critical theory can be difficult to define because it continues to evolve, serves as an umbrella for many different viewpoints, and generally tries to avoid being overly specific (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). It generally takes the viewpoint that many Western countries have accepted dominance and subordination over real equity and independence (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011; Levy, Alvesson, & Wilmott, 2003). Critical theory "has an emancipatory agenda, which seeks to probe taken-for-granted assumptions for their ideological underpinnings and restore meaningful participation in arenas subject to systematic distortion" (Levy et al., 2003, p. 73). It analyzes social conditions, criticizes the unjustified use of power, and seeks to change established social norms and institutions (Scherer, 2009). It works to reveal hidden structures of oppression and contests the notion that knowledge cannot be challenged (Duberley & Johnson, 2009). The literature of critical theory also takes issue with the idea that there are true sources of power that can be controlled or tamed. As Purdy (2012) noted, "[c]onceptualizing power in terms of its sources implicitly assumes that power is a resource that

can be expanded, diminished, or transferred (p. 410). Power is “inevitable and impossible to escape” to critical theorists (Lotia & Hardy, 2008, p. 7).

Communication and discourse are crucial in critical theory. Critical theory investigates “how a particular social structure may produce and reinforce distorted communicative actions that practically and subtly shape its members' lives” (Duberley & Johnson, 2009, p. 4). Critical theorists, and Habermas in particular, believed emancipation occurred through having discourse that came from consensus and logical argument rather than being distorted by power (Duberley & Johnson, 2009). Critical theory also aims to understand the nature of knowledge and how some knowledge becomes privileged (Duberley & Johnson, 2009). Habermas saw knowledge as a social construction (Duberley & Johnson, 2009).

Critical literature also takes issue with the assumed benevolence of cross-sector partnerships. Lotia and Hardy (2008) offered examples of organizations working to maintain the status quo and preventing influence from stakeholders that would disrupt it: collaboration itself was the “instrument of power and influence” (p. 8). Wolff et al. (2017) offered examples of a similar issue from CI: the “emphasis on using ‘shared metrics’ privileges traditional data collection for and by those in positions of power, and controls for the very contextual variables that often are part of the problem” (p. 3).

Critical theory has influenced a variety of specific knowledge areas related to leadership and organizations. Critical management studies (CMS) is one offshoot of critical theory. CMS is meant to document and challenge exploitation and oppression and engage in research that creates change (Thomas, 2009). CMS takes issue with consumerism and the focus on efficiency over emancipation in organizations and seeks to use discourse to reach truth (Scherer, 2009). Critical leadership studies examine whether leadership is desirable, considers that leadership may

create domination, unpacks “the blind faith in the curative powers of leadership,” and is skeptical about whether leadership is needed (Alvesson & Spicer, 2014, p. 3). Both Lukes and Foucault, discussed below, share some of the ideas of critical theory.

### ***Steven Lukes and Critical Theory***

Lukes (1974, 2005) offered a popular framework for the different presentations of power with three prongs or dimensions often referred to as hidden, visible, and invisible power. He is drawn on heavily in the field of CMS (Knights, 2009). As described by VeneKlasen, Miller, Budlender, and Clark (2007) hidden power is that that is exerted away from the watchful eyes of other partners or the public; visible power shows up in tangible ways, such as rules and regulations; and invisible power directs our behavior without us realizing it through social norms. Schedlitzki and Edwards (2014) offered another interpretation. Visible power (sometimes called the first dimension) is focused on behavior power and authority, as well as observable conflict; the second (hidden power) on agenda setting, which happens prior to formal decision-making taking place, gives a stronger voice to certain members or others. Lotia and Hardy (2008) presented the first dimension in partnerships as some partners wielding their decision-making authority and the second as using influence to determine which issues are addressed or which stakeholders are included. Hidden power aligns well with the Foucauldian notion that “power is embedded in the very fabric of the system; it constrains how we see, what we see, and how we think, in ways that limit our capacity for resistance” (Hardy & Leiba-O’ Sullivan, p. 460). It also highlights the power may not always be easily perceptible or result from actions within the context of the partnership. That may be one reason why being aware of political issues and the status quo may be one way power is perceived as being exercised (Hardy & Leiba-O’ Sullivan, 1998). Gordon (2002) described a similar concept as “deep structures” that



reflect social codes of behavior. Examples of deep structures include the passing down of instructions or directions down a hierarchical line (Gordon, 2002). Aligning one's behavior with existing deep structures reinforces power dynamics (Gordon, 2002).

The third dimension (invisible power) shapes the norms and values that shape others' actions (Schedlitzki & Edwards, 2014). In collaborative partnerships, the third dimension may be used to define the problem being discussed (Lotia & Hardy, 2008). Additionally, leader actions and behaviors are shaped by values, and those values are enforced through artifacts such as organizational competency frameworks, for example (Schedlitzki & Edwards, 2014). Each of these forms of power can each appear in cross-sector interactions: decisions may be made in back rooms, with only certain partners present; rules of engagement for meetings may be set so only certain parties control the agenda; and hidden power sets how groups interact with one another before the partnership work even begins.

### ***Michel Foucault***

Michel Foucault is perhaps the best-known philosopher on power. Foucault's views overlapped with the critical perspective. Foucault saw power relationships as "unstable", ambiguous, and "reversible" (Hindess, 1996, p. 97). Like critical theorists, he viewed power as inescapable (Hindess, 1996): power is everywhere, in social structures, institutions, and cultural norms (Ladkin & Probert, 2019). For Foucault, power is about the ability to influence people's choices (Hindess, 1996).

Discourse was a crucial part of Foucault's ideas about power, and he saw it as a main venue through which power was exercised (Ladkin & Probert, 2019). However, for Foucault, discourse was much more than language: "discursive practices are the local and historical contingencies which enable and constrain the knowledge-generating activities of speaking,

writing, thinking, calculating, measuring, and so on. Discursive practices *produce*, rather than describe, the subjects and objects of knowledge” (Weiskopf & Willmott, 2014, p. 8). Discourse shapes what knowledge is possible for each of us (Weiskopf & Willmott, 2014).

Power for Foucault is also defined by what must be present for it to exist, namely freedom and resistance (Hindess, 1996). When freedom is extremely limited, Foucault refers to this as domination (Hindess, 1996) or violence (Ladkin & Probert, 2019), which makes it more akin to how the term power is used in other contexts. Power is most visible through the outcomes it creates, but is difficult to see otherwise (Ladkin & Probert, 2019).

Overall, critical theory provides a useful alternate perspective to much of the literature. Particularly in an interpretive study on power, having critical theory as one potential lens may help reveal the structures and larger context that influence and shape the experiences of participants, which are explored below.

### **Experiences of Power**

Though generally lacking in the literature, there are some accounts of the experience of power in cross-sector settings. Jacklin-Jarvis (2015) identified three tensions that voluntary sector participants experienced as part of their collaborative work: agency versus dependency (ability to make things happen versus having to listen to public agencies, who had more control), values versus pragmatism (taking a stand on values or going along with things for the ease of the partnership), and distinctiveness versus incorporation (discussed earlier). Jacklin-Jarvis’s (2015) study participants characterized cross-sector partnerships as being a rollercoaster ride, in which they had little control of their direction. Participants expressed the tensions present in juggling multiple identities and roles as “straddling different realities” and likened it to “working

undercover” (Jacklin-Jarvis, 2015, p. 295). Ultimately, asymmetrical power relations impacted partners’ experiences of tensions as well as how they responded to them (Jacklin-Jarvis, 2015).

Power also seems deeply tied to fear. Power struggles correlate positively and significantly with fear of change, fear of exposing the organization, fear of losing resources, fear of collaborating with others, and resistance to the partnership (Almog-Schmid & Bar, 2018). Though there are certainly indications of power’s negative effects in the literature, much more needs to be uncovered on this topic.

### **Synthesis of Power Literature**

Though the intent of this study is to discern how the participants view and socially construct power, my view of it will also influence the interpretation of it. My view of power as a means of influencing or accomplishing outcomes means that I view it as a natural part of decision-making and leadership processes. Also, because the research questions are framed to generate stories and examples, there is an assumed relational, narrative aspect to power. Based on the literature and my own experience, power is largely described in one of five ways: influence, resources, structures, identity and relationships, and framing and communication. These are the clearest ways that partners can obtain desired outcomes for themselves. Resources, including perceived legitimacy and authority, allow partners to withhold or provide inputs needed to create change; structures shape decision-making and how and which voices are included in key aspects of the partnership process; certain identities or relationships may be privileged or allow one to work outside agreed-upon processes; framing shapes what conversations and meanings are acceptable. I used the categories as a starting place for developing the interview guide and research questions. Though I used open-ended questions to

ensure that the responses were not limited to these areas, it is important to acknowledge the impact these had in terms of the responses I received.

### **Gaps in the Literature**

While we know enough to know power is worth paying attention to in the cross-sector context, it is clear more research is needed on the topic (Huxham & Beech, 2009). For example, the power asymmetry literature focuses on the effects on the partnership but does not often talk about personal experiences or individual impact. The work of the partnership is depersonalized. There has been little research on how stakeholders in cross-sector partnerships define power, and what actions they perceive as being power-infused. While sources and types of power are easy to find in the literature, discussion of individual interactions are not. Few researchers acknowledge or discuss power's impact on the "day-to-day enactment" of power, including meetings, workshops, and assignment or claiming of identity, looks like (Huxham & Beech, 2009, p. 11). Additionally, what sources and presentations of power are most frequent, most impactful on participants, and most impactful on the partnership are unknown. While many of the case studies of cross-sector partnerships focus on the context of the partnership, they do not often discuss the societal and other contextual forces at play that, although they are "hidden," may deeply influence the partnership.

At the nexus of power and identity, very little has been researched in the collaborative space. Powerful partners may determine what identity characteristics are acceptable for organizations and individual participants to have in the collaborative setting. How does this affect how individuals "show up" in these partnerships? Does the power associated with their respective identities change when in a cross-sector versus an organizational setting?

Though cross-sector leadership operates differently than organizational leadership, frameworks for understanding power in cross-sector partnerships largely reflect hierarchical perspectives and view power as a capacity. The more relational, flexible, and nuanced views of Foucault and critical theorists are largely missing from the collaborative power literature. There has also been little acknowledgment in the literature that just as leadership may differ in cross-sector and single-agency settings, experiences of power may differ.

## **Conclusion**

This literature review has discussed and defined collaboration, cross-sector partnerships, CI, homelessness, and power. Cross-sector partnerships are a popular means for addressing complex social issues and are thus worth of further examination. I explored how these partnerships “do” leadership, their common processes and structures, their potential benefits, and the many associated challenges. Cross-sector leadership is tied closely to other leadership theories and perspectives, such as relational leadership, shared leadership, and L-A-P. Cross-sector partnerships have shown some positive outcomes, making them even more intriguing to explore. However, while there is a growing amount of literature on cross-sector partnerships, there is a gap in information about how they function on a day-to-day basis and are experienced by individual participants. Without this information, a deeper understanding of these partnerships and their micro-level impacts alludes us.

One of the biggest challenges cross-sector partnerships must wrestle with is power, which presents advantages and disadvantages to cross-sector partnerships. The consequences of power asymmetries shape many aspects of the partnership process. The numerous theories and frameworks on power offer many ways in which individual participants’ experiences with power can be understood and analyzed, though few were developed with understanding power at the

individual level in mind. A critical lens on power is also lacking: many theories on power do not explore the cultural norms and structures that control or maintain the status quo. These gaps in the literature underscore the need for research at the micro-level with an accompanying critical lens. In Chapter III, I explore and explain the qualitative methodology that will be used in my dissertation and the justification for using it to explore power dynamics in cross-sector partnerships.

### **Chapter III: Research Method**

In this chapter, I will describe the research philosophy and the approach behind this study, explain why phenomenology was selected as the primary research method, detail the research plan, discuss the ethical protections used, review the means of ensuring research quality and rigor, and explicate my positionality as a researcher.

My research questions were:

- How are power and power asymmetries experienced, constructed, and understood by individual participants in cross-sector partnerships?
- How do individuals perceive the impact of power dynamics on them and their work?
- How does the experience of power in cross-sector partnerships compare to individuals' experience of it in their home organizations?

This study explored individual experiences and stories within three different collaborations. The study progressed through five phases that included (a) a pilot study, (b) participant recruitment and selection, (c) data collection through semi-structured interviews and review of key documents, (d) data analysis, and (e) quality checking. Each of these stages are described in more detail later in this chapter. First, I begin with a description of the research philosophy of this study.

#### **Research Philosophy and Approach**

Epistemology is the study of how we know; ontology encompasses one's view of what makes up the nature of reality. This study uses a constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. A constructivist, sometimes called social constructivist, approach supports the view that people construct their own realities (Burr, 2011; Creswell, 2014). Constructivists believe that individuals seek to understand their world and develop subjective meanings of their

experiences: these meanings are formed through interaction and are influenced by cultural and historical norms (Creswell, 2014). Because of this, researchers using a constructivist epistemology rely on participants' perspectives as much as possible in their research (Creswell, 2014).

Like constructivism, reality in an interpretivist approach emphasizes individual interpretations of events (Bakker, 2012). The focus is on gaining knowledge, the knowledge of reality, from the participants' perspectives (Lim, 2011). An interpretivist researcher believes knowledge is co-created between the researcher and the research participant (Lim, 2011). Taking an interpretivist perspective requires being skeptical of surface-level or given meanings and seeks to emancipate people from them (Schwandt, 2011). Constructivism and interpretivism are often used in tandem in qualitative research studies (Creswell, 2014). Some view constructivism as part of a worldview, while interpretivism is viewed as more of a research paradigm (Lim, 2011).

Constructivist, interpretivist research generates knowledge based on experience, or inductively. Researchers using an inductive approach develop theory and unearth patterns from the data, which in the case of phenomenological studies is participant experiences (Creswell, 2014). In this study, I interpreted individual interviews and other relevant documents to build an understanding of how power is experienced in cross-sector partnerships. However, as my analysis progressed, the work took on deductive characteristics: I used existing cross-sector and power theories to develop potential interpretations of participants' experiences.

The overall research philosophy used is one that embraces the value of meaning-making and personal experience in generating new knowledge. To complement this view, I selected



interpretive phenomenology as my method, which is a qualitative, constructivist method of inquiry. I explore phenomenology further in the next section.

### **Phenomenology**

Phenomenology examines subjective human experience (Lopez & Willis, 2004) and how people construct the meanings of their experiences (Langdrige, 2008). It emerged in the late nineteenth century as a response to positivism, originating with Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher, scientist, mathematician, and physics scholar, who wanted to understand how individuals came to know their own experiences (Usher & Jackson, 2017). Husserl wanted to support people in understanding the key qualities, or essences, of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009; Usher & Jackson, 2017) and wanted to understand phenomena “as they appeared through consciousness” (Lavery, 2003, p. 23). This goal of discerning the essence of something is foundational to what is known as descriptive phenomenology.

### ***Interpretive Phenomenology***

This study employs interpretive phenomenology: hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation, is a “major theoretical underpinning” of interpretive phenomenology (Smith et al., 2009, p. 21). Other types of phenomenology include descriptive phenomenology, the phenomenology of appearances, constitutive phenomenology, and reductive phenomenology (Spiegelberg, 1976). However, it should be noted that there is a lack of consensus about what the types of phenomenology are and how they are interrelated (Taylor, 2013). Descriptive phenomenology is the most well-known and is a term often used interchangeably with phenomenology.

A major difference between descriptive phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology is the primary focus of the founders of each approach. Husserl focused on understanding

phenomena, while Martin Heidegger, founder of interpretive phenomenology and a student of Husserl's, focused on the idea of "dasein", the experience of being human or "the situated meaning of a human in the world" (Lavery, 2003, p. 24).

Heidegger also rejected epistemology in favor of ontology, focusing on the experience being in the world instead of knowing the world (Reiners, 2012). For Heidegger, human beings were always people-in-context (Larkin et al., 2006). Additionally, unlike the other strands of phenomenology, interpretive phenomenology provides room for the researcher to bring their interpretation to the phenomena being studied. Unlike descriptive phenomenology, the interpretive phenomenological researcher does not typically bracket their biases (Reiners, 2012). Bracketing is the attempt to "strip away all prior understandings of the phenomenon and approach it with a fresh and new attitude" (Usher & Jackson, 2017, p. 7) and is meant to make it easier to see the phenomena under study more clearly (Lavery, 2003). In interpretive phenomenology, the researcher and their views have a particularly important and active role: the researcher is not just listening to, but interpreting, what the participants are saying, looking for additional meanings in their words (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This stance reflects the concept of intersubjectivity. With intersubjectivity, there is a recognition that knowledge creation and insights gained are shaped by researchers and research participants interacting, and that meanings emerge in the moment between the researcher and the participant (Cunliffe, 2010). These aspects of the method make interpretive phenomenology well-suited for the exploration and meaning-making of experiences of power in this study.

### **Research Approach Justification**

In a study attempting to understand the complex idea of power, creating more room for interpretation through various theoretical lenses enhances the quality, depth, and utility of the

research findings. Interpretive phenomenology is “useful when one is concerned with complexity, process or novelty” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 55). A phenomenological study may also provide a new perspective on cross-sector work, as case studies have been used much more frequently in cross-sector research studies thus far (Austin, 2000).

Interpretive phenomenology also provides tools to bring more critical analysis to individual experiences. Participants may unknowingly reproduce oppressive discourses when sharing their experiences (Langridge, 2008). Descriptive phenomenology may not challenge these discourses or offer new ways of understanding them, but interpretive phenomenological researchers, through continuous engagement with the data and a rigorous trying-on of various theoretical lenses, can. For example, a participant might say that they rarely speak up in meetings because of a clear power dynamic between them and the person who leads the meetings. While descriptive phenomenology may use this to point to power dynamics as being an essential part of the workplace, an interpretive phenomenologist may use this to explore how hierarchy, cultural norms, and critical theory may have created this environment, shifting the focus from the participant’s lack of voice to the conditions that support their silence. Additionally, people may not always be able to express what they are thinking or feeling (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Interpretive phenomenology “[r]ecognizes that access to experience is always dependent on what participants tell us about that experience, and that the researcher then needs to interpret that account from the participant in order to understand their experience” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 3).

Edmondson and McManus’s (2007) research offers further justification for the use of an interpretive approach. They recommend, for example, in their Table 2 (p. 1160) that research in

a nascent field collect open-ended qualitative data and use interviews and documents from the field as research methods.

### **Research Design**

Interpretive phenomenologists have been “reluctant to formalize its methodology into standardized step-by-step procedures” (Aagaard, 2017, p. 523): therefore, there is no one specific way to conduct these studies (Smith & Osborn, 2003). However, the research does offer some guiding principles on the number of participants that should constitute groups being compared, using broad, open-ended interview questions, and recording interviews, which are shared below alongside key aspects of my research plan.

### ***Research Timeline***

Participant recruitment began in September 2019, once Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the study was secured. The IRB consent form is available in Appendix B. The pilot interviews took place shortly afterward. Interviews included in the analysis began in October 2019 and continued through February 2020. Data analysis in Dedoose began in November 2019 and concluded in March 2020.

### ***Participants***

The participants in this study were 17 individuals who have participated in CI partnerships on the topic of homelessness in the United States. I sought participants in one of three sectors — public sector/government, private (business or philanthropy), and nonprofit. When making comparisons, at least five individuals per group are necessary to draw solid conclusions (Smith et al., 2009): therefore, interviewed 5 – 7 people in each sector. I did not attempt to match participants on characteristics beyond the general criteria of the study. Given this research approach is not experimental, there was no need to control for different variables.

Details on the demographics of participants, including race, age range, gender, and partnership role, are available in Chapter IV.

### ***Participant Recruitment***

I identified and reached out to participants through a directory online for participants in CI initiatives. When needed, I used a Google search to locate additional names and contact information. For the pilot, I selected participants by searching the directory for individuals that participated in initiatives on the topic of education and youth. For the rest of the study, I selected participants in homelessness-related partnerships by searching for partnerships by topic and contacting the project page administrators (if seemingly eligible participants) or randomly selecting from participants listed in the website or on the initiative's website who appeared to work for public, private, or nonprofit organizations. Fewer than ten initiatives were listed that met my criteria for being in the United States, and I reached out to each one of them. I also searched the individual participant directory for people working in homelessness, which yielded more results. I also used snowball sampling to help me identify additional interviewees. Once I was able to engage multiple participants from the same community, it officially became a community case. As the study progressed, I targeted participants based on gaps I felt I had in my knowledge, participants that were mentioned by other interviewees, and those that context documents revealed had a significant role in the partnership (e.g., chair of a committee). I also tried to speak with multiple people in each initiative who may have had shared experiences to gain richer perspectives on those incidents. I contacted participants by email, explained the purpose of the research, and provided the informed consent form. A copy of the template email I sent is available in Appendix C.

### ***Pilot Study***

To ensure that the interview questions I developed would solicit data that spoke to the research questions, I piloted them with two individuals in CI initiatives outside of the field of homelessness to avoid reducing my research sample. Both interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. I recorded the interviews, sent them for transcription, and reviewed the transcripts to determine if the responses yielded information that answered my research questions. I also took notes after each interview, noting what I felt went well and what did not based on whether the questions provided answers connected to the research questions and were clear enough for participants to understand. I modified the interview guide significantly to better align it with the information I sought. Changes I made to the interview guide included adding questions about the leaders and most powerful partners in the partnership, adding a question about resistance, and removing questions about level of engagement among partners and relationships between partners, which I determined were not closely enough related to the research questions.

### ***Overview of Semi-structured Interviews***

Data was collected primarily through semi-structured interviews with participants. Semi-structured interviews are standard procedure for phenomenological studies (Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Larkin et al., 2006). I completed 17 interviews in total. Semi-structured interviews include pre-determined questions but allow the researcher to tailor follow-ups to the participant and what emerges in the conversation. I followed the guidance that researchers within a constructivist paradigm focus on asking broad, open-ended questions (Creswell, 2014). Some introductory questions were asked of the participants via email to confirm their eligibility for participation. Based on the purpose of this study, questions were used to elicit experiences, perceptions, and examples of power dynamics from participants. I also collected contextual

information from participants about their roles within the initiative and their perceptions of the initiative itself to better ground the findings and more fully describe each case. Each interview began with me getting verbal consent from participants to move forward, and most began with me providing more background on myself and the purposes of the research. A copy of the interview guide is available in Appendix A.

**Interview Process.** Interviews were conducted individually via a virtual platform, Free Conference Call. Solo interviews were chosen to give more privacy to the interviewees. Though participants were given instructions on how to join by video, all but one of the interviews ended up being audio-only. One pilot interview was conducted via video (but not analyzed). Interviews typically lasted between 30 – 75 minutes. As I progressed through multiple interviewees in each case, I asked follow-up questions about stories or experiences previous interviewees had shared to obtain multiple perspectives on the same events.

All participants gave consent for their interviews to be recorded. While most interviews were audio-only, pilot interviews where video was used had separate video and audio recordings. Only the audio recordings were shared with the transcriptionist and then analyzed. Recording the interviews is crucial for proper analysis: Smith and Osborn (2003) argued that you cannot do interpretive phenomenological interviews properly without recording them. Recording the interviews allowed me to keep my focus on listening to the participant without fear that I was failing to gather important information. After the interviews, I took notes on what stood out about the conversations. Interviewees were interviewed only once, as there were sufficient number of participants in the study.

**Transcription.** I transcribed the first two interviews post-pilot myself: the remaining recordings were sent for transcription to an online service, GoTranscript. Once I received the

transcripts, I reviewed and edited them for accuracy and gave participants five to six business days to review them and clarify anything they desired (also known as member checking).

### ***Document Review***

In addition to conducting interviews, I reviewed relevant materials related to the partnerships and specific incidents that participants shared during these interviews. The review was an additional way to understand different presentations of power and complement the contextual information I received in the interviews. Documents included newspaper or newsletter articles, documents detailing committee heads and structures, annual reports, and information from initiative websites.

### ***Analysis and Presentation***

After the interviews, I made immediate note of things that stood out or merited further exploration in my research journal. I also kept a running log of my general observations, ideas, and questions and my process for analyzing the data. Analysis began in earnest once six transcripts had been reviewed and checked by participants and were then coded in batches of about three transcripts at a time. The steps for analysis, as described previously, included, read and rereading transcripts, making notes on major themes through coding in Dedoose, interpreting transcripts based on existing theories and my positionality, and critically examining and raising questions about the text.

Reading and re-reading transcripts as recommended by Smith and Osborn (2003) is a crucial first step, as immersion in the data is also crucial for successful analysis (Eatough & Smith, 2017). I followed Smith and Osborn's (2003) guidance of making notes about items that stood out, summarizing and paraphrasing the text, and doing some preliminary interpretation of key themes. Toward this end, I reviewed each transcript five times. I used Dedoose to code



each transcript. Dedoose is a software system that allowed me to import each transcript and other relevant documents and then select text for coding. Additionally, Dedoose allowed me to link transcript data with the demographic information of each participant, such as their race, age range, gender, initiative, and role in the initiative (backbone organization representative, funder, partner organization, or consultant) to view trends among these groups.

Codes were generated according to the three research questions, with initial codes falling under the categories of “experiences, definitions, or constructions,” “impact,” and “comparison to home organization.” This is known as structural coding (Saldaña, 2016). I also slotted codes into the major categories of power theories named in Chapter 2: resource power, relational power, identity, and structural power. Additionally, I used process and in vivo coding, as recommended by Saldaña (2016). Process coding focuses on processes, using codes with gerunds to capture actions, while in vivo coding focuses on capturing participants’ words as they have said them (Saldaña, 2016). A few categories that did not neatly fit into these categories (e.g., race, gender) were created as standalone codes. After I had coded all transcripts twice, I wrote down how what I was seeing related to my personal experiences, code definitions, emergent themes, and connections between the codes, tentative answers to research questions, and limitations of the study as recommended by Saldaña (2016). I looked for themes within the research questions, across all the interviews, across interviews with people from the same sector, and across interviews from the same CI initiatives. I used the codes to build themes. For example, coding for “LGBTQ[i],” “gender,” and “age” within the code for research question 1 (about how power is constructed, defined, and understood) led to the creation of a theme about identity. The reflection after the first two rounds of coding also included critically questioning

participants' texts, as recommended by Smith and Osborn (2003). As part of these processes, I generated over 65 of the types of comments below, which included notes like

- “Absence of power also a choice – what drives desire not to use power/be apathetic towards it/not try to influence?”
- “Significance of CoC as a frame?”
- “Credibility=legitimacy?”

Reiners (2012) referred to a similar process, interpretive hermeneutics, which features continual review of the material and acknowledgement that the researcher ultimately is part of the phenomenon under study. The second part of Reiner's guidance was furthered through focusing on reflexivity, a key aspect of the analysis process in interpretive phenomenology (Duberley & Johnson, 2009; Lotia & Hardy, 2008). Reflexivity is reflection on the part of the researcher of how they are approaching and thinking through the research process. To implement reflexivity, I questioned and noted improvements that needed to be made to my process, making notes to myself such as “Remember to code for critical theory – resistance as a sign of power” (personal notes, 12/19/19) and “How is power experienced when it isn't? Need to write about the absence of power/presence of trust” (personal notes, 10/25/19).

After these first two rounds, I went back to coding with an eye toward answering some of the questions I had raised. There were a total of 1380 coded segments, seven themes, and 19 sub-themes at the conclusion of analysis

### **Research Design Limitations**

The approach and design of this study have inherent limitations. Interpretive phenomenological studies can leave participants feeling vulnerable and exposed (Usher & Jackson, 2017). I tried to compensate for this by encouraging participants to take their time and

establishing a strong rapport with them. I provided opportunities for member checking by allowing the opportunity to review their transcripts and clear up any misunderstandings.

Additionally, data gathered represents information that is tied to a very specific time and context (Larkin et al., 2006), limiting generalizability of the findings. However, the goal of this study is transferability, so the study's value is not inherently compromised by this point.

Finally, the nature of interpretive research is that much of the work is based on the researcher's interpretations and is shaped by their previous life experiences. The conclusions drawn from this research inevitably reflect my biases, which I discuss more in the Researcher Positionality section of this chapter.

### **Ethical Protections**

This research followed the standards in the Belmont Report. My research plan and informed consent documents were approved by Antioch University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in September 2019. I obtained informed consent forms from participants before interviewing them that covered the data collection process and the use of verbatim quotations from their transcripts, a step recommended by Smith et al. (2009). I also told participants I might come back to them for additional information, but that they were free to ignore any follow-up. To protect anonymity, only the transcriptionists and I saw the full transcripts of participants (as recommended by Smith et al., 2009). Recordings of interviews were stored in a password-protected cloud-based system and will be deleted after the dissertation is published. I conduct interviews in private spaces with headphones on where the participants' words are difficult for others to overhear whenever possible. While themes generated related to identifying characteristics (gender, for example) were shared, I attempted to keep participants anonymous by using participant numbers and "they" pronouns as much as possible.

## Quality Considerations

Qualitative studies have their rigor and quality judged on their trustworthiness, which relies on credibility and usefulness (Wergin, 2018). Credibility is established through rigor, which I attempted to implement with member checking, reflexivity, and peer debrief.

Transferability comes from findings that can be used in multiple settings: though this study focuses on homelessness, other topic areas with similar context (e.g., federal funding passed through local organizations and multiple funding partners) will likely find some useful lessons here. Additionally, the CI model is used across topic areas, and some of the reflections on it expressed here may resonate with practitioners in other topic areas.

Creswell (2014) provided eight strategies to increase the accuracy of qualitative research: triangulation, member checking, using thick description, clarifying researcher bias, presenting discrepant information, spending prolonged time in the field of study, peer debriefing, and using an external auditor. While constructivist approaches are not as concerned with accuracy in terms of reflecting one objective truth, many of these approaches were used in this study. I provided opportunities for member checking by allowing the opportunity to review their transcripts and clear up any misunderstandings. It should be noted that the value of this process of member checking is under debate, for reasons that include potential for confidentiality breaches and distress caused by re-reading about one's experience (Usher & Jackson, 2017, p. 12). I let participants know of this risk of experiencing strong and negative emotions. I also worked with three participants to check the resonance of overall themes once the interviews had been completed.

I also used thick description when writing up research findings and presented data even if they did not align with overall themes and findings. I have shared my biases in this chapter, and

revisited and reflected on them throughout this process. I practiced reflexivity by keeping a journal detailing my analysis process and memoing ideas, thoughts, and questions that came to mind as I worked. Sample entries included:

**Entry from 12.5** Resource power comes up frequently - so frequently! Foundations tend to have a ton of decision making power across cases, that is sometimes hidden and visible, doesn't seem invisible. Most of the resource power seems to be about money. CI initiatives seem much more shared power than government/nonprofits, but are they really? That seems to be the perception. Impacts seem to be negative; managing or dealing with stress.

I chose not to put all of Creswell's suggestions into practice. Data were not triangulated because of the nature of the research questions: the meaning someone makes of their experience does not need to be verified. Given that part of this process is my personal interpretation, I did not make use of an external auditor to see if my individual findings were supported. I relied on my own journaling to provide that kind of rigor, as well as the insights from my "research buddy." This individual served as a sounding board to offer different interpretations than the ones that I am seeing. They had access to portions of transcripts and my codes and were asked to identify where those codes would fit in the five transcripts shared with them. Given that this study does not utilize observation, I did not spend significant time in the field of study, though my "insider" status provided me with useful contextual knowledge.

### **Researcher Positionality**

Understanding one's identities, beliefs, and ideas and how they intersect and shape the research process is crucial (Bourke, 2014). Though interpretive phenomenology does not mandate that researchers engage in bracketing like descriptive phenomenology does, they are

expected to be honest and clear with themselves and their research teams about their preconceptions (Given, 2008; Smith et al., 2009). Researchers in interpretive phenomenology acknowledge “the inevitability of biases, preoccupations and assumptions when conducting research; they reflect on how these shape their research inquiries and, following [philosopher Hans-Georg] Gadamer, they aim to engage with them fruitfully for the purpose of understanding” (Eatough & Smith, 2017, p. 5).

I am a former cross-sector partnership consultant. Most of this experience has been in the homelessness field, working with representatives from different sectors on writing strategic plans and changing local homelessness policies. I have seen the advantages of cross-sector collaboration: it helped build consensus and increase buy-in, create relationships that had benefits beyond ending homelessness, and led to a shared vision that united people and prepared them for action. However, I also believe cross-sector partnerships can indeed be extremely challenging, particularly when it comes to wielding power. I recall one incident of an individual’s ego and influence significantly slowing a community’s progress toward ending homelessness for years. He actively worked against evidence-backed policy changes, resisted the progress that others in the community wanted to make, which made my work much more challenging. However, the more I have learned about power’s manifestations, the more I see its necessity in moving things forward.

CI was introduced to me several years into my work in homelessness by a former supervisor. It helped me make sense of the work I had been doing and wanted to do more often. I kept up with the literature about the model over the years, and eventually came to work at the company whose founders introduced it, FSG. Once there, I became more aware of some of the criticism of CI. For these reasons, I chose to conduct “inside-out” research, given I have insider

knowledge but am not completely within the phenomena under study (Bishop et al., 2018). Bringing an insider's perspective to research can generate unique insights and interpretations (Bishop et al., 2018). Additional benefits include the ability to provide a more multi-faceted sense of the phenomenon under study and the fact that insider-outsiders may monitor their biases more carefully given that they are aware others are assuming their views are biased (Bishop et al., 2018,). However, insider research must be handled carefully, with the researcher carefully connecting their reflections to data and theory (Bishop et al., 2018). An insider perspective may also lead to confirmation bias, self-serving bias in which you make your interpretations fit with your perspective, and an overestimation of the value of the research to others (Bishop et al., 2018). Debriefing and seeking out alternate perspectives can help mitigate these biases (Bishop et al., 2018). All these experiences, and others I have not shared here, shaped the interpretation I bring to this study. I share my biases to bring transparency to my research and so that I and others understand the influence these have on the stories I share and the themes I saw in the data.

## **Conclusion**

Through using a constructivist, interpretivist approach with interpretive phenomenology, I tapped into individual participants' experiences of power and its impact on them at a specific point in time, building up the research in this previously neglected area. Using interpretive phenomenology allowed me to both capture the authentic voices of participants as well as interpret their experiences for additional meaning. An explicit focus on critical theory was used to identify power dynamics that are often ignored in the mainstream literature. Participants were recruited online and via through snowball sampling. Data were collected through 17 semi-structured interviews with participants in CI initiatives, preceded by a brief 2-person pilot study to test the interview guide in Appendix A. The study also included some review of key

documents to build on and better contextualize the interview findings. By attending to reflexivity throughout, immersing myself and constantly re-engaging with the data, member checking, peer debriefing, , and bringing my positionality to the interpretive process, I surfaced new insights about power in CI while respecting participants' voices and autonomy. The findings were analyzed within the context of specific communities and across communities. I discuss the findings resulting from this process in Chapter IV.



## **Chapter IV: Findings**

Chapter IV focuses on the findings gleaned from the interviews and key document review described in Chapter III. First, I provide demographic information about the participants. I then review in more detail what the research procedures were alongside an explanation of how I worked to ensure the rigor of the study. Each of the three community cases is then presented in narrative form, providing a rich context within which to ground the findings and information on themes that were unique to each case. Following this, I discuss the themes that emerged across all interviews and cases.

The primary research questions of this study are used to organize the findings. Those questions are:

- How are power and power asymmetries experienced, constructed, and understood by participants in cross-sector partnerships?
- How do individuals perceive the impact of power dynamics on them and their work?
- How does the experience of power in cross-sector partnerships compare to their experience of it in their home organizations?

### **Participant Demographics**

Interviews were conducted with 17 participants across 4 different communities. I present findings for each of the three communities, renamed Community A, B, and C. Because there was only one participant in a fourth community, Community D, it was excluded from the case-level analysis.

There were a total of 17 participants in this study, 16 of which were female and one of which was male.

Eligibility criteria for participation in the study were that the person be currently or previously engaged with a CI initiative focused on homelessness and be at least 18 years of age.

Six participants each were interviewed in Communities A and B, and four were interviewed in Community C. One participant whose community was not included in the case narratives was also interviewed. Demographics as described in more detail below.

### ***Age***

As shown in Table 4.1, all participants were between the ages of 30 - 69, with most (70.6%) being under the age of 50.

Table 4.1

#### ***Age Range of Participants***

Age Range	Number of Participants	Percentage
<b>30 - 39</b>	5	29.4%
<b>40 - 49</b>	7	41.2%
<b>50 - 59</b>	1	5.9%
<b>60 - 69</b>	4	23.5%

### ***Race***

Participants were disproportionately Caucasian: each of the communities included in the study were predominantly white. Sixteen participants were Caucasian/white, with only one participant identifying as Asian. This should be noted as a limitation of the study, as the voices represented are not diverse racially, and the primary group represented is one that is generally less likely to be marginalized or disempowered in American society. This gap is especially

significant given African Americans disproportionately experience homelessness in the United States (Moses, 2019). Though I reached out multiple times to people who did not initially respond to my outreach, including people of color, I was not able to increase the diversity of the sample.

### ***Partner Type***

Each participant was identified as a partner type and affiliated with a certain sector, the former of which is represented in Table 4.2 below. For those that had experienced the partnership from multiple organizations, I identified them by the role they held during the time of the interview. Backbone organizations are entities specific to the CI model expected to “plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad logistical and administrative details” of the initiative (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 40). Partner agencies were from agencies that were not represented in the other category types.

Table 4.2

#### ***Partner Type across Interviewees***

Partner Type	Number of Participants	Percentage
<b>Backbone</b>	4	23.5%
<b>Partner</b>	7	41.2%
<b>Funder</b>	3	17.6%
<b>Consultant</b>	3	17.6%

### *Sector*

Participants were relatively evenly spread across the three major economic sectors, as demonstrated in Table 4.3 below. Some participants had changed sectors since their involvement with the CI initiative or worked in ways that involved multiple sectors (for example, serving as a consultant to a government-funded initiative).

Table 4.3

#### *Sector Type of Interviewees*

Sector	Number of Participants	Percentage
<b>Government</b>	6	35.3%
<b>Nonprofit</b>	6	35.3%
<b>Private</b>	5	29.4%

To preserve anonymity, all participants are referred to by a number. Initially, pseudonyms were planned for the use of this study: however, given that some participant characteristic numbers were so small that it increased the risk of them being identified, I refer to participants solely by their numbers and use “they” pronouns throughout the write-up whenever possible.

### **Analysis Process**

Analysis of the data began with noting themes, observations, and questions that came up in the interviews immediately afterward they ended. I then conducted two rounds of coding, coding the transcripts in batches of two to four transcripts at a time. Taking breaks between each batch gave me time away from the data to refresh and reflect before moving forward. After

each transcript had been coded twice, I re-read each transcript and wrote down emerging themes, questions, and ponderings.

I then re-coded each transcript three more times. The final three rounds of coding were mainly used to ensure a sufficiently deep level of engagement with the data. During this process, initial codes were removed, added, refined, and combined. These were then categorized into themes that captured participants' experiences, processes (e.g., decision-making) and constructs from the theory and literature (e.g., hidden, visible, and invisible power from Lukes, 1974, 2005). I erred on the side of coding nearly all processes and experiences at first. Some of these codes were abandoned later in the process, as it was determined they were not clearly enough linked to the research questions or power generally. In addition to the interviews, themes are informed by review of key documents related to each community initiative, such as websites, bylaws, and newspaper articles about the initiatives. These documents provided contextual information and additional data on potential power dynamics.

Throughout this process, I attempted to refrain from defining what I meant by power and power dynamics to allow participant meanings and understandings to emerge. However, to focus participants' responses, I had to present some potential types of power, which I pulled from the power literature. Thus, the interview questions (available in Appendix A) drew out power related to themes including influence, leadership, and resources. I relied first on participants' direct responses to questions about power and their use of the word power, then on these more targeted questions

As themes were being finalized, I reached out to 16 of the participants who agreed to be contacted as part of the member checking process. Of those 16, only three were available to participate, including two from Community C and one from Community A. Their comments

indicated that the themes I shared with them generally resonated. Comments included that the findings were appropriately nuanced, and, to my earlier point, that power may appear to be absent because it is not often considered in the context of these partnerships. A participant also noted the difficulty and a sense of being overwhelmed without having a definition of power to work with. This tension was one of the trade-offs of using a more inductive approach to understanding what power meant to participants.

In addition to member checking, I checked for inter-coder reliability with a colleague from my PhD program. They were presented with five snippets of transcripts and the codes I had used in each of them. They were then asked to code the transcripts keeping those codes in mind. This colleague did not have a background in homelessness or CI. The degree of alignment between the two of us on those five transcripts is described in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4

*Alignment on Coding*

Transcript	Alignment Between Researcher and Coder
Transcript 3	General agreement and overlap; I coded for context and policies and procedures when they did not
Transcript 7	General overlap, but did not use lack of conflict as a code
Transcript 14	General overlap – different codes for exerting power
Transcript 11	Less agreement – saw more tensions than I did; didn't see hidden power, had different ideas of context.
Transcript 5	Agreed on power dynamic, disagreed on absence of power, difference in exerting power versus power dynamic

The lack of something (e.g., power or conflict) seemed to cause the most disagreement, which is understandable since I did not provide illustrative examples of what that lack might look like. I attempted to define more clearly what I saw as the absence of power and why in this analysis because of that. I also reconsidered some instances where I had seen a lack. Ultimately, power dynamics and exerting power were combined into many of the same themes, so the differences there did not end up affecting the analysis and write-up.

Below, I present the findings: first by focusing on unique themes in each community (defined as those that did not come up in all three cases), and then by examining the themes across all 17 interviews and three cases.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

I begin by focusing on each community's unique story. The community narratives, including context and themes that are present in the community being discussed but not all three, are provided first to ground readers in the unique aspects of the community as they consider broader themes. These provide an early orientation to the communities' context, including the community's demographics and the history of the CI initiative, so that when shared themes are examined, readers are able to hold the unique shaping factors of each community in mind as they review the data.

Phenomenology values individual experience. The quotations and descriptions included below do not represent the totality of those mentioned by participants. For each theme and subtheme, generally one to three quotations or statements are used to illustrate the statement, which means in some cases additional statements were excluded. I focused on those quotes which I felt provided the most detail or the clearest demonstration of each theme and tried to avoid duplication of quotations; thus, some themes that overlapped are discussed only in one

area. I explore areas raised by more than one participant to ensure the findings focused on shared experience.

### **Discussion of the Three Case Studies**

The three communities under study had similarities across them: they all focused on homelessness in their efforts, all claimed to use a CI model, and all had somewhat similar structures that included multiple committees responsible for carrying out the work of the initiative. All had some form of hierarchy within their governance structures, and partners with legitimacy or access to funding were among the most powerful. Common themes in power across the initiatives were largely present in the areas of resources, and identity. However, there were also differences in the degree to which each of these types of power mattered, and how other sources of power as far as, structures and processes, framing and communication, leadership, and resistance presented themselves. The nuances of each community and its context are discussed in more detail and is available in Table 4.5 below. Information on the recruitment process for participants and cases is in Chapter III. Information provided is not exact in order to protect the anonymity of communities.



Table 4.5

*Demographics of Each Community (from Anonymous Initiative Website, 2020; Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020, U.S. Census Bureau, 2020)*

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Community A*</b>	<b>Community B</b>	<b>Community C*</b>
<b>Population Size (2018)</b>	800,000	80,000	150,000-200,000
<b>CI Topic Area Focus</b>	Homelessness	Homelessness, Food Insecurity, Affordable Housing, Poverty, Education, Substance Abuse	Homelessness
<b>Poverty Rate (2018)</b>	10% (average across cities)	16%	11% (average across counties)
<b>People Experiencing Homelessness (Point-in-Time, 2018)</b>	1000-2000	No data on local level	100 - 500
<b>Description of area</b>	Several counties in largely rural states	City in a rural state	Rural counties with a larger city
<b>Largest Racial Group</b>	More than 80% white	More than 80% white	More than 90% white

### **Community A Narrative**

Participants in interviews for Community A included two backbone organization representatives, one consultant, and three representatives from partner agencies. Documents reviewed for Community A included publicly available documents such as the list of committees, the backbone organization's board's bylaws, and the backbone organization's website. Community A covers an area that includes three counties across two states: stakeholders must work across two different state governments. There are approximately 800,000 residents, with the clear majority (87% on average across the three counties) identifying as white in 2018 (U.S. Census, 2020).

The CI initiative is focused exclusively on the area of homelessness: partially because of this, the CI initiative is practically synonymous with the local Continuum of Care (CoC). One participant described the CoC and CI initiative as the same thing (Participant 1). Per a webpage that describes its CI work, the goal of the CI initiative is successful implementation of a ten-year plan to end homelessness (Community A Website, 2020). That plan focuses on ending chronic (long-term), child, family, and youth, veteran homelessness and reducing overall homelessness (Community A Website, 2020). As for the landscape of homeless organizations, many do not receive HUD funding and therefore are not bound by its rules (Participant 1). Community A also has a large philanthropic community, many of whom support the homeless assistance field (Participant 1).

The same nonprofit organization serves as the backbone of both the CoC and the CI initiative. The backbone organization became its own nonprofit 501(c)3 organization in the mid-2000s, and was formed with CI in mind (Participant 4). It took over the duties of leading the CoC from a government agency, partially due to the recommendations from a research study and concerns about the government agency's ability to represent the needs of multiple localities (Participant 1). The backbone has four full-time staff as of January 2020, two of which joined in 2019 (Participant 1). As one participant (Participant 4) described of the backbone's responsibilities:

We're carrying out a lot of the day-to-day work. We're convening those groups, um, taking care of, you know, the agendas and the minutes and all that kind of stuff, doing whatever research or providing whatever data those groups are looking for. (p. 7)

The backbone organization staff chair and set agendas for committee meetings. One of the larger projects the initiative has taken on, developing a curriculum around trauma-informed

care, is handled almost entirely by the backbone: they “put together a proposal, got it funded, contracted the consultants, handle all the training dates ... and all the legwork around it” (Participant 4, p. 7). They also co-lead two of the most powerful committees, a group of service provider leadership and another focused on agencies that receive HUD funding. The backbone’s website is the central collection point for information about the CoC and the CI initiative.

The backbone organization has a board whose membership was determined based on HUD requirements of CoC boards. Each committee of the broader CI initiative is chaired by a board member. The board has the ultimate approval authority for the CI initiative, as well as the ability to engage in discussions with the working groups that report into it. As Participant 7 explained, “So, when there's something we need to take, like a committee brings it to us ... we need to bring it up to the [backbone organization] board. That's been the structure” (p. 11). The board of the backbone organization came up as a powerful partner only in the context of Community A, likely due to its unique positioning serving as the CoC Board “and the governance body for [redacted] as a private nonprofit organization” (Community A Governance Charter, 2017). Members of the board also served as members of the steering committee in the Community of Practice, described in more detail below. These multiple roles increased their power and claims to legitimacy within the initiative.

As mentioned above, key committees in the initiative include a Council that wrestles with more strategic issues (Participant 1, Participant 3) and a group that meets specifically to discuss issues related to HUD funding and policies and procedures that includes only agencies that receive HUD funding (Participant 3). The Council serves as an advisory board to the backbone’s board (Participant 1). Both committees mainly include executive directors and other

executive-level staff or their delegates (Participant 4). The Council and the HUD funding group were divided in 2019 into two groups to create more space to discuss strategic issues at the Council meetings (Participant 3). The Council's and HUD-funding related committees' roles are still evolving (Participant 1). The Council is expected to deal with more strategic issues in the future, as Participant 4 described in their vision for it:

[The] Council would really look at things at a much higher level. So, affordable housing. We don't have enough affordable housing in [Community A] ...How do we collectively as a community begin to look at that? What are things that are going on already? Uh, what are projects that people are working on? How do we better engage with landlords?  
(p. 7)

Another committee within the initiative is a Community of Practice (CoP), a voluntary group in which many CI initiative members participate that began a little over two years ago. The CoP is funded anonymously by a local foundation (Participant 3, Participant 11). The initial purpose of the CoP was to break down silos between service providers and get them to speak more with one another (Provider 11). The CoP, as Participant 1 described, is a place for conversations around issues that include power and to build greater trust among participants. Additional goals included promoting a positive space for service providers, supporting the backbone organization's success, and supporting improved operational and service delivery practices (Participant 11). As part of their work, the consultants leading the CoP unearthed some negative dynamics between providers, with some providers reporting they did not respect each other at the time the CoP started (Participant 11). Several participants talked about the value the CoP had brought to the community: after the first year, the amount of trust between providers went up an estimated 30 percentage points (Participant 11). The CoP is supported by a steering

committee and a separate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) steering committee. The main steering committee is composed of members of the backbone organization's board (Participant 1), another instance of formal leadership serving in multiple roles.

In addition to these committees, the initiative hosts four committees, four subcommittees, and three task forces as of December 2018. These groups focus on specific subpopulations, processes, and topics and appear to function more as working groups. As the governance charter for the CoC describes, the "Task Forces are the action planning components of the system for the purpose of the 10 Year Plan Implementation" (Community A Governance Charter, 2017, pp. 7–8). As with all CoCs, Community A must issue public invitations to join the CoC annually (Community A Governance Charter, 2017).

While Community A had a clear hierarchy and a large, if complicated, governance structure, emergent leadership was also present. In some cases, vocal individuals were able to place themselves in leadership positions (Participant 11). In both cases that it was mentioned, the emergent leadership was raised in a negative context. For example, Participant 1 described a provider that put themselves into a leadership role, uninvited, in order to influence decision-making and agenda setting processes. This context shapes the themes and sub-themes that were present in Community A but not shared across all three communities, which are discussed below.

### ***Constructions and Experiences of Power in Community A***

First, I examine unique ways in which power was constructed and experienced in Community A, the focus of the first research question.

**Identity.** Dynamics around identity included those pertaining to membership in specific groups.

***Race and Ethnicity.*** The communities interviewed, and the participants, were disproportionately white. Participant 4 reflected on how the lack of racial diversity influenced the decisions of the initiative:

We're talking about these issues. And there's 20 people in this room, 18 or 19 of them are white, and none of them have loads of experience, or very few do. What does that do with our perception and how do we build, um, kind of that common agenda from a lack of perspective, but also from a position of privilege? (p. 13)

This power of the dominant group to shape the common agenda of the CI initiative was an example of the continuation of the current power paradigm, and also highlighted the absence of power of more marginalized groups within the initiative.

**Resources.** Resources included assets that partners could use in order to increase their influence or credibility over others in the initiative.

***Power in Numbers.*** When asked about who had more power in the initiative between the HUD-funded and privately funded providers, Participant 3 shared: “Um, the publicly funded side. There are just more of them...than most people” (p. 7). Participant 4 identified that there were partners with outsized influence. About one agency in particular, they shared: “...sort of by default, um, the fact that they're this huge provider, uh, their influence gets, uh, I think gets magnified” (p. 11).

**Structures and Processes.** Structures and processes include ways of operating, as well as the formal divisions of labor within the initiative.

***Facilitation.*** Facilitation was often carried out by representatives from backbone agencies. In Community A, backbone representatives facilitated the Council and HUD-funded

agency meetings, sometimes with other partners. Having them in such a visible role that also allowed them to manage conversation offered an additional source of power and leadership-based authority.

***Operational Procedures.*** Three out of the four instances of exerting influence that were named by participants included developing new processes, procedures, or competencies within the CI initiative. One such initiative included the creation of a coordinated entry process, a process required by HUD to streamline and expedite helping people experiencing homelessness get placed with the appropriate program or housing opportunity quickly. Another was related to building a curriculum around trauma-informed care. Each of these efforts were primarily driven by the backbone or the backbone's board.

***Agenda Setting.*** Being involved in agenda setting is one tool through which participants magnify their voices throughout the initiative (Participant 4). Powerful partners, such as the CoP steering committee, committee chairs, and backbone organization representatives, were involved in agenda setting procedures. The steering committee of the CoP helped shape the agenda for those sessions (Participant 11), and the Council agendas are set by the Council co-chairs, which include a backbone representative and the executive director of a provider agency (Participant 3).

***Framing and Communication.*** Framing and communication as a theme explores how frames and the use of voice were used to exert influence over the initiative.

***Common Agenda.*** The common agenda—one of the five elements of the CI model—helped empower the group, and served as a frame for the purpose and the goals of the initiatives. Participant 4 shared that “getting people to really buy into that common agenda, to the core values around why we’re doing it, um, helps,” ostensibly with accomplishing the initiative’s goals (p. 24).

Participant 10 shared,

...for the most part, I feel like everybody's in the room trying to accomplish the same thing, if that makes sense. How we're getting there sometimes isn't always the same but I feel like you know I've never sat in a meeting where I'm like, "I don't even know why you're here." (p. 5).

***Being Vocal.*** Some partners were more vocal than others. Speaking more than others had consequences, with Participant 1 speaking of partners being able to halt initiative progress by speaking up. Sometimes there appeared to be a correlation between how vocal someone was and potential influence, as described by Participant 3: "[redacted], um, is also a frequent speaker. He seems to play a big role in some of the tech decisions" (p. 3).

### **Perceived Impact of Power Dynamics in Community A**

The second research question explored how participants perceived the impact of negotiating power dynamics on them personally. The only participants to name positive, or at least non-negative, impacts of power dynamics were from Community A. As Participant 4 stated of managing power dynamics: "It offered a good growth opportunity I guess" (p. 25). Participant 3 named the dynamics as "fine" (p. 15). However, Community A participants named negative impacts as well. The tepid responses indicate that the number of positive experiences with power, while more than other communities, was still quite limited.

### **Comparison to Power in Home Organizations in Community A**

The third research question asked participants about differences or similarities in the power dynamics in their home organization and the CI effort. Less was unique about Community A as far as this research question was concerned. Participant 4 noted differences



between power dynamics and their home organization, the backbone agency, but struggled to articulate what they were.

### **Summary of Community A**

Community A's structure includes a CI initiative that is virtually the same as its Continuum of Care. Since the CI and CoC were considered interchangeable, the hierarchy and structures involved were the same. This is an important point to consider when gauging power dynamics within CI and other collaborative models: how much does the model dictate the dynamics versus absorb the existing dynamics around it? In this setting, the CI framing appeared to be used to primarily explain and show the importance of bringing other partners outside the federally funded homeless system to the table, and signal the collaborative values of the backbone organization.

Community A's backbone organization and its board seemed to have an especially large leadership role and a great deal of power in shaping the initiative, with their power radiating out into the various committees and structures that support the work. More vocal participants and participants from the dominant racial group were also experienced as wielding power. Power dynamics seemed to appear when members of the initiative sought to implement new processes. For example, the coordinated entry process was required of all CoCs by HUD, a "top-down" change that the backbone organization was charged with implementing. The experiences with power compared to other settings were less negative than in other communities, potentially because the power structure here was well-established and legitimized already.

### **Community B Narrative**

The participants interviewed for Community B included four initiative partner organization representatives, one funder, and one consultant. Documents reviewed included the

initiative website, newspaper articles about the initiative, and an academic article written by a consultant to the initiative.

Community B includes a relatively small city, with a population of approximately 80,000 residents in 2018 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). It is approximately 80% white (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The community has a high proportion of Native people living in poverty, with multiple Native reservations near the city (Participant 9, Participant 8). Per one participant, relationships between Natives and white people remain tense due to historical trauma, among other things (Participant 9). Geographically, the area is mountainous (Participant 9), with the community's population and services are spread out (Participant 2) and poor public transportation. Participants named racism and generational poverty as major issues (Participant 8) in the community.

The CI Initiative began in 2015 and initially focused on a variety of issues, including affordable housing, homelessness, poverty, education, substance abuse, and food insecurity based on the desires of local philanthropists who met in the summer of 2015 (Anonymous, 2016). At one point eight or nine different committees (each devoted to a different topic) were part of the initiative (Participant 2): Participant 9 signaled that juggling this number of issue areas was a challenge. These philanthropists additionally served as supporters for the burgeoning initiative (Anonymous, 2016). Participant 5 described the efforts as coming down to one donor:

There was a really big effort in our community, um, by one really, really engaged, involved major donor who's done a lot of progressive work for our community, really kind of spearheaded it and wanted to do, uh, an intense collective impact approach towards a large number of social issues. (p. 3)

Some committees for funders were exclusive: no other partner type could join. As Participant 9 described, this caused tensions when other groups wanted to participate. They recalled a conversation they had with another group of participants: “‘Well, that’s the authority is at the funder circle...’ ‘Well, we want to be at that table.’ ‘Well, unless you are helping fund this work, you can’t be at that table. I’m sorry’” (p. 20). Foundations were named explicitly as leaders of the CI Initiative, likely due to their influence and the backbone function being housed within a foundation. The leader of that foundation was also individually named as a leader leadership.

Key structures within or related to the CI initiative include a foundation that houses the backbone function, a governing council that meets approximately bimonthly, and several cohorts of a leadership cohort, the latter of which began in 2016. Initially, there was also a funders group with four members who worked to increase investment in the initiative (Anonymous, 2016, p. 8). There was also a mapping working group to engage the community in systems mapping efforts.

The governing council, which still exists, was designed to provide guidance to the decision-making body for the initiative, and is mostly composed of the heads of organizations, mainly government agencies and funders (Anonymous, 2016; Participant 6). The backbone responsibilities at first were handled by outside consultants before being housed at a local foundation (Anonymous Article, 2017).

Community B’s leadership cohort began in 2016. The program was supported by a local foundation that was part of the initial funders’ group and governing council. The program is geared toward younger leaders who were under 40 and in lines of work that matched up with the CI initiative’s efforts, though older participants were also involved (Participant 6). Part of the

purpose of the program was to increase the resources available to the initiative and to “bring community voice to the program” (Anonymous, 2016, p. 10). Participants had to apply for the program. Each cohort featured sub-groups focused on specific projects and lasted 12–18 months (Participant 6). The groups worked on issues that were prioritized by the CI initiative (Anonymous Leadership Cohort Article, 2018). The first cohort designed the work of the second, which was facilitated by a staff member at a local foundation who sponsors the group (Anonymous Leadership Cohort Article, 2018). Participants in the program were also responsible for soliciting input from citizens through focus groups, surveys, and interviews (Anonymous, 2016).

The initiative led to one major spin-off project, a nonprofit, which became its own organization in 2019. One of the early proponents of the idea was a member of the governing council. This spin off also had support from a funder’s council, though it is unclear if this was the same group of funders that supported the broader CI initiative. Unique themes in power in Community B are explored below.

## **Constructions and Experiences of Power in Community B**

### ***Identity***

**Race and Ethnicity.** Ethnicity came up in the interviews in the context of Native-white relations. The leadership program participants received training to better understand the Native population. A white participant highlighted their struggle to include Native folks in the CI initiative:

I wasn't comfortable but that power dynamic was, I'm not trying to take away any power from you. I'm actually trying to create a situation where the Native people have their voices back, have their choices back, get their power back. (Participant 9, p. 21).

Participant 9 further detailed challenges in coming to agreement with representatives from the local Native population: “Well, it's like...it was just like this crazy... [u]m, yeah, wanting, you know, [the Natives] wanting more and more and more” (p. 20).

**Gender.** Power dynamics around gender also made their way into Community B: two participants reflected on this specifically. Participant 8 reflected on their frustration with a familiar pattern in this type of work: “... no offense, cause, I mean, I love men, but like we always hire like a middle-aged white dude to come in from like, you know, four states away” (p. 5). The combination of gender and race highlights the intersectional power of dominant identities in these initiatives, another type of “power multiplier” effect similar to that of having the same people serve in multiple leadership roles. Within these initiatives, broader societal dynamics of privilege where men and white people hold disproportionate power continue on.

### ***Resources***

**Dependence.** Two participants mentioned issues of dependence on the initiative or its partners. Participant 5 shared the reason for her organization’s participation:

Well, I look at it as it is, you know, we want in order for us to meet our mission and help our community be better off there are - we need to tackle some of these issues in a different way, in this type of way... so whether, you know, they're leading it or we're leading it, it really doesn't matter as long as we're all a part of it and helping where we can because it helps all of us in the end. (p. 10)

That “different way” appeared to be one that included collaboration, with multiple partners working toward a shared goal. This statement speaks to the positive frame associated with CI; that it offers opportunities to work together differently and more effectively.

**Expertise.** Having expertise helped create buy-in and convene the right people in

Community B. Participant 8 shared their ability to wield power through their previous knowledge and expertise with policies and procedures:

And we just laid it out for her and said, “Here's what we did in our program. Here's why it worked. Here's the research that we based this on. Here's what your outcomes can look like, and here's what your evaluation needs to look like in order-you have to tell the story in numbers so that you can continue to get funded until you can prove, you know, people are succeeding.” (p. 18)

**Relationships.** There are also examples of the Foucauldian view of power; power based in interactions and relationships. Relationships with city officials were crucial to the project that spun off from Community B. As Participant 9 shared saying,

And as we're going through this design, I'm gonna need a couple of favors from the city to make the campus what it needs to be and get around some of the like, building regulations. Not for safety or code, anything like that. But like easements and some issues that are making the safety of our campus a little precarious if they don't work with me on it. (p. 30)

Participant 8 reflected on how important relationships were to mitigating power elsewhere:

I mean, the only thing that's in my mind to ever mitigate some of this power stuff is really getting to know each other and having a relationship where there's some trust and some mutual, you know, give and take. (p. 15)

A similar resource was having access to people and relationships. Participant 8 named access as a resource they could use in their favor.

But we, I, you know, I have total access [to a local funder], which is an interesting power dynamic. Like I can call up [redacted]. He sits like right in front of me at church too. You know, like I could, and he's like, in all these meetings I'm in, you know, or [redacted] who's the program officer who I've worked with for years, I can call them and have coffee with them and be like, "Hey, you know? This is what we're thinking about doing. What do you think?" Super informally and yet, you know, that's a really powerful thing to be able to do is to have access. (p. 14)

Relationships provided means to accessing other forms of power, such as resources necessary to move projects forward.

### **Structures and Processes.**

**Facilitation.** Facilitation was often carried out by representatives from backbone agencies. For example, Participant 6, when asked about who the leader of the initiative in Community B was, said "I mean [backbone representative, name redacted] definitely is. She's the one that more or less heads up the meetings and gets things rolling in the right direction" (p. 10).

### **Framing and Communication.**

**Being Vocal.** Participant 5 gave an example of when they exerted power: "I know I made some comments as 'wow, that's like-- that's pretty ambitious to try to tackle'" (p. 11). By suggesting that the aims of the CI initiative were overly ambitious, they hoped to encourage a narrower focus on specific issue areas. Alternatively, Participant 8 worried about the lack of voice the community had in some of the plans for the spin-off housing project of the initiative, wondering: "is it because ... they don't have a position of power or they're not paying?" (p. 20).

**Hidden Power.** Hidden power was clearly present in Community B, as participants provided specific examples of times when they did not have knowledge over who had decision-making power. Multiple participants named instances of hidden power, particularly when it came to access to the initiative and to money. For example, Participant 6 was unaware of who selected who made it into the leadership program: Participant 12 did not know what all of the criteria for being accepted into the leadership program were. The major donor behind the initiative's spin-off project remained anonymous for some time. Hidden power made it easier for powerful stakeholders to make decisions without attracting attention or scrutiny.

### **Perceived Impact of Power Dynamics in Community B**

All participants in Community B that answered this question spoke about the negative impacts that power had.

As Participant 8 shared:

I think you immediately are aware when they're [funders] in the room, you're kind of thinking about what you're saying and how you're saying it. You're really hesitant to bring up anything that maybe make you look like you're not, you know, like, there's weaknesses. I mean, I think those power dynamics are so palpable when there's certain people in those-in those rooms. (p. 13)

Participant 9 admitted to not dealing so well with the impacts often power dynamics and described them as sometimes “really hard and stressful” (p. 21).

### **Comparison to Power in Home Organizations in Community B**

Similar to Community A, most meaningful responses to this question were similar to those in other communities, and thus are discussed later in this chapter. Participant 5 found there were additional challenges with CI as compared to other organizations, “Um, well, it does get



more complicated and more personalities of course, the more- and the bigger it is, the more players that are at the table” (p. 12).

### **Summary of Community B**

Community B was shaped deeply by the foundation roots and resources behind its launch, governance, and support of spin-off projects. Like Community A, power is relatively centralized. Foundations exerted a great deal of control over who engaged in the initiative: they hired the initial consultants, facilitated and likely had a hand in selecting participants in the leadership program, and had their staff lead some of the major project functions. Ethnicity was also a source of power dynamics and tensions. The relationship with Natives was mostly described in ways that “othered” them. For example, training was offered on how to work with the Native community and understand their traditions as part of the leadership program.

Participant 9 indicated that they had to

Walk on eggshells with this piece because I don't know when the next offense is going to come where somebody's gonna give meaning to something that doesn't even exist. But it's gonna be, you know, a black eye to contend with. (p. 32).

Overall, participants found managing power dynamics to be stressful. This stress seemed linked to interactions with funders and their power, as well as challenges navigating tensions related to race and ethnicity. The CI initiative was simultaneously viewed as having more complicated power dynamics, but an easier path to impact than government and other organizations.

### **Community C Narrative**

The participants interviewed for Community C included one consultant, two funders, and one backbone representative. Less information is available due to the smaller group size of

Community C (four as compared to six for the other two communities). Documents reviewed included the initiative's website and documents related to a federal grant they received.

Community C includes multiple largely rural areas, where “there really is a culture of taking care of each other” (Participant 13, p. 5). The target area of the CI work includes over 2,000 square miles and over 150,000 individuals spread across several counties (Federal Grant Plan). The largest county in the area has approximately 90,000 residents as of 2018 and was over 90% white (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). A lack of emergency shelter and this culture of care means unsheltered homelessness is largely nonexistent (Participant 13). The concept of homelessness may therefore be primarily viewed as belonging to those whom, by the federal definition, are technically at-risk of homelessness, living with others in housing that is not their own (Participant 13).

The CI initiative under study serves a specific subpopulation of people experiencing homelessness. This group was viewed as underserved in the current system (Participant 17). The provider community is small, with “one of everything” (every type of service provider; Participant 16, p. 11). A subgroup of the CoC eventually grew into this population-focused CI initiative, though participants have different views on how closely this work adheres to the CI model. Participant 16, who had other experiences with CI efforts, described this effort as “the most organic” of the ones they had been involved with (p. 9). A foundation provided a seed grant for someone to convene this group, and then additional money to collect data on the target population of people experiencing homelessness, support grant writing and initial planning efforts for a federal funding opportunity, and outreach efforts once that grant had been won (Participant 14).

Due to the federal funding the group received to carry out this project, they created additional committees to carry the workload. The core structure of the initiative includes three primary committees: a consumer board composed of members of the initiative's target service population, service provider representatives or "in the weeds service sector people", and a group of local champions, open to funders and other community members who expressed excitement about this work (Participant 13, p. 9). The consumer committee is a requirement of the federal funding Community C received. The three groups are intended to be equal (Participant 13). How to make these groups function well together is still evolving.

Similar to Community A, Community C includes a Community of Practice that has representation from the CI initiative. Assembled by one of the major funders, it includes three to four other grantees and meets quarterly to discuss systems change (Participant 13).

As Participant 16 reflected, there were multiple "points of power" in Community C, including coordinators of the initiative and community members who took a role in organizing it (p. 14). While Community C and Community A shared the CoC as a central leadership body, power was more formally and clearly delineated in Community A.

## **Constructions and Experiences of Power in Community C**

### ***Identity***

**Committee versus Community.** The major arena in which power was experienced or witnessed in Community C was interactions between the three groups within the initiative. These groups attempted to influence or shape the work of the others on different occasions. The dynamics most frequently mentioned were those that implied attempts to manage or control the consumer group, which included members of the target population being served, and disagreements between the provider and champion groups. As Participant 17 described, "and,

um, there were meetings, um, and [one group] would self-invite themselves to their [consumer] meetings. So in the early iteration of this, it was more [one group] talking at [consumers], talking over them, um, you know, not really fostering their participation” (p. 7).

Participant 14 shared the tensions between the approach and vision of the initiative and the reality of incorporating consumers into the process,

...they [members of the provider group] said that you know, there isn't anything that that initiative does that the [consumers] aren't - that doesn't come from the [consumers], and I was like really blown away by that...[b]ecause that's unusual, it felt like a power shift to me and I was really intrigued and really inspired by that. (p. 12)

However, Participant 14 later acknowledged that they had heard from others that the consumers may not be as involved as they initially thought, and that having the consumer group was a requirement of the federal funding they received.

Tensions also arose between service providers and the champion's group. Participant 17 described a situation where the champion's group tried to explore alternative housing models:

The people engaged in business as usual who want community involved, who were really threatened by the fact that here was this group just trying to see, "Are there different ways we can go at this? You know, if we come with a different mindset, um, are there options for providing housing and congregate housing?" (p. 9)

The feeling of being threatened is a signifier of power. Community members may have been perceived as fighting the status quo of power in the CoC, which was set by the nonprofit

providers. The tension here reveals the frustration of someone who has perhaps not normally been part of “business as usual” expecting that working with a CI engagement would offer different opportunities and power structures. Ultimately, this same participant stated multiple times that, when they were involved, it did not appear that the community was ready for this kind of work.

### ***Resources***

**Relationships.** In Community C, one participant described that things in CI initiatives “only works based on um, how, well the relationships work. And how well there’s somebody who can maneuver those type of dynamics” (Participant 15, p. 6). Relationships with the local housing authority were used to gain access to housing units (Participant 16). As in Community B, relationships proved a helpful way to acquire resources.

### **Perceived Impact of Power Dynamics in Community C**

Only one participant in Community C spoke to the impact of power dynamics, and, after struggling to describe her own experience, answered they were “different for everybody” (Participant 16). This description alone did not yield enough information for analysis, and thus is excluded from the broader themes.

### **Comparison to Power in Home Organizations in Community C**

Beyond Participant 16 stating power was “hardly even present... when you have specific organizational and reporting structures...it’s like easy” (p. 25). From their perspective, organizational dynamics were much easier to manage. Participant 17 described the scope within a singular organization as being much narrower. Participants tended to focus their responses on how the size or other aspects of CI made it different than other organizations, rather than describing how the feeling of the power dynamics differed.

## Summary of Community C

Community C's powerful partners included funders and government (via HUD funding), but its power dynamics revolved around the dynamics between the multiple committees involved with the partnership. These dynamics seemed especially visible between consumer representatives and other committees, as there was talk about having to manage consumers, concern about how to best use their insights, stories of consumers being talked over, and concerns about how deeply they were integrated into the initiative. The issue of power dynamics between committees reinforces that even in collaborative models, hierarchy is still at work. Evidence of this came out in several quotations from Community C interviewees, such as Participant 17's:

The leader of that group would come to the larger table, you know, a very special young man...[a]nd as he was trying to present his report, you know, uh, one leader, in particular, would just talk over him, um, just like, interrupt his report and start to talk. And I remember once saying to that person, 'You know, when the meeting [unintelligible 00:21:31], oh, I think we'd really like to hear from [redacted].' (p. 7)

Funders and providers appeared especially powerful, while community members had some power but were limited in their influence. Community C, more so than other communities, viewed organizational dynamics as easier to manage than ones in CI.

## Conclusion and Integration of the Community Narratives

This section focused on the sub-themes that were present in each community but not shared across all three cases, focusing on those that appeared the most tied to the unique context of each community. Table 4.6 shows the themes and sub-themes that emerged from this analysis. All three cases had major themes revolving around resources: however, the sub-

themes varied. Resource power of all kinds appeared more present in Community B. Because it had a less centralized structure, Community B may have had more space to accommodate other types of resource power beyond money. The theme of identity also came up in all three of the communities, revealing that the dominant identity groups in communities tended to have power. For Community A and B, that dominance largely focused on race/ethnicity and gender: for Community C, it was those partners who were already tied to legitimate power structures like the CoC or funding sources. Structures and processes were especially important in Community A, as were framing and communication: these were two of the main venues through which the most powerful partners intentionally exerted their power. The structure of Community A was also the most extensive because it essentially included an existing CoC. In both Community A and B, those who spoke the loudest attained more power. Finally, Community B had a significant amount of hidden power in terms of how it operated, allowing funders to exert more power behind the scenes. I discuss more about why these differences may have occurred across communities in Chapter 5.

Table 4.6

*Unique Themes and Subthemes Highlighted in the Three Cases*

Theme and Subthemes	Present in Case
<b>Identity</b>	<b>A, B, C</b>
...LGBTQ+	A
...Race and Ethnicity	A, B
...Gender	B
...Committee vs. Community	C
<b>Resources</b>	<b>A, B, C</b>
...Power in Numbers	A
...Dependence	B
...Expertise	B
...Relationships	B, C
<b>Structures and Processes</b>	<b>A, B</b>
...Facilitation	A, B
...Operational Procedures	A
...Agenda Setting	A
<b>Framing and Communication</b>	<b>A, B</b>
...Common Agenda	A
...Being Vocal	A, B
<b>Hidden Power</b>	B

**Themes from Interviews Across all Three Cases**

Below, I review the themes that came up across all three of the communities under study. Within each major theme, I offer examples from each of the communities. I excluded codes or subthemes where only one person in the community mentioned them, unless there was something significant about those comments (e.g., an insight that expressed a new viewpoint not present in the literature or otherwise in the study, seemed especially surprising, or triggered more questions, or an emotional response), so as to focus on shared experiences. I include



sub-subthemes that are not necessarily present in all three communities to show the nuances within the shared themes. Table 4.7 lists all of the themes, sub-themes, and sub-subthemes that emerged from this analysis.

Table 4.7

*Themes and Subthemes Highlighted in All Three Cases*

Theme	Subthemes in Case	Sub-subthemes
Resources	Financial resources Labor	Lack of resources and resource competition
Identity	Multiple roles	
Structures and Processes	Hierarchy Decision-making processes	
Framing and Communication	Frames about CI	
Resistance		
Formal Leadership		
Absence of Power	Choosing not to use power	

***Resources***

Power is constructed through the presence of resources. Resources showed up in every initiative as being central to how power was experienced – they gave individual actors the ability to influence the initiative, and in some cases begin the initiative. They also provided partners the opportunity to be at the table for decision-making processes.

**Financial Resources.** Foundations were coded as powerful partners more frequently than any other stakeholder type. Funders initiated the initiatives and Communities of Practice,

facilitated meetings, decided who participated in the Communities of Practice, and served on committees with decision-making power. Participant 15 captured the extreme importance of foundations and their resources well: "...what do you have if you don't have the money to kind of force people, use the power and put it over them... What else do you have?" (p. 12). In Community A, People attended CoP meetings to stay in funders' good graces (Participant 11). Foundations paid for the CoP and its consultants: as Participant 4 described, "So, uh, one of the local foundations I think has more money than most countries I think. Um, they said you need to form a community practice, you need to figure your stuff out" (p. 18).

Federal funding was also a dominating force in Community A's initiative, so much so that the initiative had to reorient to ensure other partners who were not receiving federal funding felt included. Government was the second-most frequently identified powerful partner. Indeed, the work of Continuums of Care and the associated CI initiatives is dictated by the federal government (Participant 1), who provide the vast majority of funding for homeless assistance work. HUD regulations shape governance for these initiatives, with requirements specific to how the CoC operates, makes decisions, and sets up its committees. In Communities A and C, backbone representatives, who were essentially federal government representatives, served as coordinators of entire initiatives and of specific committees. The backbone organization, or backbone function in the case where a separate organization is lacking, is a crucial piece of the CI model and has specific responsibilities. Their role in the CI model legitimizes them having power and authority over partners. As Participant 15, a backbone representative shared, "[u]sually, when we show up in a committee meeting, uh, any of our staff is expected to um, facilitate, take the lead, do something, you know, or some follow up" (p. 2).

Differing values around inclusion of the LGBTQi community illuminated power dynamics revealed power struggles between publicly (federally funded) and privately funded providers in Community A: as Participant 7 shared, “they [privately funded service providers] don't want the government to tell ‘em they have to serve LGBTQ[i] people” (p. 23). For HUD providers, regulations dictate that providers must be inclusive and serve LGBTQi populations or risk losing access to federal funding. There are more providers that receive public funding than not: because of this, they have more influence (Participant 3). However, a lack of dependence on HUD money was also a source of power: as Participant 10 described, “I'm not being funded through like HUD or places like that, so I don't have to have those guidelines. And so I'm not gonna implement them until I have to if that makes sense” (p. 6). Partners’ ability to make decisions that would not necessarily cost them access to resources offered them more freedom and control.

The power of being able to provide funding was deeply felt in Community B. As Participant 8 indicated:

I mean, I think when you enter into a room, you’re really conscious at that level of who the players are and what level they’re at. And I mean, an example would be, you know, when there’s a representative, like the CEO from the [local foundation] in the room, everyone is on point. Because... this person has so much power in our community. I mean, they give away literally millions of dollars to this small area in [redacted], where these grants, they just fund innovative work. (p. 13)

In Community C, Participant 16 reflected on another participant’s power because she had been awarded funds: “[a]nd so she, you know- she really was more of like a program

implementer, um, so in that sense, held a lot of power because a lot of her funds were awarded to her agency” (p. 16). Local funders shaped major aspects of the Community C initiative through their grant requirements, which included having MOUs and partnership agreements in place (Participant 14).

***Lack of Financial Resources and Resource Competition.*** The absence of resources reinforces that access to resources is a source of power. Organizations competed for funding from federal and local government, as well as local foundations. As Participant 7 in Community B shared, “There was, um, a lot of concern about one particular agency getting all the money and that came up a lot and that agency wasn't even at the table” (p. 25). Participant 11, speaking of the situation at Community of Practice meetings in Community A, described a competitive environment that resulted from general the lack of funding available to service providers. Participant 7 described the backbone’s board as “working on not being territorial and not- the abundance approach and not the scarcity approach” (p. 25). As Participant 14 described of Community C, “They're [providers are] just coming together because they care about the same issue. So then when those groups come, and all of a sudden there’s \$150,000 it, uh- it can cause a lot of tension” (p. 8). Turf conflict was one type of conflict that showed up in Community A, representing a struggle for resources and power between different partners.

**Labor.** Service providers, agencies providing services to people experiencing homelessness, were also perceived as powerful due to the ability to fulfill the service requirements of the initiative. As Participant 4, a backbone representative, described: “And so, how it relates to a power dynamic, while we may be the backbone organization, we are 100% reliant on everybody else to **do the work** [emphasis mine], and do it properly” (p. 29). The

backbone could make requests, coordinated responses, and deliver consequences, but ultimately could not deliver the services to people experiencing homelessness.

Labor external to the initiatives also proved vital to its success. All three of the communities leveraged outside consultants at some point in their CI work to help them achieve their goals. Consultants were especially influential in shaping the Community of Practice in Community A. In Community B, consultants were brought in initially to lead the CI effort, before it was handed off a foundation to serve as the backbone. The consultant moved to the city to help launch it, working very closely with local philanthropists (Anonymous, 2016). Often funded by foundations, they also represented an extension of their power and influence over the initiatives. Without their external support, the initiatives may have not been able to launch or would have taken much longer to do so. Across all of the initiatives, resource power appears to be primarily derived from access to financial resources, and secondarily by having the tools to carry out the projects required by that funding.

**Identity.** In each community, certain constructions of identity were perceived as having more power than others. The factors of identity that were most salient and most likely to lead to conflict varied by community, though in each case the largest groups and/or the dominant identity (e.g. white, male) seemed to prevail. The sub-theme that arose in every community was that of multiple roles and identities yielding more power, which is explored below.

**Multiple Roles.** In some cases, multiple roles within the partnership led to increased influence. In Community A, those that serve on the board of the backbone also lead some of the backbone's working committees and participate in the steering committee for the Community of Practice. As Participant 4 described, there were consequences of this:

Um, [provider executive directors'] voice opinion seems to get magnified because they have a role in setting these agendas or setting these strategic plans or whatever. And they can participate in all these other levels of conversation, so it's not just during board meetings, but it's also during [the] Council ... also during workgroups.

(p. 12)

Another participant described the “echo chamber” feel that resulted from having so many of the same people in the same meetings (Participant 3, p. 7). In Community B, some of the backbone organization's staff also served on the governing council, potentially giving them multiple points of decision-making power. The mayor served on both the governing and funding council. Staff for the spin-off organization had initially served on the governing council. Additionally, the major local funder in Community C also provided technical assistance to its grantees, making it a source of funding and expert power. Having the same people serve in multiple roles amplified their voices and ability to impact the work of the initiative. It also crowded out the voices of others who may have represented viewpoints outside the traditional representations of leadership, such as community members, racial or ethnic minorities, and people experiencing homelessness (though people experiencing homelessness were a part of some of these committees).

**Structures and Processes.** Structures and processes were experienced as creating and maintaining power constructions in each initiative. For example, as discussed above, having certain people serve in leadership roles in multiple structures allowed them access to more power. Hierarchy that elevated certain committees or structures over others and decision-making processes were also areas where power was constructed.

**Hierarchy.** Each of the initiatives under study had multiple committees involved with governing the CI initiative. Community A and B each had clear hierarchies for decision-making and approval; in Community A, it was the board that oversaw the backbone organization, and in Community B it was the backbone function that had the ultimate authority. Some committees were more visible than others: while some communities listed each of their committees online with members of each committee included, some committees' members were much more difficult to find. Tensions around power imbalances plagued some of the committees, as Participant 5 shared: "... and that's been part of the learning curve, of kind of working out the dynamics of what is each one's [committee's] role" (p. 8). In Community C, though the backbone responsibilities were a bit more unclear, it was clear that funder and provider-focused committees enjoyed more power than the consumer one did. A major theme across initiatives was lack of community voice and power and construction of power structures that mirrored those of existing settings, which I discuss more in Chapter 5.

**Decision-making Processes.** In Community A, decision-making authority is given primarily to those at the backbone organization and on the backbone's board within the initiative, reinforcing existing hierarchy. As Participant 4 shared about the backbone,

Sometimes we do have to make those hard decisions and say, "Look, this is just the way it's gonna be. We heard what you said, we appreciate that but we have to make an ultimate decision." But we try not to if we don't have to. (p. 23)

Settling on a decision-making process within the initiatives had its own associated dynamics, and proved challenging in some instances. For example, in Community A, deciding on a decision-making process caused tension in the Community of Practice, where a fifteen-minute exercise ended up taking up the entire meeting time (Participant 11). Decision-making is

informed but seemingly not driven by those with lived experience, another sign that CI initiatives may sometimes simply elevate those with existing power rather than shift it to other stakeholders. This finding ties into what has already been discussed around identity and resources elevating the power of already-powerful partners. This is a recurring meta-theme that I explore further in Chapter 5.

In Community B, the challenges of group decision-making came up frequently. It was also sometimes unclear who made the final decisions about different items, particularly in the context of the leadership program (Participant 5). This was perhaps a consequence of having no separate backbone organization and the desire of various donors and foundations to remain anonymous when it came to their participation.

In Community C, Participant 14 talked decision-making among grantees: “it helps us know that they've at least had some conversations about decision making, um, which I think is where a lot of power stuff or power issues comes in for sure” (p. 8). Participant 17 discussed having a decision made about their role that involved only “a few people” (p. 8). This mirrors earlier findings around power being centralized among a small group of already-powerful stakeholders.

**Framing and Communication.** Framing and communication were used to construct power, particularly by powerful partners. Framing was raised in the context of having or setting a common agenda, one of the five main elements CI. The common agenda is comprised of the shared goals of all of the partners within the initiative. Framing is broader than this and draws on the idea of discourse. Frames were identified in interviews as instances where a set of messages related the initiative were actively used consistently to make sense of or create a concept or idea. Frames were also used to justify the target population served by the initiative or



message what the work was to participants. In the communities under study, the frames were usually developed by formal leadership within the initiatives.

Within Community A, framing was used to merge the idea of the CoC and CI (Participant 1). Community A participants also wrestled with who should have the right to frame their work: Participant 1 questioned how much control and power foundations should have over the narrative and the work of the CI effort. Fear of creating the wrong narrative also factored in to how the backbone dealt with other partners, as is discussed later.

Frames were used to acquire buy-in in Community B, as Participant 9 shared with a colleague:

Well, if you want the community to care, if you want them to cherish this asset and get behind this and you want this community to care, in order to change minds and hearts [redacted name], I have to educate them and I do that best when I'm with them, painting this vision, painting this mission, showing them the picture, they feel it, and it transforms them. (p. 22)

In Community B, Participant 8 described that in committee meetings with funders, “when they say something, I think you generally see, um, the solutions being led in those areas” (p. 13).

In Community C, the initiative had “the ethic was nothing for [consumers] without [consumer] voice, [consumer] involvement. And so, there was a [consumer advisory] board” (Participant 17, p. 7). This frame was driven by the requirements of the federal grant and the tension in upholding it created conflict between partners around the degree to which this was honored. The power of framing was summarized well by Participant 15, who was not tied to any of three communities, observed, “...when you know how to control the message, and when it's a

simple message ... you can actually utilize that to make a powerful statement and create power for yourself” (p. 9).

**Frames about CI.** How CI is framed is part of what gives the model power. Participant 8 had very specific reaction to one frame about CI: “it was so funny to me how they [the consultants] describe Collective Impact. Like we're here to help you come together as a fractured community with scarce resources to solve these huge problems” (pp. 5–6). Frames like this portray CI as paternalistic and deficit-based. Hearing a description like this could reduce belief in efficacy of the model and make it less likely participants would view it as legitimate. Alternatively, Participant 12 in Community A referred to the CI initiative as “a way to show that movement” (p. 14) in the same direction as a community. Here, CI became a tool and symbol of progress.

Community C offered another frame. As Participant 14 described,

People are just connected to it [CI] because I think it is very much like our-- It's familiar because it feels like an organizational kind of model structure rather than something more organic like, uh, in networks I think because there isn't that, um, true accountability between organizations.

The familiarity of the structure of CI, because it was constructed in a familiar way, may have given it more legitimacy. Each of these frames represent very different views of the model, which may have shaped individual experiences with the initiatives. If shared by multiple people, they could easily have influenced how the initiatives, the work they did, and how the power dynamics within were viewed.

**Resistance.** Participants were asked specifically about instances of resistance during the interview process. Resistance was coded as instances where either participant answered

questions specifically about instances of resistance or shared stories where someone refused to act or go along with a decision that was made. An example came from Participant 17 in Community C, who described an effort to implement a different kind housing program: “the folks around the agency table whose feet are in the cement of, ‘We’ve always done it this way,’ um, really [were] putting up roadblocks to those efforts rather than encouragement” (p. 10).

Resistance happened between multiple parties: providers and providers, providers and community members, etc. It emerged around issues where changes were made to processes, especially in areas related to providers’ values. As Participant 7 in Community A shared,

the [redacted] team wanted to add questions about [redacted] to the intake. And people were upset about that and said, “I’m not going to ask my 50-year old man to come to my shelters, they don’t-- it’s not gonna be okay. They won’t come.... (p. 9)

Participant 8 described resistance to some of the proposals around the spin-off project in Community B. As they shared,

And so, I’ve definitely brought it up. Some of it is just-- I-- it’s just being kind of resistant to what’s already in place. And I find it interesting ‘cause one of the arguments we get for like fencing and like metal detectors and all this is, “well we promised the community...”

Resistance offered a way for stakeholders to influence efforts, and proved particularly important for those partners who had less power than others. Each of the examples above involved resistance from a less-powerful party or a person representing a less-powerful group’s interests.

**Formal Leadership.** Separate questions were asked about power and leadership to discern how the concepts were related in participants’ minds. Powerful partners and leaders

often corresponded exactly. Leadership was often associated with agenda setting, ability to create frames, and leading and facilitating meetings. Multiple participants noted clear leaders in each initiative. Backbone organizations or their individual representatives were named as leaders in each of the cases under study. In Community A, Participant 1 named a foundation that placed themselves into a leadership role on homelessness. The backbone representatives and its board were setting agendas, facilitating meetings, etc. In Community B, two different participants named the backbone as the leader of the effort, and the head of the organization that hosted the backbone function as “number one in command” (Participant 6, p. 9). In Community C, Participant 14 reflected on the concept of leadership more broadly and in the context of power dynamics:

The only frame of reference we have I think sometimes is what we think of as a good leader in an organization, um, or what some people think of as a good leader in an organization.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Participant 14: ... some person who holds power and, um, you know, can help us find the answer and, you know, points the direction, and get everyone to fall in line and follow. I see that type of leadership that [unintelligible] model in some cases just being applied in these collaborative or network structures when really I think what could more be most effective is much more of a shared leadership. And you know sometimes we used to call it distributive leadership, you know, and I don't know. I feel like there's a need for a new word or something where even when we hear the word leadership, it's like we just think of it as like, uh, a person with vested power or something. (p. 22)

From their perspective, the “Great Man” theory of leadership spilled over from organizations into CI initiatives: a single, heroic individual holding power and leading the way for their followers. Leadership positions were held by those with positional power, legitimacy (as members of backbone organizations), and people with resources, as is often the case in organizations.

**Absence of Power.** Perhaps the most surprising result of this study, given the many different perceptions of power that arose in interviews, is that some participants revealed that they did not experience or witness power dynamics as part of their CI experience. Participant 10 in Community A declared “...there are more people that are more outspoken than others, I guess. Um, I think that's just their personality but nobody really stands out to me like, you know what I mean, as powerful” (p. 5). Similar to Community A, power was not necessarily visible to Community B participants. Participant 12 noted, when asked specifically about outsized influence, said no partners had it in the leadership program.

**Choosing Not to Use Power.** Sometimes, the absence of power came from the participant themselves choosing not to influence the partnership in any way, despite the fact that they had the ability to do so. For example, Participant 14 (in Community C) and Participant 3 (in Community A), when asked about a time they tried to exert influence over the partnership, could not think of a specific example or noted it as something that rarely happened. Their dominant identity characteristics (both are white) and high degree of power may have made them oblivious to times when they did wield their influence, however. Participant 3 described themselves as being “mostly there as an observer” who did not vote (p. 11); Participant 6 in Community A shared: “I'm not one of the people that's gonna set the agenda or anything like that” (p. 15).

Participant 4 expressed consciously withholding power they had to “hold a level of fidelity to that collective impact model, um, with those, you know, kind of core components, uh, as opposed to us just saying, “We’re the CoC, here’s what it is, do it” (Participant 4, p. 23). The collaborative of spirit of CI seemed to signal to partners that using their power was not always acceptable. There was also discussion of the fear of ramifications of using power the backbone has, as Participant 4 shared:

[Redacted] is the biggest shelter in the community. Single biggest. Uh, has a lot of great connections across the community, especially the funding community...If we were to say, ... ‘You guys in this piece or whatever, are doing shit work’...The narrative could be to other providers or to the foundations or whatever, that [the backbone] sucks.

This ability to harm their reputation, which might damage their legitimacy as well, is something the backbone worked hard to avoid.

One of the powerful partners in Community C spoke both about actively abdicating power as well as discomfort with using it. As Participant 14 shared, “I mean, some days I just wanna say, “Designate one person to be [chuckles] you know, one to contact me,” but that doesn’t feel right” (p. 9). Power proved to be uncomfortable to wield, reinforcing the association most had with power dynamics being negative.

**Summary of Data on Research Question 1.** The first research question focused on how power and power asymmetries were experienced, constructed, and understood by participants in cross-sector partnerships. This section focused on commonalities in these themes across initiatives. Power was primarily constructed through resources, identity, structures and processes, framing and communication, resistance, and formal leadership. Throughout these

themes, there were common threads of partners with positional power maintaining and magnifying their power through each of these mechanisms. Resistance was one of the few manifestations that appeared to allow the voices of more marginalized groups to emerge. Interestingly, despite it appearing omnipresent for so many, for some, power was absent or something to be avoided. I explore these tensions and contradictions further in Chapter 5.

**Perceived Impact of Power Dynamics.** The second research question sought to understand the impacts of power dynamics, which appeared to vary widely. Participants were not always able to reflect on these dynamics, as not all participants saw or experienced power. Impacts named were largely negative: nearly three times as many statements were coded negative than positive in response to the question about this. Words used included:

- “not been happy” (Participant 7, p. 23)
- “really hard” (Participant 9, p. 21)
- “stressful” (Participant 9, p. 21)

Participant 17 in Community C felt they made her feel misunderstood: “I felt like I was speaking Greek and they were speaking Russian” (p. 16). Participants also described adopting management techniques, including self-care and facilitation, to manage the power dynamics.

However, not all mentions of dynamics were negative. Participant 1 reflected on it expanding their ability to work with many different individuals.

Others did not have a positive or negative experience with power dynamics. Participant 3 in Community A described that the dynamics did not “rattle me or make me feel weird or anything” (p. 15). Though that personal experience itself was relatively neutral, the suggestion that it could have made them “feel weird” is worth noting. Others described varied experiences, describing dealing with the dynamics as “up and down” (Participant 15, p. 15).

**Summary of Data on Research Question 2.** The second research question asked how participants perceived the impact of power dynamics on them and their work. The impacts of power were varied but were mostly associated with negative emotions. Participants also spoke of having to manage the power dynamics. It is notable that despite these negative feelings, so many people seemed to have positive experiences with the partnerships overall. I explore this tension further in Chapter 5.

**Comparison to Power in Home Organizations.** The third research question probed how the experience of power in cross-sector partnerships compared to participants' experience of it in their home organizations. Participants typically defaulted to describing differences in how the two settings operated rather than differences in power dynamics per se. Participants often described the dynamics within CI initiatives as more complicated. Across cases, most comparisons were about how CI compared to government, which is examined in more detail below.

**Comparison to Government.** Comparisons between the experience within the CI initiative and experiences of local government indicated a deeper sense of equality and less hierarchy in CI initiatives. As Participant 3, a government-affiliated respondent, indicated: "it's [the Collective Impact work] much more a collection of equals than city government is" (p. 16). They also referred to government as "so much more top down" (p. 16). Power in government came from more limited sources, whereas in CI initiatives, the ability to influence CI was more shared.

Participant 2 described that unlike in their experience with government, in CI "there was a concerted effort to pull anybody who had a voice to the table," (p. 14) reflecting a theme of inclusivity that appeared across all the initiatives (and is discussed more in Chapter 5).



Participant 15 reflected on how hierarchy seemed to matter more than competence in government settings:

I mean, there are complexities but I really think um, government is just very, very much driven by uh, who's in charge ... it's the best person in charge with collective impact, um, even if it's not a strong person who is in the right position, it will resolve itself over time. (p. 20)

Generally, CI seemed to be viewed as a positive alternative to government, one that included more shared power and participation and less hierarchy.

**Summary of Research Question 3.** Participants mostly believed CI initiatives' power dynamics were complicated and created challenges, but more inclusive and less hierarchical than single organizations. Government in particular was highlighted as being more bureaucratic and less inclusive of other voices than CI.

### **Integration of Findings of Case Studies and Individual Interviews**

Certain themes in each research question appeared across all initiatives, despite their differing contexts. In constructions and experiences of resource power, the themes across all cases and interviews fell into five categories:

- resources,
- structures and processes,
- identity,
- framing and communication,
- resistance,
- and formal leadership.

Often, formal leadership could, and did, have power in each of these categories: they were often members of dominant identity groups, had money and legitimacy, and oversaw several committees. Any resistance from less-powerful groups was generally not enough to overcome this. Money proved to be a dominant way through which power was constructed. Many of the way these themes were constructed appeared to mirror dynamics in single organizations and society more broadly: partners with money, members of dominant identity groups, and hierarchical structures were all the top of the power field in CI initiatives. However, groups interestingly seemed to consistently struggle to describe differences between CI and organizational settings or align on what those differences were, except in the case of government, and though many described positive experiences with CI, most associated managing power dynamics within these initiatives in a negative way. These contradictions, which I surmise are driven by the positive framing of CI as a method of inclusive social change, are discussed more in Chapter V.

### **Chapter Summary and Conclusion**

This interpretive phenomenological study was designed to answer three research questions, the broadest and largest of which was how participants defined, constructed, and experienced power in cross-sector partnerships. I examined the experience of power in three different CI initiatives in three different communities and across 17 interviewees. Semi-structured interviews and analysis of key documents revealed multiple dimensions to experiences of power. Power was experienced and constructed through discussion of resources, identity, structures and processes, framing and communication, resistance, and formal leadership. While common themes stretched across these initiatives, each also had its own unique patterns, including around who powerful partners were, how power was exerted (or not exerted), and what

kinds of conflicts arose around identity. These dynamics appeared to be shaped by who started the initiatives and variations in community context around each of the themes (identity, for example). This idea is discussed more in Chapter 5. Interestingly, the data also revealed that some participants did not see or experience power dynamics at all in the CI setting. For those who did experience power, they named primarily negative impacts. Comparisons of CI to single organizations also varied, with some seeing CI as more inclusive and easier to navigate as far as power dynamics were concerned, while others viewed it as making things more complicated and moving more slowly.

In Chapter V, I elaborate on the themes in these findings and how these compare to the extant leadership on power and collaboration, working to interpret their meanings and significance. I also discuss what implications these findings have for the field, suggest areas for future study, and provide closing reflections on the research.

## **Chapter V: Discussion**

Power dynamics in cross-sector partnerships have been widely understudied. This dissertation was designed to help remedy this gap by providing new information on how power is constructed, defined, experienced, and made meaning of by CI initiative participants. The research questions of this study are:

- How are power and power asymmetries experienced, constructed, and understood by individual participants in cross-sector partnerships?
- How do individuals perceive the impact of power dynamics on them and their work?
- How does the experience of power in cross-sector partnerships compare to their experience of it in their home organizations?

The results in Chapter IV revealed themes across research questions about how power presents and impacts participants, including that power was often constructed through resources, structures and processes, identity, resistance, formal leadership, and framing and communication. How power presents varies based on the context, as the community narratives revealed. Perhaps most surprisingly, power is not always experienced or visible in CI initiatives. The impacts of dealing with power dynamics were mostly negative for participants. Participant views varied on how power dynamics in CI initiatives compared to power dynamics in single organizations, but they generally viewed CI as less hierarchical and more equitable than government settings. In this chapter, I explore these findings in more detail, discussing how the findings answer the research questions, how they compare to the literature, what they mean for leadership and change theory and practice, and potential directions for future research. I also describe the unique significance and contribution of this study, introduce a revised model of CI, and note the study's limitations.

A note for the reader on the language in this chapter: I attempt to use phenomenological language, recognizing power as an experience rather than a “real” object. However, occasionally I use language such as “power was” or “power is” instead of “power was experienced as” as shorthand for these ideas to increase the readability of the analysis below.

### **Reflection on Differences Between Communities**

In Chapter IV, I explored themes that emerged in all three communities and those that were raised in only two or one. While common themes stretched across these initiatives, each also had its own unique patterns, including who powerful partners were and how power was exerted (or not exerted). Many of these differences seem to be explained by the context and who began these initiatives. In Community A, the CI initiative was simply an expansion of the existing CoC, and thus seemed to absorb its infrastructure, existing power sources, and focus on homelessness, an issue area that has a defined set of leaders. The CoC and CI were synonymous, and CI appeared to be used primarily to frame the work in a more inclusive way. However, perhaps because it aligned so closely with the existing hierarchical CoC structure, sub-themes around structure and processes were more pronounced here than even in Community C, whose initiative began as part of the CoC’s work but seemed to evolve to include other structures, like the consumer committee. In Community B, local foundations and donors funded CI because it was an opportunity to address interconnected social issues at once: they chose the focus, brought in other partners, and built a pipeline of people to contribute to the initiative through the leadership program. In Community C, there was a combination of these forces, as well as a more elevated and formal role for consumers. However, the service providers and CoC lead were the initial sources of the initiative. It appears that the initiators of these projects, who served as sponsors and conveners of these efforts, ultimately retained power throughout them and shaped

decision-making processes and ways of operating. As Huxham and Vangen (2000) described, dominant conveners can deeply influence collaborative partnerships: that seems to be the case here.

Other differences between the communities occurred along some of the other key theme areas. For example, race and ethnicity came up within the identity theme because of the large Native population in Community B. In Community A, the disproportionate whiteness of the CoC made how race affects power relations more visible. The relationship sub-theme emerged in Communities B and C, where there were perhaps less clearly defined power relationships and perhaps more room for informal interpersonal relationships to have influence. These themes are not just sources of power, but variables that change how power is experienced. Next, I discuss and link together all the themes and sub-themes that emerged in this study.

### **Review of All Themes**

Below, I weave together the themes revealed in the community narratives and across all interviews to make further meaning of the study results. Table 5.1 reveals the themes and sub-themes in research question 1 (How are power and power asymmetries experienced, constructed, and understood by individual participants in cross-sector partnerships?), whether or not they align with extant literature, and what gaps or questions remain. I examine the remaining two research questions separately.

Table 5.1

*Themes and Subthemes in How Power and Power Asymmetries are Experienced, Constructed, and Understood (Research Question 1)*

Theme	Subthemes in Case	Appears in Literature
Resources	Financial Resources	Yes
	Labor	Yes
	Power in Numbers	No
	Dependence	Yes
	Expertise	Yes
	Relationships	Yes
Identity	Multiple Roles	No
	Race and Ethnicity	Limited
	Gender	Limited
	Committee vs. Community	Yes
Structures and Processes	Hierarchy	Yes
	Facilitation	Yes
	Operational Procedures	Yes
	Agenda Setting	Yes
	Decision-Making	Yes
Framing and Communication	Processes	
	Frames about CI	Yes
	Common Agenda	Yes
	Vocal	No
Resistance	n/a	Yes
Formal Leadership	n/a	Yes
Absence of Power	Choosing Not to Use	No
	Power	
Hidden Power	n/a	Yes

### *Experiences and Constructions of Power*

**Resources.** The power of financial resources was abundantly clear based on how often participants discussed it. Many different partners are perceived to have power or be able to lead in CI initiatives: however, those that are perceived as most powerful appeared to be those with money. These partners either have their own financial resources (such as foundations) or serve as a pass-through for funds (such as CoC leads, who are often backbone representatives). Both foundation and government partners provide financial resources and, often, governance mandates to the initiatives. The impact of money was further exemplified through the change in the energy and conversation in the room when funders were present in Community B, and by the ability to require participation in the Community of Practice in Community C.

These findings highlight the relevance of resource dependence theory (RDT) in the cross-sector setting. As described in Chapter 2, RDT posits that organizations survive when they have the resources they need from their environment, and that they use cross-sector partnerships to reduce uncertainty around receipt of these resources (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005). Service provider and other organizations need access to these financial resources and wish to be in the good graces of those that have them to protect their organization's survival. CI itself requires financial resources: the initial article on CI stated that "creating a successful collective impact initiative requires a significant financial investment" (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 41). The fact that the model requires this influx of resources privileges those who have them and forces reliance on those with money for the initiative's success. Needing their resources led to deference by others: participants generally followed what funders, or sources of funding, asked them to do, thus giving them even more decision-making power. Participant 9 put this the most bluntly when she explained to others "'Well, unless you are helping fund this work, you can't be



at that table. I'm sorry'" (p. 20). RDT could also explain why independence was a source of power within these initiatives. Interdependence, as noted in Chapter 2, is also a driver of collaboration (Wood & Gray, 1991), so it follows that dependence on other partners is one form of power that organizations have over each other. This theme is an example of when a theory created in an organizational context applies in a cross-sector setting.

Expert and relationship power, present in Community B, can be explained by French and Raven's (1959) framework, which lists these as two of the original five (later expanded) sources of interpersonal power. Relationships are sources of power and can be enabling factors for collaboration as well (Bryson et al., 2006). In some ways, labor, particularly in the case of consultants, could also be viewed as a form of expert power, or a combination of resource and expert power. However, the power to implement was not named specifically as a source of power in the literature reviewed.

Power in numbers, which came up in Community A and was not explicitly raised in the literature, is discussed more in the identity section below due to its tie to that theme. The resource power sub-themes reveal that many of the factors that enable collaboration are the same items that are viewed as sources of power once the collaboration has begun. The prevalence of resource power, particularly financial resources, and how participants responded to it, make it a dominant force in these initiatives.

**Identity.** Power was constructed at multiple levels within the CI initiative but appeared to be wielded by those from dominant identity groups or with positional power the most. Several participants also mentioned how personality conflicts between people at the CI table was a source of power dynamics. Challenges around gender, race, and sector arose within participant's stories. Groups that are in the minority in their communities (people of color or Native people,

for example) or with less formal power (community members and consumers) were consistently experienced as having lower power than their counterparts. The same power dynamics that exist in society more broadly are present in CI initiatives: marginalized identities remained marginalized, leaving existing constructions of power relationships relatively unchanged, and in some cases reinforced.

Dynamics of race, gender, etc. were rarely discussed explicitly in the academic literature in cross-sector partnerships, though they are mentioned within the practitioner literature in CI (e.g., Wolff et al., 2017). This absence may partially be due to the racial identities of the authors and their own personal awareness of race.

Identity also factored in at the organizational and sectoral levels. In her research, LeChasseur (2016) found that service providers are often framed as powerful parties, alongside individuals with high positional power. While these findings were mostly true in the context of these partnerships, funders and backbone representatives were also experienced to be dominant partners. Meanwhile, lack of community and consumer power was a major recurring theme throughout each initiative. Though Community B engaged community members (but not consumers) through their leadership program, their role was typically more that of a working group, not as decision-makers. When attempts were made to bring other partners to the table, such as in Community C, those partners appeared to not be fully integrated, which left these partners frustrated. This was also a major theme in the literature. Wolff et al. (2017) criticized CI's failure to engage community effectively, and van Tulder and Keen (2018) noted that key actors can be excluded in collaborative work. The very term "cross-sector" and the research surrounding it focus on economic sectors, which excludes the general public. Bryson et al. (2006) are a notable exception, as they consider the public as being a sector.

In contrast, powerful partners with more dominant identities had their power magnified by having multiple roles within the initiative. This nexus of resources (including the power in numbers and financial resources sub-themes in Community A), identity (being members of dominant groups), structure (being represented in multiple roles), and formal leadership (having positional power) majorly increased the power certain stakeholders could wield. This is a dominant theme explored throughout this chapter, and one of the most important themes in this study. The fact that multiple layers of identity and the associated power were experienced simultaneously validates Foot's (2016) findings that power dynamics around identity operate at multiple levels in these cross-sector partnerships.

**Structures and Processes.** Structures and processes were rife with power across initiatives. The “points of power” framework of Huxham and Beech (2009) claims that anyone can emerge as a leader during a collaborative initiative. Though there were instances of emergent leadership, across partnerships, the same types of partners appeared to be leading committees, setting agendas, and running partnerships: backbone representatives (among the most powerful partners in the collaboration) and leaders with positional authority. As described above, structure was generally an additional way for the same powerful individuals to exert power. The role of governance and structure is similarly clear in the literature, such as in Huxham's (2000) assertion that structure helps decide how much power individual stakeholders have. The idea that structure affects the amount of power different stakeholders experience aligns with my findings that structures and processes can increase the power of already-powerful stakeholders.

Beyond increasing the power of specific partners, structural power presented itself in other ways. Hierarchy is inherent to the CI model, and participants expressed this through their

recognition of who had decision-making authority. Certain committees and individuals were experienced as having more power than others, an example of a power asymmetry. Austin (2000) noted differences between organizations and collaborations that included their decision-making processes: in this study, it is not clear that those findings hold true. While more people may have been involved, decision-making power was still usually deferred to a single body or person. Power was also experienced as being present in who led and directed certain processes, such as meeting facilitation and agenda development. Part of the function of the backbone is to facilitate dialogue between partners (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). Backbone partners therefore come into these partnerships with the ability to wield control and power.

Overall, structure revealed itself as a venue through which power was constructed, and one in which partners with formal authority maintained their already high power levels. It appears this asymmetry and continued exertion of power by the same partners was largely ignored or viewed as acceptable by other participants, something I explore later in this chapter.

**Resistance.** Resistance, while not necessarily defined as a form of power, can be a signal of power's presence (Foucault, 1982; Hindess, 1996). Resistance arose around partners' attempts to impose their will, often related to one of the other sources of visible power referred to above. Largely, it came from partners who were less powerful: what felt like resistance to some may simply have been leadership from people with less power and opposing views. Resistance came when a backbone organization imposed new policies (Community A); when a consultant spoke up on behalf of consumers (Community C); and when a member of the backbone's board and committee leader asked people to ask questions related to gender identity as part of their intake process for clients (Community A). Resistance may have been attempt for less powerful partners to wield power. Despite being lower power partners, Foucault's work would indicate that

because a range of partners had at least enough power to resist, no one was completely dominated or without power. This appears to be the case in the communities under study. Community C is a good example of this. While the consumer group in the initiative had to endure being talked over, their discursive power was still important for the initiative, and important to the funder, which gave them a significance that prevented them from being totally excluded. Discursive power, as described in Chapter 2, is the power derived from believing yourself to represent a specific group (Purdy, 2012).

Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan (1998) argued that power constrains the ability for resistance. This may be true in this study, as instances of resistance were relatively limited. The amount of resistance experienced may also be skewed because no consumers were interviewed, who were more likely to be in low-power situations and may have been more likely to resist.

**Formal Leadership.** Formal leadership and power were often synonymous. Wolff et al.'s (2017) criticism that CI initiatives are often top-down efforts seems well-founded based on the initiatives under study, as people with positional power seemed to often be in decision-making roles. As Participant 14 noted, these initiatives largely carried forward leadership models from organizational settings. Some of the most influential bodies in each committee, such as the Council in Community A and the community group in Community C, tended to include the heads of different organizations. This reality aligns with LeChasseur's (2016) findings that individual change agents tend to be executives in CI initiatives and lends credibility to Lotia and Hardy's (2008) argument that collaborative efforts preserve the status quo.

Interactions between government/backbone representatives or foundations and other partners reflected deference to their needs and highlighted the power of legitimacy these leaders had. Adherence to HUD regulations, whether on governance or to meet funding requirements,

are echoed throughout the different initiatives. The reason for this legitimacy being offered, beyond dependence on powerful partner's resources, may be due to what Gordon (2002) referred to as deep structures. As he stated:

[a]n example of the effect of deep structure can be seen when people interact with someone whom they recognize as having a higher status than themselves...[s]uch an act, however, reinforces ongoing power relationships in which those expected to act with deference are marginalized (p. 152).

Deep structures are in many ways similar to the idea of invisible power, representing the norms around hierarchy and power that guide our daily behavior. Deep structures bring to the fore that these norms include power dynamics and are deeply ingrained in how we operate, and thus difficult to see. Participants carried over how they would treat these leaders outside the partnership into these CI initiatives, replicating the same dynamics.

**Framing, Communication, and Absence of Power.** Upon analysis, the themes around framing and communication and absence of power are inextricably linked. Partners who spoke up the most were experienced to have more influence and power than others. Therefore, use of voice was an opportunity for influence. By being in multiple committees and serving multiple roles, those who are already in leadership had more opportunity for voice than others. This was not a theme that emerged in the literature reviewed.

Some partners spoke of choosing to hold back their power to avoid negative consequences, such as reputational damage. The ability to choose whether or not to wield additional power was in itself a sign of the participant understanding themselves to have power in the first place. This also did not emerge in the literature reviewed.

More broadly, framing was used to influence stakeholders, acquire buy-in, and appease stakeholders with resources (such as in Community C). The CI element of a common agenda, a theme that emerged in the data, is in fact a recognition that a common frame for the problem and the initiative's purpose are necessary to achieve the initiative's goals. For these reasons, framing is an identifiable source of power: as Dewulf and Elbers (2018) claimed, it allows the shaping of goals, knowledge, and problem definition within collaborative partnerships. Despite experiencing negative consequences of power dynamics or sharing stories that either they identified as containing power dynamics or aligned with those in the literature, power or power imbalances were viewed as absent by some participants. There are several reasons related to framing why this may have occurred that I explore in the sub-themes below.

***Positive Frame of CI.*** CI likely benefits from the cross-sector collaboration “normative ideal of collaborative decision-making where all parties involved have equal opportunity to voice their concerns” (Dewulf & Elbers, 2018, p. 2). Framing is inextricably linked to the discourse around the initiatives being explored. The broader positive discourse of CI may have shaped some of the perceptions that participants had about power. The words of Participant 12 are a good example: when asked to describe CI, they shared:

...it's this idea that if not everyone in the community is doing well, then the community is not doing well. It's saying that, you know, we need to help one another and move in a direction, um, but the health of the community means everyone needs to be doing well. (p. 15)

A frame that views CI as a venue for developing collective wellbeing may be contributing to an environment where participants are not critically questioning power dynamics. Perhaps for these reasons and others, for Community A, framing themselves as a CI initiative was an

intentional choice, even though there was already a federally mandated and legitimate structure already in place.

This positive frame was not shared by all, however. Participant 8 described CI as a “buzzword” (p. 5). Participant 4 described being skeptical of CI as well. While these viewpoints were present, participants’ actions—such as being unable to see power and not resisting its structures—told another story.

***Inclusive Frame of CI.*** Participant 2 in Community B named a spirit of inclusiveness as something else that separated CI from other community efforts: “I think that the major difference was, um ... that there was a concerted effort to pull anybody who had a voice to the table” (p. 14). Participant 4, a backbone representative, said “We're always trying to bring new people into the conversation” (p. 16). Consultants who worked on the CoP in Community A detailed efforts to maximize everyone’s ability to participate. Related to inclusiveness was a deep sense of equality between partners. Some, like Participant 13 and Participant 4, who helped construct the structure of Communities C and A respectively, designed the different committees with equality in mind, with committees they saw as having equal power.

While inclusion and equality emerged as a theme, there were notable incidents of exclusion. Involvement, particularly from community stakeholders and consumers, appeared more limited than initially described. As Participant 17 expressed of Community C:

...in terms of it being a community initiative, where community members are deeply engaged in new ways with agency people, um, I think there are just some natural barriers to that work, that everybody’s got to acknowledge upfront if you really wanna make progress. (p. 11)



They went on to describe attempts by community members to slow the start of the initiative until additional conditions had been met without success. Though perceived as inclusive in terms of bringing multiple stakeholders to the table, inclusiveness as far as shared power was not evident.

***Role of Hidden Power.*** Hidden, as well as visible and invisible power, as put forth by Lukes (1974, 2005), were experienced as being present in these initiatives. Hidden power was especially evident participant stories in Community B, where the partners who launched the CI initiative were unknown to the community, and in Community A, where the CoP received funding from an anonymous donor. In Community B, who approved applicants to the leadership program was also not clear. Hidden power in this case meant that knowledge or information power was not available to all participants, which partially explains why participants were not aware of certain power dynamics. Some participants seemed aware that they did not know everything, but unbothered by it. Feeling generally unconcerned by not having this information may have been partially due to the positive, inclusive framing of CI initiatives, in addition to other factors discussed below.

### ***Summary of Research Question 1***

The findings from research question 1 largely aligned with the literature, confirming many of the themes around what power is and how it presents: through resources, identity, structures and processes, framing and communication, resistance, and formal leadership. The findings that diverge from the literature include the finding of that a small group of people having power across the domains of identity, resources, formal leadership, and structural power and the absence of power from participant's experiences. The interaction effects of being part of a dominant group, having access to money, and having multiple leadership roles was truly

staggering. Wolff et al.'s (2017) statement that support for CI has led to collaboratives “that are funded and encouraged by foundations and government to use a top-down approach that likely will maintain the status quo and do little to alleviate the problems they were designed and funded to address” (p. 6) is reflected in these findings.

### **Perceived Impact of Power**

This research question, which asked what the perceived impacts of power dynamics were on participants and their work, was meant to fill a gap in the literature around what participants' personal lived experience of power dynamics is. As discussed in Chapter 2, literature on the impact of power dynamics on individuals is extremely limited. My findings revealed largely negative impacts of power, with a few neutral and some “silver lining” positive experiences. Even those partners that seemed to have more power than others in the initiative, such as backbone representatives, experienced negative impacts. These results, particularly in the presence of certain turf conflicts and competition for resources, align with Almog-Bar and Schmid's (2018) findings of negative consequences from power struggles (though those results are specific to struggles and not power more generally). These negative experiences serve as an interesting counter to the positive framing that participants had about CI. The impacts of these dynamics seemed to largely stem from difficult interactions with other people. In this way, the impacts may potentially be felt more in CI than in organizational work, as someone may interact with more people, and more people that are different than them, as part of their work in CI. However, this is something that would need more research to be confirmed.

Some partners could not perceive the impact of power at all given that they did not experience it in their initiatives. Combined with some reflections from participants about never having considered or been asked these questions before, it is my belief that the lack of discussion

a power – a key ingredient to its construction – is part of what makes it difficult to perceive, as well as difficult to process enough to challenge existing positive frames about collaboration.

There is also the possibility that people with power are sometimes unable or unwilling to see it.

### **Comparison to Home Organization**

The third research question asked participants to compare their experiences of power dynamics to it in their home organizations. Many of the responses to this research question focused on processes or things like speed (fast versus slow) than on more substantive differences between CI initiatives and single organization settings. Generally, CI initiatives were framed as taking longer and being more complicated but being less hierarchical than organizations. However, some responses noted that power dynamics were much more present in CI (Participant 16) and others talked about the need for a different kind leadership instead of the organizational model that was being carried over (Participant 14). The literature speaks to some of these experiences: Sun and Anderson (2012) described cross-sector partnerships as less hierarchical, with organizations who lacked authority over one another; Page (2010) discussed the need for “soft power” to accomplish aims as opposed to organizational settings. However, the CI model clearly embraces hierarchy more than cross-sector models generally due to the use of a backbone organizations and steering committees that lead them (Hanleybrown et al., 2018). In this way, these findings align with the idea that CI is hierarchical (as outlined in the structures and processes section), though it is understandable it could be experienced as less so than organizational settings. It is interesting, given the many similarities to organizations expressed in other research questions (such as formal, positional leaders having power and the dominance of certain identity groups) that these were not raised as part of the responses to this question. This may reflect how little participants think about power on a regular basis in either context. That

aside, because of the variation in responses, it is difficult to draw a singular, definitive conclusion about the degree of perceived difference between CI and single organizations.

Answers when comparing CI to government were more consistent across participants than those of other sectors. Comparisons reflected some of the inclusive, equitable framing of collaboration alluded to earlier in this chapter, such as Participant 3 referring to CI as a “collection of equals” (p. 16). The conclusion overall from these experiences is that based on context, perceptions may be wildly different. Each of these organizational contexts and institutional fields have their own ways of being, in addition to intra-organizational dynamics around identity, framing, and the other factors listed. Though there may be trends across organizational type, as there is with government, these other themes will always inform the individual experiences people have.

### **Collective Impact and Critical Theory**

Part of the goal of this study was to uncover what applying the lens of critical theory could reveal about the experience power in CI initiatives, a nexus which has been underexplored in the literature. This analysis is of particular relevance in interpreting research question 1, which explored the experience and construction of power dynamics.

The discussion of critical theory began earlier in the chapter in the discussion of resistance, framing, and hidden power. Visible power, another piece of Lukes’ (1974, 2005) framework, in the form of governance and structures, is clearly experienced in these initiatives as well. Resistance arose around these visible manifestations of power, such as implementation of new processes. Invisible power shapes these initiatives deeply: societal and cultural norms around dominance, particularly as they relate to race, positional power, and gender, further influenced interactions within these partnerships. Framing represents a form of invisible power.

Gaventa (1980) found that invisible power led people not to fight injustices imposed upon them by their employers. The norms that carried over from other settings around who powerful partners are may have created an environment where other participants did not challenge power relations without even realizing it. The fact that only one participant seemed to recognize the carryover of organizational power dynamics into CI (Participant 14, a funder) is notable, and reinforces Gaventa's idea. I compare what has been revealed in this study to additional key beliefs about critical theory in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2

*Interpreting the Findings Through Critical Theory*

Tenet of Critical Theory	Does it Apply in This Study?
People in the Western world accept dominance and subordination over equity (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011; Levy, Alvesson, & Wilmott, 2003)	<b>Yes.</b> The first point is partially borne out in these studies; participants generally seemed comfortable accepting these power dynamics inside and outside the initiatives, though they seemed to recognize them less within CI initiatives.
Partners will try to exploit their power (Lotia & Hardy, 2008)	<b>Yes.</b> While few partners expressed that they were using their power unfairly or with ill intentions they certainly tried to leverage it to achieve their goals. People also noted others using their power.
Discourse is a form of power (Hardy & Phillips, 1998; Purdy, 2012)	<b>Yes.</b> The ability to frame and shape discourse around CI is a form of power.
Power is inescapable and inevitable (Lotia & Hardy, 2008; Hindess, 1996; Foucault).	<b>Unclear,</b> but in these settings it certainly seemed omnipresent, though some people were unaware of it.

The first and third points in the table above reveal why power in these settings may not be discussed or debated more: because people are used to accepting domination in other settings and trust CI in broader society, they continue to accept unequal power dynamics. The second

bullet highlights that despite these perceptions, power is still in play in these CI initiatives. Two definitions of exploit are present in the dictionary: (a) “to make productive use of” and (b) “to make use of meanly or unfairly to one’s advantage” (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Certainly, the most powerful partners seemed to be making productive use of these initiatives to achieve their goals: they implemented new policies and programs and recruited others to work with them to achieve their goals. While the goals of these initiatives and the partners involved appeared altruistic, the level of control held by a small number of partners meant that they could use the initiatives for selfish ends. Some may say those partners also had unfair advantages due to the multi-layered power they enjoyed, even that was not always perceptible to other partners. Lotia and Hardy’s (2008) assertion that “collaboration is often deliberately used to prevent change and to protect the privileged positions of existing power-holders” (Lotia & Hardy, 2008, p. 8) cannot be completely denied.

The fourth point in Table 5.2 is unclear. Manifestations of power dynamics were present in every community studied, both from the participant and the researcher perspective, but not every participant saw them. If they are not perceived, are they not there?

### **Significance of This Study**

This study provides examples of how power is defined and experienced by participants: through formal leadership, resources, framing, identity, structures and processes, and resistance. It unveiled that participant experiences in this context aligned with themes in the existing literature, but not completely. In these initiatives, power from multiple sources combined and amplified the power of already powerful partners. This finding is in stark contrast to the other major finding of this study; that not all participants experienced power in these initiatives. This perceived absence of power or power dynamics may be due to the larger, more inclusive look of

these initiatives and the positive framing they benefit from in addition to the idea that, as Lukes suggest, power is “insidious” (Lukes, 1974, 2005; Hindess, 1996, p. 81).

In addition to identifying constructions of power, this study captured the experiences and feelings of participants encountering power as part of their collaborative work. Experiences of power were primarily negative, even for those who have multiple sources of power.

This study also adds to the body of academic literature devoted to CI. So far, its study has remained largely in the practitioner arena: it is discussed far more frequently in practitioner journals, articles, and online forums than in the academic sphere. By studying this specific model of collaboration, I have added rigor to the academic and practitioner conversations on this model.

Additionally, unlike other studies, this dissertation pairs exploration of participant experience with a close and intentional application of critical theory, interrogating ways in which power operates in these initiatives. By explicitly bringing this theory to bear, it introduces new insights about how power is experienced in these settings, particularly around the role of framing and the preservation of the status quo in collaborative partnerships. It offers additional evidence that the CI model, particularly when being used in subject areas with hierarchical structures, may absorb and maintain unequal power dynamics around it.

Based on the findings, this study also offers an updated model of CI, with an explicit addition of “managing and shifting power” as a sixth condition to the CI model and additions of power-related tasks and responsibilities in each of the other five conditions. This model is discussed in detail in Figure 5.1 as part of the Recommendations for Action section.

## **Implications for Leadership and Collaborative Theory**

Cross-sector partnerships continue to proliferate (Gray & Purdy, 2018), and CI remains a popular model that is implemented across topic areas. Part of the significance in this study lies in what implications it has for cross-sector and leadership theory and practice. Below, I discuss those implications and whether they do and do not align with the extant literature.

### ***Findings That Align with the Literature***

Currently, “descriptions of collective impact tend to minimize the role of power in community change or in maintaining the status quo in communities. This limits the potential of collective impact initiatives to achieve transformational changes” (Christens & Inzeo, 2015, p. 431). This study bears out and builds upon these views: the inclusive frame of CI seemingly obscures the similarity of its asymmetrical power dynamics to other settings and the fact that power is still often held by the same stakeholders that have it outside the initiative. Partners in CI efforts must pause, reflect, and honestly decide what the goals of their efforts are. If the goal is to include more stakeholders in meetings and provide a positive frame around change efforts, CI may accomplish that. However, if the goal of collaboration is to shift power dynamics to improve impact or truly invite more partners to share power and decision-making authority, these CI initiatives did not exhibit that. Certain spaces, like the CoPs, allowed deeper conversations about power and relationship and trust building to take place, but largely these types of experiences appeared absent. If CI initiatives are not fundamentally changing existing systems, or only do so under certain special circumstances, then they may not be as valuable as currently believed in addressing complex problems.

The importance of structures and governance and their ability to influence agendas, power, and resources (Huxham & Vangen, 2000) very clearly applied in these settings.



However, the field might benefit from more discussion of the context that will influence how these factors apply, especially as it relates to who funds and governs these initiatives. Currently the literature tends to categorize partnership types based on the sectors involved (nonprofit-business partnerships, for example), whether they are mandatory or voluntary, and topic area. However, the heavy involvement and power that the federal government has over governance structures and funding in homelessness appear to have deeply influenced the structures and power holders in Communities A and C. Other CI initiatives may similarly be shaped by these factors, which may explain their power dynamics more than any element of the CI model does. More typologies of cross-sector partnerships, and with thick description of the contextual factors such as the existing power patterns that shape them, will be helpful in determining the extent to which cross-sector partnerships have commonalities outside of these factors.

### ***Findings That Did Not Align with the Literature***

Many of the leadership theories that were explored (such as shared leadership and relational leadership) in Chapter 2 focus on relationships between members as mechanisms through which leadership occurs. All of the partnerships studied were committee-based and relational power did arise within them: however, they primarily seemed to rely on financial resources and legitimacy to accomplish their goals. McCann and Gray's (1986) assertion that leadership may end up concentrated in the hands of formal leadership roles (sponsor, convener, etc.) rang true among these partnerships. As such, more deeply studying the influence of these resources will be important. Generally, I recommend more research on the findings that appeared new: the ability of certain partners to stack power across multiple areas and the perceived absence of

power in particular. I provide recommendations for practitioners and an updated CI model in the section below.

### **Recommendations for Action**

For practitioners in the cross-sector leadership space interested in CI, particularly those working in homelessness, the study findings can be used to critically challenge the value, purpose, and outcomes of collaborative efforts and improve their ability to identify and manage power in these spaces. Based on the results of this research and the implications for leadership and change, I provide the following recommendations to CI practitioners, CI funders, and to HUD, as the primary funder and decision-maker around homelessness in the United States. I have tried to strike a balance of making high-level and specific recommendations, understanding that all of these initiatives exist in their own specific context, and that “no one size fits all” approach can sufficiently speak to the complexity of this topic. Additionally, given the type of research undertaken (qualitative and heavily context-based), these recommendations are transferable to similar contexts (e.g., those with similar partners and patterns as far as funding) but not generalizable to all other contexts. These recommendations should also be implemented with the idea in mind that power dynamics may naturally evolve over time (Huxham & Beech, 2009), and that this study examined these dynamics at a fixed point in time.

**Develop a vocabulary and comfort with discussing power (recommendation for all CI partners).** The lack of discussion about power makes it more difficult to identify and manage. It also allows it to remain invisible. Talking about power alone may help empower stakeholders: to Huxham and Beech’s (2009) point, “[s]takeholders can manipulate the infrastructure insofar as they are aware of it” (p. 14). Not addressing imbalances appears to preserve the status quo, with more powerful partners increasingly setting priorities for the

initiative (Jacklin-Jarvis, 2015). Almog-Bar and Schmid (2018) further recommended discussing power early in the partnership as part of preliminary meetings.

Because of the deep control that the federal government has over homelessness in particular, HUD should be responsible for mandating and providing basic training on power and tools on how to facilitate discussions on it, ideally in partnership with consumers and community members. CI Initiatives like Community B, who are not beholden to HUD in the same way, should have their governing councils seek out this sort of support. These trainings or other facilitated discussions should include a frank discussion of sources of power within the initiative itself, who may have the most access to these sources, how these will inevitably shape interactions between individuals, and how these can be leveraged for the greater good of the partnership.

**Require that community members have more and more formal decision-making roles in the community.** The CI structures studied in this dissertation privileged partners that often already held power due to their financial resources and positional authority. In the case of homelessness, the CoC creates ways for people experiencing homelessness to participate, but the overall decision-making structures are still managed and controlled by backbone representatives (who are often CoC leads). However, HUD could increase the required number of representatives that serve on the CoC board, and mandate that these members, if they desire, are represented in other committee roles, such as committee chairmanships. HUD should also explicitly state decisions that must be made by consumers instead of other partners. This governance change would spill over into CI initiatives that use the CoC as a starting place. CI initiatives operating outside of HUD's influence should be intentional about ensuring consumers are represented on governing councils and include more than one consumer to avoid tokenizing

or marginalizing them. Similarly, consumers should be given ultimately decision-making authority over discrete parts of the initiative.

**Make shared power an explicit goal of the initiatives and of the Continuum of Care.**

As Dewulf and Elbers (2018) indicated, “outcomes of cross-sector partnerships for an important part are determined by power games” (p. 7). Sharing power is one way to facilitate more transparent discussions (Levesque, Calhoun, Bell, & Johnson, 2017) as well as a means to increase the effectiveness of collaborative governance partnerships (Ran & Qi, 2018). Thomson and Perry (2006) named shared power as a necessity, stating that “[p]artners who seek to collaborate ... need to create structures for reaching agreement on collaborative activities and goals through shared power arrangements” (p. 24). Ashman (2001) found that shared control among partners was associated with partnership success. For these reasons, it should be made an explicit goal of CI initiatives. This intention should be met with a plan for increasing awareness of power and discussing power amongst the partners in the initiative. Wolff et al. (2017) cautioned that “efforts that do not start with treating community leaders and residents as equal partners cannot later be reengineered to meaningfully share power” (p. 2), so these discussions should be made at the start of a new initiative. Initiative documentation and other framing opportunities should publicize this goal, and like any other goal of the initiative, it should be used to shape structures, processes, and governance, and progress on it should be measured. Initiatives should have a plan for how lower power partners might be elevated, how partners without positional authority can be invited into the process, and how larger societal dynamics and community dynamics around race, gender, etc. can be discussed openly (a version of the approach advocated for Watson & Foster-Fishman, 2013). Raising awareness of concepts such as class and white privilege, training on gender discrimination, and support and training from





community organizers are productive steps communities could take to achieve this goal. HUD could make evidence of making changes to shift power part of its process for allocating funding to communities, as it has with other priorities in the past. Similarly, initiatives outside the CoC context should measure and report out on success with these goals to funders or other key partners.

**Use Communities of Practice as a model for the initiative and not as separate supportive spaces.** The environment of the Community of Practice, particularly Community A, may better embody the orientation needed to shift power in these initiatives. The CoP in Community A was already discussing power openly, had a diversity, equity, and inclusion committee, and had a steering committee that was open to all to join. That CoP was named by several participants as something that positively shifted the relationships and reduced the “bad blood” between different partners. If these spaces were used to frame how the entire CI initiative operated instead of being separate committees, initiatives may be better positioned to achieve their goals. CI initiatives should similarly be building their capacity to talk about race and power through training and consider governance structures that perhaps rotate or otherwise center consumers. These spaces may better enable the depth of engagement and discussion required to talk about the multi-faceted nature of power in these partnerships. Because they also can offer more opportunity for inclusion into key structures, like Community A’s steering committee, which opened up participation to all interested parties, they are also better positioned to allow more people into positions of power.

These recommendations compose part of the detail in Figure 5.1 below, which updates the current model of CI with a sixth condition, management and shifting of power. While the CI model has been adapted and includes practices that speak to similar topic such as equity, I

believe managing power is important enough to be included as part of the fundamental elements of the model.

Figure 5.1. *Expanded Collective Impact Model*. This model includes the proposed sixth condition and text in blue that indicates additional tasks under each of the existing five. The model expands upon the original as detailed in Kania and Kramer’s article (2011, pp. 39–40) on the topic.

					
<b>Mutually Reinforcing Activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Coordination of different activities in connection with common agenda (Kania &amp; Kramer, 2011)</li> <li>•Shared responsibilities around discussion of management of power</li> </ul>	<b>Shared Measurement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Measurement of results on shared list of indicators (Kania &amp; Kramer, 2011)</li> <li>•Accountability for data and outcomes (Kania &amp; Kramer, 2011)</li> <li>•Measurement of progress in shifting power using a variety of methods including consumer opinion</li> </ul>	<b>Backbone Organization</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Management of CI process using dedicated staff (Kania &amp; Kramer, 2011)</li> <li>•Structured decision-making process (Kania &amp; Kramer, 2011)</li> <li>•Coordination and provision of technical assistance opportunities related to power, oppression, etc.</li> <li>•Meetings have ground rules and are conducted in a way that establish trust and allow for frank discussion</li> </ul>	<b>Common Agenda</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Shared vision and goals (Kania &amp; Kramer, 2011)</li> <li>•Goal of shifting power to less-powerful stakeholders</li> </ul>	<b>Continuous Communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Meeting regularly (Kania &amp; Kramer, 2011)</li> <li>•Development of a common vocabulary (Kania &amp; Kramer, 2011)</li> <li>•Investment in relationship and trust building through dedicated time and deep conversations</li> </ul>	<b>Management and Shifting of Power</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Completing tasks in other five conditions</li> <li>•Making structural changes to honor discursive power, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖Putting consumers in positions of power</li> <li>❖Putting conditions on funder participation</li> <li>❖Rotating facilitation</li> <li>❖Actively recruiting marginalized groups and organizers to participate</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Within each of the original five conditions, I list some of the practices that currently support it in black and suggestions for incorporating power in blue. Many of these are discussed in the recommendations above, but a few are not. For example, for the backbone organization, in addition to facilitating the provision of training, I suggest using practices similar to the CoPs to create an environment so participants can develop the trust necessary to engage deeply on power. Rather than using their role mostly to project manage, this centers them as key actors in providing fertile ground for power-oriented discussions. As part of the sixth condition, in addition to attending to the tasks added to the other five elements, I call for an honoring of

discursive power through structural changes to the partnership. This means that those who are or represent consumers are not just respected for their experience but placed in powerful positions, such as committee chairmanships (as advocated above). To implement this will also require that those with financial or other forms of resource power are removed from those positions, which is also part of the process of reimagining hierarchical structures. Breaking down hierarchical models into multiple committees with true equal power may be too difficult given the broader context of these models, which inherently absorbed that structure. However, redesigning those committees to operate with greater community representation, forcing unanimity instead of consensus on decision-making, and rotating facilitators and agenda setters may help loosen the grip of those who are most powerful now. Similarly, funders can be asked to sign agreements that place conditions on their participation. This may be difficult for funders that initiate this process or initiatives with one funder, but in other situations funders may agree that they will provide resources that are not conditional on them leading a committee (for example). Other partners could also work together to build power and ask that all funders sign a pledge not to involve themselves, outside of certain agreed-upon scenarios, in the workings of the initiative. Finally, all initiatives should actively recruit organizers and other representatives of marginalized groups not just to participate in the partnership, but to help them shape it and understand how power dynamics can be better managed. As Christens and Inzeo (2015) posited, “[t]he collective impact frame could benefit from the insights of grassroots community organizers, who have carefully attended to the roles that power can play in coalition formation, maintenance, and the achievement of goals” (p. 431). This adapted model reveals that CI has much to learn about power, but many paths which it can take to improve its management of it.

## **Study Limitations**

While this study generated new information about the experience of power dynamics and an updated CI model, it also has limitations that will affect its applicability that are discussed in more detail below.

### ***Lack of Definition of Power***

One of the aims of this study was to uncover how participants defined and experienced power. To keep that exploratory lens, I went into these interviews without defining the concept for participants, but with some examples from the literature in mind and embedded in the research questions. However, that lack of a definition also created some confusion and lack of certainty for participants when answering some of the interview questions. Ultimately though, it was important to preserve the exploratory nature of the study allow let the participants' experiences and narratives define how they viewed or experienced power. This is also in line with using phenomenology as an approach, which urges researchers to avoid imposing a priori ideas onto their research (Smith et al., 2009).

### ***Lack of Diversity in Interview Sample***

Homogeneity is sometimes viewed as positive in phenomenological studies, as it allows the study to focus in more on specific parts of the phenomena (Smith et al., 2009). However, in a study about power and where multiple communities struggled with racial issues, this lack of diversity generates an incomplete picture of power within these initiatives and a more one-sided view of race and power. Repeated attempts were made to engage participants of color but were unsuccessful. Additionally, without existing relationships and co-location in their communities, there were few other options to try to ethically elicit their participation. This may have skewed responses, including ones about absence of power.



Beyond lack of racial diversity, the voices of community members were also not well represented in this study. Part of that was because, in the initiatives under study, community members were not listed as points of contact and were not as easy to locate because they were not listed on an organization's website. This leaves a gap in our understanding of how the broader community, and people experiencing homelessness, experienced power dynamics. The community at large, including people living in the communities who may have participated in the initiative without representing an organization, were similarly difficult to engage. However, this lack of community voice may also be somewhat reflective of how the CI model is designed. As Christens and Inzeo (2015) relayed, "[o]ne of the most pronounced differences between collective impact initiatives and community organizing initiatives concerns the engagement of residents who are not involved in the effort as professionals, decision-makers, or elected officials" (p. 428).

### *Sensitivity of the Topic*

Power, and the associated experiences and feelings, can be a difficult topic to discuss, particularly with strangers. While I did my best to establish a rapport with those I spoke with, it may have been challenging for them to reveal their innermost thoughts about power, especially knowing that I would also be talking to their colleagues. While I may have gained more insights by knowing the participants longer, I still managed to obtain what felt like profound feelings, as exemplified by the quotes below:

"I feel kind of embarrassed saying this because I just feel like it's been a big thing for me lately. Um, I feel I've had to do a ton of healing over the summer" (Participant 8).

"And I'd say behind the scenes, "Ya better tell the public the truth or I'm gonna do it for you and it's not gonna be so pleasant..." (Participant 9).

In these examples, interviewees shared feelings that included embarrassment or share things that happened outside of the public eye. This is confirmation that at least some of the participants felt comfortable opening up to me.

### ***Interview Format***

Because I was not in the same place as any of the participants and in order to reduce research costs, all interviews were conducted virtually. While I initially envisioned these interviews would happen via video, all of the interviews (except the two pilot interviews, which were not included in this research) happened via phone. This was sometimes due to lack of technology (on the participant's side) but was mostly for interviewee comfort and convenience reasons. This prevented me from being able to use data like body language to add to my understanding of participants' experiences, which would have offered a richer view of their perspectives.

### ***Limited Responses to Some Questions***

When designing this study and the interview guide, I assumed that everyone I would be interviewing would have experienced power as part of their work in the CI initiative. However, I learned quickly that that was not the case. This was one reason why in some instances some of the interview questions did not apply, which meant some questions had a more limited pool of responses from which to draw themes. Additionally, due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, not every question was asked in every interview. Because this study is qualitative and exploratory in nature, I do not believe this significantly damages the credibility or utility of the findings.

### **Areas for Future Study**

This study sought to identify and reveal the impacts of power dynamics in CI initiatives focused on ending homelessness. Though it illuminated some aspects of the experiences of power dynamics in these contexts, many questions remain.

First, variations on the design of this study could yield new insights. Other studies should explore different topic areas, particularly ones where federal government is less involved, and see if some of the patterns around legitimacy and funding power hold in a different funding context. Potential topics include education (where state and local government are also major players in terms of funding) and local economic development efforts, which may have stronger involvement from community organizations. The greater societal context of this study – such as it taking place in a capitalist society – also cannot be ignored in interpreting the results. Different countries, with different political systems and institutional fields governing their sectors, may witness power playing out in a different way. Whether these other settings would replicate the dynamics in those countries would be fascinating to uncover.

Future studies could, and should, include perspectives of the broader public and beneficiaries of CI initiatives. This study focused on interviewing practitioners within the initiatives, and those that were easy to locate and contact through the Internet or through snowball sampling of previous participants. Because of this, while some of those practitioners may have been consumers at that point, those voices were generally underrepresented. These partners may be harder to find and may not identify as participants in the CI model the same way as others do. Nonetheless, it is especially important to include their voices and opinions in future discussions given that this study and the literature suggest they have less power than other partners. Each of these approaches could help fill the gaps left by this study.

## **Closing Reflections on Researcher Experience**

Being able to conduct research on a topic that has been so deeply intertwined with my work has been deeply satisfying, and quite complicated. Power is complex in every setting. It also lurks behind the surface more than I had previously realized. This research has forced me to think differently about power in my own life and apply a more critical lens to how I interact with the world. I have become more attuned to the choices I am making that are in response to unstated norms rather than formal rules. I question: do I really need permission to take an action, like send a communication to all-staff or begin a new project, or do I just feel like I do because I am less powerful than the other stakeholders involved? If so, why do I believe that? What have I accepted as “normal” because it fit in with my own mental models of power? As a result, I have more frequently tested stepped outside these norms, and more often than not found I was able to accomplish what I wanted and had more power than I realized. I have also worked to make the implicit explicit in my own work: rather than making people guess at the ways of operating, facilitating a meeting, or understanding a process, I have tried to focus on making things more transparent to disrupt the hold of invisible power. I have also started to think more deeply about the power that I hold and the ways in which I and others maintain the status quo. At times, it feels impossible to disrupt it, but my research has helped me see how a lack of disruption is unlikely to yield the change we seek.

This study also confirmed some things I have been pondering about my own relationship to power and collaboration. The CI model appealed to me because of its simplicity, but also because it made me feel like I could be valuable. It gave me a sense of purpose, impact, and power. Talking to people involved in these CI initiatives revealed that they shared my commitment to the greater good: I was inspired by them and their work. However, I also

noticed how absent community voices were, and, because I was not as intimately involved, could see how clearly these projects allowed the usual powerful partners to maintain their power. I was surprised in how much other people did not mention this, or ultimately did not seem to mind it. This could be because of an internalized oppression: as expressed by critical theory, that we are conditioned to accept domination (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011; Levy, Alvesson, & Wilmott, 2003). It struck me: often, when I participated in these initiatives, I trusted having more people in the room, including those who are most affected, would lead to better outcomes. I left with as much power or more than I came with, but I cannot say the same for the people experiencing homelessness with whom I worked. I have realized that collaboration undertaken in this way – according to the existing model, initiated by powerful partners with good intentions but not much focus on power – is incremental change at best. On its own, it likely will not alter systems or provide more power to low or medium-power partners. A model is only as good as the intentions and willingness to work of the people behind it. Without commitment from partners to talking about, identifying, and attempting to shift power relations in these types of CI initiatives, they seem unlikely to meaningfully shift the status quo. I see a lot of work ahead for myself and others in teaching myself and others the value of releasing or sharing the power they have.

However, I still believe the CI model, conceived of and intentionally delivered differently as illustrated in the extension of the CI model as depicted in Figure 5.1-can be of use. Partners can commit to making understanding power dynamics central in their work, to looking at the systems that construct the problems they are solving, to elevating folks outside of traditional power structures into decision-making roles, and to curb or limit the power of partners with financial resources and positional authority. They can also decide that CI model is not the right model for theory work and commit to using the principles that better align with what is required

for deeper change. Collaboration is inevitably full of power dynamics – but we do not have to carry over the dynamics from the status quo into this work. We can decide to collaborate differently, and rather than bury that power under positive frames, use it to fuel transformative change.

## References

- Aagaard, J. (2017). Introducing post phenomenological research: A brief and selective sketch of phenomenological research methods. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 30(6), 519–533. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2016.1263884>
- Agranoff, R. (2012). *Collaborating to manage: A primer for the public sector*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Almog-Bar, M., & Schmid, H. (2018). Cross-sector partnerships in human services: Insights and organizational dilemmas. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Service Quarterly*, 47(Suppl. 4), 119S–138S. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764018771218>
- Ansell, C., & Gash, A. (2007). Collaborative governance in theory and practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(4), 543–571. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mum032>
- Ashman, D. (2001). Civil society collaboration with business: Bringing empowerment back in. *World Development*, 29(7), 1097–1113. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(01\)00027-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(01)00027-4)
- Austin, J.E. (2000). Strategic collaboration between nonprofits and businesses. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 29(Suppl. 1), 69–97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764000291S004>
- Austin, J.E., & Seitanidi, M.M. (2012). Collaborative value creation: A review of partnering between nonprofits and businesses. Part 1: Value creation spectrum and collaboration stages. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 41(5), 726–758. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764012450777>

- Bakker, J.I. (2012). Interpretivism. In A.J. Mills, G. Durepos, & E. Wiebe (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412957397>
- Barroso-Méndez, M.J., Galera-Casquet, C., Seitandi, M.M., & Valero-Amaro, V. (2016). Cross-sector social partnership success: A process perspective on the role of relational factors. *European Management Journal*, 34, 674–685.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2016.07.004>
- Beech, N., & Huxham, C. (2003). Cycles of identity formation in interorganizational partnerships. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 33(3), 28–52.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.2003.11043686>
- Bishop, D.G., Eury, J.L., Gioia, D.A., Treviño, L.K., & Kreiner, G.E. (2018). In the heart of a storm: Leveraging personal relevance through inside-out research. In *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 1–57. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2018.0089>
- Blok, V. (2014). The metaphysics of collaboration: Identity, unity and difference in cross-sector partnerships for sustainable development. *Philosophy of Management*, 13(2), 53–74.  
<https://doi.org/10.5840/pom201413211>
- Bolden, R. (2011). Distributed leadership in organizations: A review of theory and research. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 13(3), 251–269.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2011.00306.x>
- Booyesen, L.A.E. (2018). Workplace identity construction: An intersectional-identity-cultural lens. In *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia, Business and Management*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190224851.013.47>
- Bourke, B. (2014). Positionality: Reflecting on the research process. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(33), 1–9. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR19/bourke18.pdf>



- Brouwer, H., Hiemstra, W., van der Vugt, S., & Walters, H. (2013). Analyzing stakeholder power dynamics in multi-stakeholder processes; insights of practice from Africa and Asia. *Knowledge Management for Development Journal*, 9(3), 11–31. Retrieved from <https://www.km4djournal.org/index.php/km4dj/article/view/153>
- Brown, L.D., & Ashman, D. (1996). Participation, social capital, and intersectoral problem solving: African and Asian cases. *World Development*, 24(9), 1467–1479. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X\(96\)00053-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(96)00053-8)
- Bryson, J.M., Crosby, B.C., & Stone, M.M. (2006). The design and implementation of cross-sector collaborations: Propositions from the literature. *Public Administration Review* 66, 44–55. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00665.x>
- Burr, V. (2011). Constructivism. In M.S. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman, and T. F.Lao (Eds.), In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412950589>
- Cairns, B., & Harris, M. (2011). Local cross-sector challenges tackling the challenges collaboratively. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 21(3), 311–324. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.20027>
- Casciaro, T., & Piskorski, M.J. (2005). Power imbalance, mutual dependence, and constraint absorption: A closer look at resource dependence theory. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 50(2), 167–199. <https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.2005.50.2.167>
- Chircop, A., Bassett, R., & Taylor, R. (2014). Evidence on how to practice intersectional collaboration for health equity: a scoping review. *Critical Public Health*, 25(2), 178–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09581596.2014.887831>

- Choi, T., & Robertson, P. J. (2013). Deliberation and decision in collaborative governance: a simulation of approaches to mitigate power imbalance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 24(2), 495–518. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mut003>
- Christens, B.D., & Inzeo, P.T. (2015). Widening the view: situating collective impact among frameworks for community-led change, *Community Development*, 46(4), 420–435. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2015.1061680>
- Clarke, A., & McDonald, A. (2016). Outcomes to partners in multi-stakeholder cross-sector partnerships: A resource-based view. *Business & Society*, 58(2), 298–332. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650316660534>
- Collective Impact Forum (2014). What is collective impact. Retrieved from <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/what-collective-impact>
- Cook, J. J. (2015). Who’s pulling the fracking strings? Power, collaboration and Colorado fracking policy. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 25(6), 373–385. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.1680>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Crosby, B., & Bryson, J. (2010). Integrative leadership and the creation and maintenance of cross-sector collaborations. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(2), 211–230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.01.003>
- Crosby, B., & Bryson, J. (2013). Public Integrative Leadership. In D.V. Day (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Leadership and Organizations*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhnb/9780199755615.013.003>

- Cunliffe, A.L. (2010). Crafting qualitative research: Morgan and Smircich 30 years on. *Organizational Research Method*, 14(4), 647–673.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428110373658>
- D’Innocenzo, L., Mathieu, J.E., & Kukenberger, M.R. (2016). A meta-analysis of different forms of shared leadership-team performance relations. *Journal of Management* (42)7, 1964–1991. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206314525205>
- Dawson, J., Huikuri, S., & Armada, F. (2015). Liverpool Active City 2005 - 2010: Increasing Population physical activity levels through intersectoral action. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 12(6), 749–755. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2013-0397>
- Dentoni, D., Bitzer, V. & Schouten, G. (2018). Harnessing wicked problems in multi-stakeholder partnerships. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 150(2), 333–356.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3858-6>
- Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2012a). Criteria and recordkeeping requirements for definition of homelessness [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/1974/criteria-and-recordkeeping-requirements-for-definition-of-homeless/>
- Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2012b). Introductory guide to the CoC program [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2036/introductory-guide-to-the-coc-program/>
- Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2020). PIT Count and HIC Data and Reports [PDF files]. Retrieved from <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/pit-hic/data-reports/>

- Dewulf, A., & Elbers, W. (2018). Power in and over cross-sector partnerships: Actor strategies for shaping collective decisions. *Administrative Sciences*, 8(43), 1–15.  
<https://doi.org/10.3990/admsci8030043>
- Duberley, J., & Johnson, P. (2009). Critical management methodology. In M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman, & H. Willmott (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199595686.013.0017>
- Eatough, V., & Smith, J.A. (2017). Interpretive phenomenological analysis. In C. Willig & W. S. Rogers (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology* (Chapter 12). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526405555>
- Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350–383.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999>
- Edmondson, A.C., & McManus, S.E. (2007). Methodological fit in management field research. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(4), 1155–1179.  
<https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2007.26586086>
- Edmondson, J., & Hecht, B. (2014). Defining quality collective impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Retrieved from  
[https://ssir.org/articles/entry/defining\\_quality\\_collective\\_impact](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/defining_quality_collective_impact)
- Edmondson, J. & Santhosh-Kumar, P. (2017). It's about results at scale, not collective impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Retrieved from  
[https://ssir.org/articles/entry/its\\_about\\_results\\_at\\_scale\\_not\\_collective\\_impact](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/its_about_results_at_scale_not_collective_impact)
- Emerson, K., & Nabatchi, T. (2015). *Collaborative Governance Regimes*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

- Flestea, A.M., Curseu, P.L., & Fodor, O.C. (2017). The bittersweet effect of power disparity: Implications for emergent states in collaborative multi-party systems. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 32(5), 401–416. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-09-2016-0289>
- Foot, K. (2016). *Collaborating against human trafficking: Cross-sector challenges and practices* [Kindle version]. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. Retrieved from Amazon.com
- Foucault, M. (1979). *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, trans. R. Hurley. London, UK: Allen Lane.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), 777–795. <https://doi.org/10.1086/448181>
- French, J. R. P., Jr, & Raven, B. H. (1959). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Studies in Social Power* (pp. 150–167). Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research.
- Gaventa, J. (1980). *Power and powerlessness: Quiescence and rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Given, L. M. (2008). *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909>
- Googins, B.K., & Rochlin, S.A. (2000). Creating the partnership society: Understanding the rhetoric and reality of cross-sectoral partnerships. *Business and Society Review*, 105(1), 127–144. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0045-3609.00068>
- Google. (n.d.). Tool: Foster psychological safety. Retrieved from <https://rework.withgoogle.com/guides/understanding-team-effectiveness/steps/foster-psychological-safety/>

- Gordon, R.D. (2002). Conceptualizing leadership with respect to its historical-contextual antecedents to power. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(2), 151–167.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(02\)00095-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(02)00095-4)
- Gray, B. (2000). Assessing inter-organizational collaboration: multiple conceptions and multiple methods. In D. Faulkner & M. de Rond (Eds.), *Cooperative Strategy: Economic, Business, and Organizational Issues* (243–260). New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Gray, B. (2009). Intervening to improve inter-organizational partnerships. In S. Cropper, C. Huxham, M. Ebers, P.S. Ring (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Inter-organizational Relations*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199282944.003.0025>
- Gray, B., & Hay, T.M. (1986). Political limits to interorganizational consensus and change. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 22(2), 95–112.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/002188638602200204>
- Gray, B., & Purdy, J. (2018). *Collaborating for our future: Multistakeholder partnerships for solving complex problems* [Kindle version]. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.  
 Retrieved from amazon.com
- Gray, B., Purdy, J.M., & Ansari, S. (2015). From interactions to institutions: Microprocesses of framing and mechanisms for the structuring of institutional fields. *Academy of Management Review*, 40(1), 115–143. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2013.0299>
- Greer, P.A. (2017). *Elements of effective interorganizational collaboration: A mixed methods Study* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Antioch University *Dissertations & Theses*. (371). <https://aura.antioch.edu/etds/371/>

- Hanleybrown, F., Kania, J. & Kramer, M. (2012). Channeling change: Making collective impact work. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Retrieved from [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/channeling\\_change\\_making\\_collective\\_impact\\_work](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/channeling_change_making_collective_impact_work)
- Hardy, C., Lawrence, T.B., & Grant, D. (2005). Discourse and collaboration: The role of conversations and collective identity. *Academy of Management Review*, 30(1), 58–77. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2005.15281426>
- Hardy, C., & Leiba-O'Sullivan, S. (1998). The power behind empowerment: Implications for research and practice. *Human Relations*, 51(4) 451–483. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1016989830806>
- Hardy, C., & Phillips, N. (1998). Strategies of engagement: Lessons from the critical examination of collaboration and conflict in an interorganizational domain. *Organizational Science*, 9(2), 217–230. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.9.2.217>
- Heifetz, R. A., & Linsky, M. (2002). *Leadership on the line: staying alive through the dangers of leading* [Kindle version]. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing. Retrieved from amazon.com
- Henry, M., Mahathay, A., Morrill, T., Robinson, A., Shivji, A., & Watt, R. (2018). The 2018 annual homeless assessment report (AHAR) to Congress: Part 1 [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5783/2018-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us/>
- Hindess, B. (1996). *Discourses of power: From Hobbes to Foucault*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

- Huxham, C. (2000). The challenge of collaborative governance. *Public Management Review*, 2(2), 337 - 358. <https://doi.org/10.1080/147190300000000021>
- Huxham, C., & Beech, N. (2009). Inter-organizational power. In S. Cropper, C. Huxham, M. Ebers, P.S. Ring (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Inter-organizational Relations*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199282944.003.0021>
- Huxham, C., & Vangen, S. (2000). Leadership in the shaping and implementation of Collaboration agendas: How things happen in a (not quite) joined up world. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 43(6), 1159–1175. <https://doi.org/10.5465/1556343>
- Huxham, C., & Vangen, S. (2004). Doing things collaboratively: Realizing the advantage or succumbing to inertia? *Organizational Dynamics*, 33(2), 190–201.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2004.01.006>
- Huxham, C., & Vangen, S. (2005). *Managing to collaborate: The theory and practice of collaborative advantage* [Kindle version]. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.  
Retrieved from amazon.com
- Jacklin-Jarvis, C. (2015). Collaborating across sector boundaries: A story of tensions and dilemmas. *Voluntary Sector Review*, 6(3), 285–302.  
<https://doi.org/10.1332/204080515X14448338369886>
- Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011). Collective impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.  
Retrieved from [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact)
- Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2013). Embracing emergence: How collective impact addresses complexity. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Retrieved from  
[https://ssir.org/articles/entry/social\\_progress\\_through\\_collective\\_impact](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/social_progress_through_collective_impact)



- Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2015). The equity imperative in collective impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Retrieved from [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the\\_equity\\_imperative\\_in\\_collective\\_impact](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_equity_imperative_in_collective_impact)
- Kettl, D.F. (2015). From intergovernmental to intersectoral. In M. E. Guy & M. M. Rubin (Eds.), *Public Administration Evolving: From Foundations to the Future* (18-36). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kincheloe, J.L., & McLaren, P. (2011). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, London: SAGE, 260–299.
- Kindornay, S., Tissot, S., & Sheiban, N. (2014). The value of cross-sector development partnerships. Retrieved from <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/The-Value-of-Cross-Sector-Development-Partnerships.pdf>
- Klitsie, E.J., Ansari, S. & Volberda, H.W. (2018). Maintenance of cross-sector partnerships: The role of frames in sustained collaboration. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 150(2), 401–423. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3859-5>
- Knights, D. (2009). Power at work in organizations. In M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman, & H. Willmott (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199595686.013.0007>
- Kolk, A., van Dolen, W., & Vock, M. (2011). Trickle effects of cross-sector partnerships. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 94(Suppl. 1), 123–137. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-0783-3>

- Koschmann, M.A. (2012). The communicative constitution of collective identity in interorganizational collaboration. *Management Communication Quarterly* 27(1), 61–89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318912449314>
- Ladkin, D., & Probert, J. (2019). From sovereign to subject: Applying Foucault's conceptualization of power to leading and studying power within leadership relations. *The Leadership Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2019.101310>
- Lane, S.R., & Pritzker, S. (2018). *Political Social Work: Using Power to Create Social Change* [Kindle version]. Cham, CH: Springer International Publishing AG. Retrieved from Amazon.com
- Langdrige, D. (2008). Phenomenology and critical social psychology: Directions and debates in theory and research. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2(3), 1126–1142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00114.x>
- Larkin, M., Watts, S. & Clifton, E. (2006). Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 102–120. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp062oa>
- Laverty, S.M. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(3), 21–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690300200303>
- Layder, D. (1985). Power, structure, and agency. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 15(2), 131–149. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.1985.tb00048.x>
- LeChasseur, K. (2016). Re-examining power and privilege in collective impact. *Community Development*, 47(2), 225–240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2016.1140664>

- Lee, F. (1997). When the going gets tough, do the tough ask for help? Help seeking and power motivation in organizations. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 72(3), 336–363. <https://doi.org/10.1006/obhd.1997.2746>
- Levesque, V.R., Calhoun, A.J.K., Bell, K.P., & Johnson, T.R. (2017). Turning contention into collaboration: Engaging power, trust, and learning in collaborative networks. *Society and Natural Resources*, 30(2), 245–260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2016.1180726>
- Levy, D.L., Alvesson, M. & Wilmott, H. (2003). Critical approaches to strategic management. In M. Alvesson and H. Wilmott (Eds.), *Studying Management Critically* (73-85). London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Lim, J.H. (2011). Qualitative methods in adult development and learning. In C. Hoare (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Reciprocal Adult Development and Learning* (2nd ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199736300.013.0020>
- Lopez, K.A., & Willis, D.G. (2004). Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology: Their contributions to nursing knowledge. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(5), 726–735. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732304263638>
- Lotia, N. (2004). Power dynamics and learning in collaborations. *Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management*, 10(2), 56–68. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S183336720000451X>
- Lotia, N., & Hardy, C. (2008). Critical perspectives on collaboration. In S. Cropper, C. Huxham, M. Ebers, P.S. Ring (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Inter-organizational Relations*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199282944.003.0014>

Lukes, S. (1974, 2005). *Power: A radical view* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) [Kindle version]. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. Retrieved from Amazon.com

Maguire, S., & Hardy, C. (2005). Identity and collaborative strategy in the Canadian HIV/AIDS treatment domain. *Strategic Organization*, 3(1), 11–45.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127005050112>

McCann, J.E., & Gray, B. (1986). Power and collaboration in human service domains. *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 6(3), 58–67.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/eb013016>

McGuire, M., & Silvia, C. (2009). Does leadership in networks matter? Examining the effect of leadership behaviors on managers' perceptions of network effectiveness. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 33, 34–62.

Moses, J. (2019). *New data on race, ethnicity, and homelessness*. Retrieved from

[https://endhomelessness.org/new-data-on-race-ethnicity-and-homelessness/?gclid=CjwKCAjw7e\\_0BRB7EiwAIH-goG4BU3JxaJnYHjWpxuTLcHOFTC\\_ywDKFI9SJ7n4WzbqQQB5HSZZcKBoCxgkQAvD\\_BwE](https://endhomelessness.org/new-data-on-race-ethnicity-and-homelessness/?gclid=CjwKCAjw7e_0BRB7EiwAIH-goG4BU3JxaJnYHjWpxuTLcHOFTC_ywDKFI9SJ7n4WzbqQQB5HSZZcKBoCxgkQAvD_BwE)

Murphy, M., Arenas, D., & Manuel Batista, J. (2014). Value creation in cross-sector collaborations: The roles of experience and alignment. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 130(1), 145–162. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2204-x>

Nowell, B., & Foster-Fishman, P. (2011). Examining multi-sector community collaboratives as vehicles for building organizational capacity. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 48, 193–207. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-010-9364-3>

- Otiso, K.M. (2003). State, voluntary and private sector partnerships for slum upgrading and basic service delivery in Nairobi City, Kenya. *Cities*, 20(4), 221–229.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0264-2751\(03\)00035-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0264-2751(03)00035-0)
- Page, S. (2010). Integrative leadership for collaborative governance: Civic engagement in Seattle. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(2), 246–263.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.01.005>
- Pearson, H. (2014). Collective impact: Venturing on an unfamiliar road. *The Philanthropist*, 26(1), 49–53. Retrieved from  
<https://thephilanthropist.ca/original-pdfs/Philanthropist-26-1-13.pdf>
- Purdy, J.M. (2012). A framework for assessing power in collaborative governance processes. *Public Administration Review*, 72(3), 409–417.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2011.02525.x>
- Raelin, J.A. (2016). Introduction to Leadership-as-Practice. In J.A. Raelin (Ed.), *Leadership-as-Practice: Theory and application* (1-17). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ran, B., & Qi, H. (2018). Contingencies of power sharing in collaborative governance. *American Review of Public Administration*, 48(8), 836–851.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074017745355>
- Raven, B. H., (1965). Social influence and power. In I. D. Steiner & M. Fishbein (Eds), *Current studies in social psychology* (pp. 371–381). New York: Hoh, Rinehart. Winston.
- Reiners, G.M. (2012). Understanding the differences between Husserl’s (descriptive) and Heidegger’s (interpretive) phenomenological research. *Nursing & Care*, 1(5), 1–3.  
<https://doi.org/10.4172/2167-1168.1000119>

- Rittel, H.W.J., & Webber, M.M. (1973). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences*, 4, 155–169. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01405730>
- Ryan, A. & O'Malley L. (2015). The role of the boundary spanner in bringing about innovation in cross-sector partnerships. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 32(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2015.09.002>
- Ryan, M.J. (2014). Power dynamics in collective impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Retrieved from [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/power\\_dynamics\\_in\\_collective\\_impact](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/power_dynamics_in_collective_impact)
- Saetrevik, B., Ghanonisaber, S. & Lunde, G.E. (2018). Power imbalance between supply vessels and offshore installations may impede the communication of safety issues. *Safety Science* 101, 268–281. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssci.2017.09.010>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* [Kindle version]. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd. Retrieved from amazon.com
- Salignac, F., Wilcox, T., Marjolin, A., & Adams, S. (2018). Understanding collective impact in Australia: A new approach to interorganizational collaboration. *Australian Journal of Management*, 43(1), 91–110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0312896217705178>
- San Juan, K. (2005). Re-imagining power in leadership: Reflection, integration, and servant-leadership. *International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, 1(1), 187–212. Retrieved from <https://www.spearscenter.org/docs2010/InternationalJournalofServantLeadership2005.pdf>
- Schedlitzki, D. & Edwards, G. (2014). *Studying leadership: Traditional and critical approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Scherer, A.G. (2009). Critical theory and its contribution to critical management studies. In M.

Alvesson, T. Bridgman, & H. Willmott (Eds.), *The Oxford*

*Handbook of Critical Management Studies*.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199595686.013.0002>

Schreiber, C., & Carley, K.M. (2008). Leading for learning and adaptability. In M. Uhl-Bien,

R. Marion, & J. R. Meindl (Eds.), *Complexity leadership: Part 1: Conceptual*

*Foundations* (pp. 291-332). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Schwandt, T.A. (2011). *The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*.

<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412986281>

Selsky, J.W., & Parker, B. (2004). Interface dynamics in cause-based partnerships: An

exploration of emergent culture. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*,

33(3), 458–488. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764004266016>

Selsky, J.W., & Parker, B. (2010). Platforms for cross cross-sector social partnerships:

Prospective sensemaking devices for social benefit. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 94(Suppl.

1), 21–37. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-0776-2>

Shumate, M., Fu, J.S., & Cooper, K.R. (2018). Does cross-sector collaboration lead to higher

nonprofit capacity? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 150(2), 385–399.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3856-8>

Silver, N., & Jansen, P. (2017). The multisector career arc: The importance of cross-sector

affiliations. *California Management Review*, 60(1), 33–55.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/000812561772590>

- Silvia, C., & McGuire, M. (2010). Leading public sector networks: An empirical examination of integrative leadership behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(2), 264–277.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.01.006>
- Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretive phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research* [Kindle version]. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd. Retrieved from amazon.com
- Smith, J.A., & Osborn, M. (2003). Interpretive phenomenological analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Methods* (pp. 53–80). London: SAGE.
- Soubliere, J., & Cloutier, C. (2015). Explaining levels of local government involvement in service delivery: The dynamics of cross-sector partnerships in Malawi. *Public Administration and Development*, 35(3), 192–205. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.1715>
- Spark Policy Institute & ORS Impact. (2018). *When collective impact has an impact: A cross-site study of 25 collective impact initiatives*. Retrieved from <http://sparkpolicy.com/collective-impact-impact-cross-site-study-25-collective-impact-initiatives/>
- Spiegelberg, H. (1976). *The phenomenological movement* (Vols 1 and 11). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Stachowiak, S., & Gase, L. (2018). Does collective impact really make an impact? *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Retrieved from [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/does\\_collective\\_impact\\_really\\_make\\_an\\_impact](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/does_collective_impact_really_make_an_impact)
- Stadtler, L. (2016). Scrutinizing public-private partnerships for development: Towards a broader evaluation conception. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 135(1), 71–86.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2730-1>



- Starks, H., & Trinidad, S.B. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), 1372–1380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732307307031>
- Stott, L., & Rein, M. (2009). Working together: Critical perspectives on six cross-sector partnerships in South Africa. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 90 (Suppl. 1), 79–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-008-9915-9>
- Sun, P. Y., & Anderson, M. H. (2012). Civic capacity: Building on transformational leadership to explain successful integrative public leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(3), 309–323. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.05.018>
- Taylor, B.J. (2013). Phenomenology. In B.J. Taylor & K. Francis (Authors), *Qualitative Research in the Health Sciences: Methodologies, Methods, and Processes* (77–98). Hoboken, NJ: Routledge.
- Thomas, R. (2009). Critical management studies on identity: Mapping the terrain. In M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman, & H. Willmott (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199595686.013.0008>
- Thomson, A.M., & Perry, J.L. (2006). Collaboration processes: Inside the black box. *Public Administration Review*, 66(Suppl. 1), 20–32. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00663.x>
- Trist, E. (1983). Referent organizations and the development of inter-organizational domains. *Human Relations*, 36(3), 269–284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872678303600304>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). Data. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/data.html>

- Uhl-Bien, M. (2006). Relational leadership theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 654–676.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2006.10.007>
- Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R., & McKelvey, B. (2007). Complexity leadership theory: Shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18(4), 298–318. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2007.04.002>
- Usher, K., & Jackson, D. (2017). Phenomenology. In J. Mills & M. Birks (Eds.), *Qualitative Methodology: A Practical Guide*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473920163>
- van Tulder, R., & Keen, N. (2018). Capturing collaborative challenges: Designing complexity-sensitive theories of change for cross-sector partnerships. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 150(2), 315–332. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3857-7>
- Vangen, C., & Huxham, S. (2003). Nurturing collaborative relations: Building trust in interorganizational collaboration. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 39(1), 5–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886303039001001>
- VeneKlasen, L., Miller, V., Budlender, D. & Clark, C. (2007). *A new weave of power, people, and politics: the action guide for advocacy and citizen participation*. Bourton-on-Dunsmore, Warwickshire, UK.
- Waddock, S., Meszoely, G.M., Waddell, S., & Dentoni, D. (2015). The complexity of wicked problems in large scale change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 28(6), 993–1012. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-08-2014-0146>
- Wadham, H., & Warren, R. (2013). Inspiring action, building understanding: How cross-sector partnership engages business in addressing global challenges. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 22(1), 47–63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/beer.12006>

- Weiskopf, R., & Willmott, H. (2014). Michel Foucault, (1926–1984). In J. Helin, T. Hernes, D. Hjorth, & R. Holt (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Process Philosophy and Organization Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199669356.013.0032>
- Wergin, J. (2018). Finding the right design for EDI research. In L.A.E. Booysen, R. Bendl, & J.K. Pringle (Eds.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Diversity Management, Equality and Inclusion at Work* (36–59). <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781783476084>
- White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation. (n.d.). *About SICP - The Community Solutions Agenda*. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/sicp/about>
- Wolff, T., Minkler, M., Wolfe, S.M., Berkowitz, B., Bowen, L., Dunn Butterfoss, F., Christens, B.D., Francisco, V.T, Himmelman, A.T., & Lee, K.S. (2017). Collaborating for equity and justice: Moving beyond collective impact. *Nonprofit Quarterly*. Retrieved from <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2017/01/09/collaborating-equity-justice-moving-beyond-collective-impact/>
- Wood, D.J., & Gray, B. (1991). Toward a comprehensive theory of collaboration. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 27(2), 139–162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886391272001>

**Appendix: A**

## Appendix A: Interview Guide

### Opening Questions:

How do you identify when it comes to:

A. Gender -

B. Race

C. Age Range (20 – 29, 30 – 39, 40 – 49, 50 – 59, 60 – 69, 70 – 79, 80 – 89,

90+)

### **1. Tell me a bit about the partnership you're involved in.**

Prompts: goals, geographic scope, target population, major stakeholders

a. What is your organization's reason for participating in the partnership?

b. What are your responsibilities as a representative to the cross-sector partnership? How long have you been a representative for your organization to this partnership?

c. What role does your organization play in the partnership? What responsibilities does it have?

d. How long has your organization participated in this partnership?

### **2. Which partners do the following:**

- Set the agenda for partnership meetings
- Facilitate or lead meetings among partner agencies
- Appear in public on behalf of the partnership
- Decide who participates in the partnership
- Provides financial and other needed resources to the partnership
- Decides when stakeholders should be convened
- Speak the most at meetings
- Communicate externally about the goings-on of the partnership
- Shape the vision of the partnership
- Decides on success measures

### **3. Who would you say are the leaders of the partnership, informally or formally? Why?**

### **4. Who are the most powerful partners in the partnership/partners with outsized influence? Why?**

### **5. Are any partners that are prevented from participating as fully in the partnership as they would like? By whom? OR Have any partners been turned away from participating?**

### **6. Tell me about a time when your organization was able to successfully influence or exert control over the partnership. What happened?**

Sample prompts:

a. Who were the major stakeholders involved in this story?

b. What else was happening in the partnership at that time? What

about in the community more broadly?

c. How far into your work with the partnership did this happen?

**7. Why do you believe they were successful in influencing the partnership?**

Potential examples that can serve as prompts: access to resources, relationships, authority, personality

**8. Tell me about a time when your organization was not able to successfully influence or exert control or faced resistance over the partnership, and were unable to get an outcome you wanted?**

Same prompts as question 4

**13. Why do you believe they were unsuccessful?**

Same prompts as question 5

**14. Tell me about a time where your experiences with power in cross-sector partnerships (such as in the stories you shared) impacted you personally.**

**15. Thinking back on our conversation, what reflections do you have about how power may show up differently in your organizational vs. partnership settings?**

**16. Who else should I talk to? Are there any key documents that you can share with me that relate to what we discussed?**

**Appendix: B**

## **Appendix B: IRB Informed Consent Form**

This information sheet explains the purpose, process, and outcomes of Kim Walker's dissertation so that you may evaluate and decide whether to participate.

**Name of Principal Investigator:** Kim Walker

**Name of Principal Investigator's Organization:** Antioch University (AU), PhD in Leadership and Change Program

**Name of Project:** The Construction and Impact of Power in Cross-Sector Partnerships: An Interpretive Phenomenological Study

### **Introduction**

Kim Walker is a PhD candidate in AU's Leadership and Change program. She is partially fulfilling the requirements of her doctoral studies by completing this dissertation.

### **Purpose of the Dissertation**

The purpose of the dissertation is to increase understanding of how power is experienced and defined by individuals working in cross-sector collaborations and how that experience may differ from other settings.

### **Project Activities**

You are being asked to engage in interviews virtually, via a virtual conferencing platform. You may participate in the interviews from anywhere you'd like. Before the interview, Ms. Walker will send you a brief questionnaire via email that will ask basic questions about your identity and you and your organization's role in the partnership.

### **Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure**

Any names and other identifying information used in this dissertation will be replaced with pseudonyms. Ms. Walker will not maintain any list connecting names to pseudonyms. To



protect anonymity, only the transcriptionists and Ms. Walker will see the full transcripts of participants. Recordings of interviews will be stored in a password-protected cloud-based system and deleted after the dissertation has been published. Ms. Walker will do her best to conduct interviews in private spaces with headphones on where the participants' words would be difficult for others to overhear. Names will not be shared in the published research, and while themes generated related to identifying characteristics (gender, for example) may be shared, Ms. Walker will attempt to keep participants anonymous by using pseudonyms.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, you will not be negatively affected and there will be no penalties. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time, including after interviews have taken place.

### **Risks**

Talking about power may be a sensitive topic and bring about strong and/or negative emotions. Participants will have the opportunity to pause or stop the interview entirely if they feel too uncomfortable moving. Participants know that they should also feel free not to engage in any follow-up contact with Ms. Walker if they feel it will be emotionally challenging.

### **Payment**

There is no monetary incentive for taking part in this study.

### **Benefits**

While no direct benefits are promised, your participation will illuminate the impact of power on individuals. Learning more about its impacts may help you or others you know more effectively manage power and mitigate its effect on them, as well as make these partnerships more effective.

**Future Publication**

The dissertation will be published in open access and therefore freely accessible to the general public. The dissertation may also be discussed as part of conference presentations.

**Who to Contact**

If you have questions, please contact me at [REDACTED]. If you have any ethical concerns, contact Lisa Kreeger, PhD, Chair, Institutional Review Board, at [REDACTED].

Do you give permission to be interviewed? Y/N

Do you give permission to have your interview recorded? Y/N

Do you give permission for verbatim quotes from your interview to be shared in the dissertation (and in related presentations)? Y/N

Are you willing to be contacted to help me analyze the data? Y/N

**Appendix: C**

### Appendix C: Email to Participants

Hello XXX -

I'm Kim Walker, a PhD student in Leadership and Change at Antioch University. You can learn more about me through my LinkedIn profile [here](#). I found your information on the [redacted] website (which I'm also a member of). I'm currently conducting research for my dissertation, which focuses on how power dynamics in Collective Impact initiatives focused on homelessness impact participants and their work. To answer these questions, I'm conducting interviews with people who have worked with a Collective Impact initiative: I would love to interview you!

If you're willing to participate, I'll send you some initial questions via email and a consent form that describes the study in greater detail, and then schedule a time for us to speak via video chat (or via phone, if video poses too much of a problem) for an hour. Thanks so much for considering, and please let me know if you have any questions!

Best,