An Analysis of Fusion Center Collaboration in a Network Environment

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

By

Selby H. Marks III

Dr. Eric B. Herzik/Dissertation Advisor

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We recommend that the dissertation prepared under our supervision by

SELBY H. MARKS III

Entitled

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Eric B. Herzik, Ph.D., Advisor

William Eubank, Ph.D., Committee Member

John Marini, Ph.D., Committee Member

John L. Dobra, Ph.D., Committee Member

Kenneth Peak, Ph.D., Graduate School Representative

David W. Zeh, Ph.D., Dean, Graduate School

December, 2014
ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, the 9/11 Commission concluded that the nation’s Intelligence Community and the domestic counterterrorism model of information gathering and intelligence failed to “connect the dots.” As a result the federal government initiated several new initiatives designed to break down the barriers and “silos” inhibiting information and intelligence sharing. One such initiative was the establishment of information sharing fusion centers. Fusion centers are state and local government operated information collection and analysis centers that serve state and local law enforcement with the prevention, detection, and deterrence of criminal and terrorism activity. Fusion centers are also part of a national network of fusion centers which provide important suspicious activity reports and other information to the federal government in support of the national counterterrorism mission.

A key feature of fusion centers is the need to collaborate with state, local and federal public agencies and disciplines, and the private sector in order to collect information, process this information into useable and actionable intelligence, and disseminate this intelligence to customers, partners and stakeholders. Fusion centers are placed in a context of dealing with terrorism as a complex “wicked problem,” which generally requires using interorganizational collaboration and networks to successfully address such problems. This research analyzes how state and local fusion centers use collaboration to build and maintain information sharing networks supporting national, regional, and local area counterterrorism efforts.
Using a multiple case study exploratory research design, this research analyzed how fusion centers collaborate with partner agencies and other stakeholders. The data used for this investigation was collected from open-ended, semi-structured elite interviews with Directors from nine different state and regional fusion centers. Selection of fusion centers participating in this research was conducted using a purposive and convenience sampling process.

The findings indicate there is variation in the perceptions of fusion center leaders as to the use of collaborative relationships and in how fusion centers operate using multiagency, intergovernmental, and multidiscipline relationships. Some fusion centers struggle with growing and maintaining a consistent collaborative environment due to lack of resources, inexperienced personnel, and political pressures. In states with multiple fusion centers, governance and coordination issues can present challenges to creating an effective network for information sharing. Several similarities among interviewees were also identified. Results from this research have implications for federal, state, and local governments along with the private sector and for academics who look to collaborative relationships as important to implementing public policy in complex problem areas such as counterterrorism. This research extends our theoretical understanding of collaboration in complex organizations and provides future researchers with robust qualitative analysis that can be used to develop quantitative research designs.
To my father and mother.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is not just the product of many years of hard work and research, it also represents a tremendous community of individuals, friendship, and family whose support and encouragement were crucial to the successful completion of this project. I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Eric B. Herzik, for his unwavering support and encouragement. There were several times during the research and writing of this dissertation where I found myself lost in the weeds or needing some reassurance that I was moving in the right direction. Professor Herzik was always available to listen to me talk through my ideas and to review my work along with providing critically valuable suggestions, which helped keep me on track to complete this dissertation.

I want to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Bill Eubank, Dr. John Marini, Dr. John Dobra, and Dr. Kenneth Peak for their valuable time and their invaluable comments to support and improve my research. I especially want to thank Professor Eubank for his always helpful suggestions and comments about my research along with patiently listening to me discuss research methodology and my tribulations with writing this dissertation.

I am indebted to so many wonderful faculty in the Department of Political Science at the University of Nevada, Reno who through their classes, and just as importantly through personal interaction and conversations, helped me acquire the knowledge and skills to successfully complete my Ph.D. In particular, I want to thank the department’s office manager, Kristin Kabrin, who was always available for me to contact
about administrative questions and other helpful assistance. More importantly, Kristin would always offer a kind word and encouragement when I was less than optimistic about my progress.

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I am very grateful to my friends and colleagues at the Nevada Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security for their kind comments and patient support, in spite of my scattered personality over the past several months as I completed this dissertation. I especially want to thank Karen Hall for her incredibly good nature and positive attitude at work, which also kept me upbeat. I would also like to thank Samantha Ladich for her strategic and welcomed comments and unambiguous support making it clear that I had to finish this dissertation.

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>ACLU</td>
<td>American Civil Liberties Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>AOR</td>
<td>Area of Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCA</td>
<td>Baseline Capabilities Assessment</td>
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<td>CCB</td>
<td>Collaborative Capacity Builder</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCIC</td>
<td>Criminal Intelligence Coordinating Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFR</td>
<td>Code of Federal Regulations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIKR</td>
<td>Critical Infrastructure/Key Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>COC</td>
<td>Critical Operating Capabilities</td>
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<td>COMPSTAT</td>
<td>Computer Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONOPS</td>
<td>Concept of Operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>Community Oriented Policing</td>
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<tr>
<td>COPS</td>
<td>Community Oriented Policing Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>Congressional Research Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Counterterrorism</td>
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<td>DEA</td>
<td>Drug Enforcement Agency</td>
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<td>DHS</td>
<td>Department of Homeland Security</td>
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<td>DOJ</td>
<td>Department of Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>DT</td>
<td>Domestic Terrorism</td>
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<td>EDA</td>
<td>Economic Development Administration</td>
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<td>EPIC</td>
<td>El Paso Intelligence Center</td>
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<td>FBI</td>
<td>Federal Bureau of Investigation</td>
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<td>FCFG</td>
<td>Fusion Center Focus Group</td>
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<td>FEMA</td>
<td>Federal Emergency Management Administration</td>
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<td>FFY</td>
<td>Federal Fiscal Year</td>
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<td>FIG</td>
<td>Field Intelligence Group</td>
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<td>FLO</td>
<td>Fusion Liaison Officer</td>
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<td>FOUO</td>
<td>For Official Use Only</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAO</td>
<td>Government Accountability Office</td>
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<td>GIWG</td>
<td>Global Intelligence Working Group</td>
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<td>GPRAMA</td>
<td>Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSA</td>
<td>Homeland Security Advisor</td>
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<td>HIDTA</td>
<td>High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area</td>
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<td>HSAC</td>
<td>Homeland Security Advisory Council</td>
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<td>HSGP</td>
<td>Homeland Security Grant Program</td>
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<td>HSIN</td>
<td>Homeland Security Information Network</td>
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<td>IACP</td>
<td>International Association of Chiefs of Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>IALEA</td>
<td>International Association of Law Enforcement Analysts</td>
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<td>IC</td>
<td>Intelligence Community</td>
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<td>ICE</td>
<td>Immigration and Customs Enforcement</td>
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<td>IFL</td>
<td>Interagency Fusion Liaison</td>
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<td>ILP</td>
<td>Intelligence Led Policing</td>
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<td>IRB</td>
<td>Institutional Review Board</td>
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<td>IRTPA</td>
<td>Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISE</td>
<td>Information Sharing Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITACG</td>
<td>Interagency Threat Assessment and Coordination Group</td>
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<td>JTTF</td>
<td>Joint Terrorism Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEO</td>
<td>Law Enforcement Online (also Law Enforcement Officer)</td>
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<td>LEO</td>
<td>Law Enforcement</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOA</td>
<td>Memorandum of Agreement</td>
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<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<td>NCISP</td>
<td>National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan</td>
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<td>NCTC</td>
<td>National Counterterrorism Center</td>
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<td>NGA</td>
<td>National Governor’s Association</td>
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<td>NSA</td>
<td>National Security Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSI</td>
<td>National Suspicions Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODNI</td>
<td>Office of the Director of National Intelligence</td>
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<tr>
<td>OHS</td>
<td>Office of Homeland Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>P/CRCL</td>
<td>Privacy and Civil Rights and Civil Liberties</td>
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<td>PM-ISE</td>
<td>Program Manager-Information Sharing Environment</td>
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<td>POP</td>
<td>Problem Oriented Policing</td>
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<td>PSKN</td>
<td>Public Sector Knowledge Networks</td>
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<td>RAC</td>
<td>Resource Allocation Criteria</td>
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<td>RISS</td>
<td>Regional Information Sharing System</td>
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<td>SAR</td>
<td>Suspicions Activity Reporting</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCIF</td>
<td>Secure Compartmented Information Facility</td>
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<td>SHSP</td>
<td>State Homeland Security Grant Program</td>
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<td>SIN</td>
<td>Standing Information Needs</td>
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<td>SLPMO</td>
<td>State and Local Program Management Office</td>
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<td>SLTT</td>
<td>State, Local, Tribal Territorial</td>
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<td>TEWG</td>
<td>Terrorism Early Warning Groups</td>
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<td>TLO</td>
<td>Terrorism Liaison Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSA</td>
<td>Transportation Security Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>UASI</td>
<td>Urban Area Security Initiative</td>
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CHAPTER 1 -- INTRODUCTION

“In the public sector networks are important brokers of knowledge; single
organizations collaborate in order to find solutions unavailable to them as
individual entities. The networks are potential human capital and data entities
waiting to attack society’s difficult problems.” Agranoff (2007, 29)

Statement of the Problem

Terrorism in the United States is a real threat to all segments of American society.
The murderous attacks carried out on September 11, 2001 killing 2,977 people in New
York City, Washington, D.C. and Shanksville, Pennsylvania,¹ caused federal, state, and
local governments to evaluate how law enforcement and public safety operate to protect
its citizens from acts of terrorism (Cooney, Rojek, and Kamininski, 2011; Carter and
Carter 2009; Joyal, 2012). State and Regional Major Urban Area intelligence fusion
centers (fusion centers) are now the primary entity to incorporate local law enforcement
and public safety into a national homeland security network. The fusion center concept
emerged from several observations by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks
Upon the United States (9/11 Commission Report, 2004) findings that several of the 9/11
terrorists were known by federal and local law enforcement. However, because of
inadequate ability to share information, interagency rivalry, and what the 9/11
Commission described as a “failure of imagination, policy, capabilities, and
management,” the “dots were not connected” (9/11 Commission Report, 2004, 13). As a
result, 49 states and several major urban areas stood up fusion centers over the past 8
years beginning in 2006 when the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) became
actively involved. In 2006 there were 40 fusion centers, which have grown in number to
78 centers today (U.S. House of Representatives, Majority Staff Report, 2013).
A fusion center is defined, in the Fusion Center Guidelines, as a “collaborative effort of two or more agencies that provide resources, expertise, and information to the center with the goal of maximizing a center’s ability to detect, prevent, investigate, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006). This definition is the guidepost for the core mission of a fusion center and interorganizational collaboration is at the heart of fusion center operations, structure and culture. Through a well established collaborative environment fusion centers are considered the best mechanism for efficient and effective information sharing and data analysis through streamlined operations and resource use to support law enforcement in fighting crime and terrorism (PM-ISE Annual Report, 2013). Fusion centers have been referred to as information sharing hubs or information warehouses, but this is a misnomer. The role of a fusion center is complex, each center serves their local customer base with data analysis, often including criminal case support, training and education services, and they are also part of the developing National Network of Fusion Centers. As an active participant in the National Network, fusion centers share information and receive information, that extends vertically with the federal government and horizontally with State and local partners. Fusion centers also produce situational awareness products for their local partners and often these are regional products produced in collaboration with other fusion centers and the federal government (more detail on the national network is provided in Chapter 2).

Most fusion centers are located under the authority of a state or local government public safety or law enforcement agency. No two fusion centers are alike, though each center shares a common framework and adheres to basic federal guidelines for
information sharing.\textsuperscript{2} State Governor’s are responsible for designating their state’s fusion center(s) by notifying DHS of the selection and one fusion center in a state is designated as “Primary” and any other fusion center in a state is considered as “recognized” by DHS (PM-ISE, 2011). In general, fusion centers have at least one partner agency collocated as part of their collaborative network, and often this includes several representatives from other federal, State, or local law enforcement agencies serving as partners within the fusion center. Because the mission of a fusion center is to gather and analyze all relevant information that could be a precursor to terrorist activity, the relationships and partnering must involve many state and local disciplines other than law enforcement. These relationships include, for example: public health, fire services, emergency management, transportation, information technology, public works, hospitals, schools, and the private sector. The level of participation and collaboration with these agencies varies among fusion centers based on each center’s needs, capabilities, funding, and location.

Law enforcements’ role in the area of counterterrorism (efforts to prevent, detect and deter terrorism) was, until the 9/11 attacks, primarily response oriented and reactive to an ongoing event (Schaible and Sheffield, 2012). This is not to say that State and local law enforcement was not engaged in intelligence, just that the criminal intelligence and analytical framework that did exist was not systematic, it lacked adequate technology for processing information, analysts were not well trained, analysis was not proactive, and communication with federal agencies was at best lackluster (Osborne, 2006, 8-10). Intelligence Led Policing (ILP), which has its roots in the United Kingdom policing methods beginning in the 1990s was being adopted by several large city police forces
prior to the 9/11 attacks (Townsend, Sullivan, Monahan, and Donnaly, 2010; Ratcliffe, 2008, 4-5). In the United States ILP was emerging through the use of crime statistics, such as the COMPSTAT and the Community Oriented Policing (COPS) programs that brought law enforcement into proactive contact with citizenry (Schaible and Sheffield, 2012). However, ILP is not the intelligence fusion process envisioned by the 9/11 Commission findings. Whereas ILP does involve a process of taking information and turning it into actionable intelligence, the ILP practice is not amenable to multidiscipline sharing of information. It generally remains, in practice, a centralized intelligence operation to the local law enforcement agency (Schaible and Sheffield, 2012; Osborne, 2006, 76-77). As stated by Radcliffe in discussing police agency view of information sharing in a broad network setting, “The structure of law enforcement in most places militates against horizontal information sharing, both between agencies and within” (2008, 5).

Fusion centers straddle two worlds, the counterterrorism world and the local area law enforcement policing world. As fusion centers have matured, their common goal has shifted from being primarily focused on counterterrorism to now including an “all crimes” and likely also an “all hazards/ all-threats” approach to intelligence and information sharing (DHS 2012, 3). This shift away from an all or primary counterterrorism approach has several reasons, though a few are common among most of the fusion centers. One explanation is the nexus between common crime and terrorism. Terrorism usually exhibits precursor elements to the final act and these elements are often considered in the collection of tips and leads to suspicious activity, but also can involve non-terrorism criminal activity. The DHS campaign of “See something, say something,”
for example, is emblematic of the need to identify suspicious activity that may or may not be terrorism (though it could be criminal activity). Likewise, several states use public service campaigns outlining the steps to a terror plot, such as suspicious surveillance or purchases of large amounts of hazardous chemicals. Because fusion centers are usually aligned with an existing law enforcement unit, the infrastructure in place is an asset to the collection of criminal intelligence and other tips and leads. Fusion centers need to be relevant to their customers and taking a broader perspective to include general criminal activity and other threats and hazards and not focusing solely on terrorism helps accomplish this (Guidetti, 2010; Cooney et al., 2011; Zilis, 2010). Finally, fiscal and resource pressures have forced many fusion centers to shift away from a terrorism-centric mission because counterterrorism is hard to sell to state legislators and county managers. General local crime fighting and using ILP to reduce criminal activity usually gets local or state funding (Ratcliffe and Walden, 2010).

The importance of collaboration to a fusion center operation cannot be overstated. In many ways collaboration is the life blood to the fusion concept and structure; without it a fusion centers is not much different from any other law enforcement bureaucracy (Joyal, 2012). As fusion centers have taken on a larger scale of duties by incorporating “all crimes and all hazards” into their counterterrorism mission the role becomes split between supporting general law enforcement and policing, and that of counterterrorism. This creates a tension in the fusion center organization as the fusion centers’ goals are primarily maintaining and fostering interagency and multidiscipline coordination and communication through information sharing. In other words, the definition of what a network is for a law enforcement agency is different (narrower) than the network for a
law enforcement agency that incorporates a counterterrorism mission. If the networks are different, then the level of collaboration will likely also be different.

Counterterrorism as a policy area, along with homeland security and terrorism are often categorized as “wicked problems” (Moore, 2011, 18-25). Wicked problems, are dynamically complex, ill-structured public problems that have no simple solution or no solution at all (Rittel and Webber, 1973), where uncertainty is present (Batie, 2009), and addressing such problems requires adaptive behavior and novel thinking (Brown and Brundy, 2003). As Williams (2002) notes, wicked problems “defy efforts to delineate their boundaries and to identify their causes, and thus to expose their problematic nature (Rittel and Webber, 1973, 167).” The public administration literature has considered collaboration important to solving these wicked problems (Huxtman, 2003; Dawes, Cresswell, Pardo, 2009; Choi and Choi, 2012), and including the homeland security literature (Kiltz and Ramsey, 2012; Pfeifer, 2012). If terrorism and countering the threat are wicked problems, then it is certainly appropriate to analyze fusion centers as organizations where collaborative networks should be used as a way to address how fusion centers function. Many challenges and driving factors identified in the collaborative network literature pertain to fusion centers. Resource dependency has emerged as important to the development and use of interagency networks (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003; Silvia, 2010; Williams, 2002). For fusion centers, the need to have expertise in several fields and disciplines, such as public health and epidemiology, cybersecurity, and interoperable communications, to provide valuable information and analysis is one aspect of this resource dependency. Additionally, the constraints on government growth also drive network collaboration because funding is often an issue
(O’Toole, 1997) and to provide adequate services, fusion centers must develop networks to leverage capabilities.

As will be argued in this dissertation, fusion centers can be understood in terms of being a “boundary organization” (Guston, 2001). Boundary organizations are bridging institutions, which are described by Ingram and Bradley as “situated between different social and organizational worlds, such as science and policy” (2006). According to advocates, boundary organizations succeed when three conditions are met. First, they must provide incentives to produce boundary objects, such as decisions or products that reflect the input of different perspectives. Second, they involve participation from actors across boundaries. Third, they have lines of accountability to the various organizations spanned [by the boundary organization]. In their mission to provide strategic analysis and situational awareness to decision-makers to prevent acts of terror and criminal activity, fusion centers meet this criteria.

Terrorism viewed as a wicked problem requires an adaptive organization to process data and information into useable and actionable intelligence. This is similar to how boundary organizations work in areas of sustainability networks, such as environmental organizations providing a trusted bridge between the science community and politicians (Guston, 2001). For fusion centers, they use an organizational and governance structure making them accountable to their data providers, customers and users. Fusion centers must maintain trust in their relationships to be relevant and effective. As an intelligence and information-sharing organization, fusion centers rely on the intelligence cycle, which is a continuous, open, flow of information with layers of feedback loops, with the goal of developing raw information into finished intelligence
products for use in decision making and formulating policy or actions (U.S. Dept. Of Justice, 2006, 19; U.S. Dept. of Justice, 2003, 3). In the area of terrorism and related situational awareness the decision-makers may not receive information that is directly related to a particular decision, such as a specialized environmental policy boundary organization might exhibit to their customer group (Quick and Feldman, 2011).\(^6\) However, fusion centers provide trusted situational awareness to decision-makers and this provides an environment of information that adds to and potentially influences decisions and choices of politicians and other government officials. Fusion centers are accountable to both the providers of information and to their customers who receive finished intelligence products. This is accomplished though formal governance structures that oversee and advise fusion centers, and also through the intelligence cycle. It is important that fusion centers be customer sensitive, adaptive, collaborative, stable in the long run, trusted, and accountable to stakeholders, which are all characteristics of a boundary organization.

This introduction to the research problem began with a quote by Robert Agranoff (2007), in which he points out the “human capital” aspect to networks. The human element is important to understanding how collaboration “in practice” is done in a network setting. The central tenet to this dissertation is exploring how fusion centers collaborate. Using a qualitative approach through interviews with high level leadership can provide important details to the cognitive aspects that drive collaboration in fusion centers. As discussed by Fountain (2013), interagency collaboration is conducted in two ways: 1. Collaboration through people and, 2. Collaboration through process. According to Fountain, for successful and sustainable interagency collaboration, both elements must
be present and managers need to find the right balance. As will be described later in this
dissertation, some fusion centers may rely primarily on the “collaboration through
process” part of this equation. This can be seen in the types of capabilities fusion centers
are asked to measure as part of the Fusion Center Assessment (see Chapter 2 for more
detail). The assessment looks at operating and enabling capabilities that are primarily
process oriented. The assumption surrounding the application of these process
capabilities is that fusion centers collaborate with partners and are doing so in the best
way possible based on each centers resources and needs. However, understanding the
complexities of individual behavior is still an important question, as stated by Fountain
(1994):

…the new institutionalism in political science and sociology represents the
individual as a boundedly rational, culturally based “practical” actor who has
economic as well as noneconomic goals and whose actions are embedded in both
social structures and ongoing social relationships [March and Olsen, 1989;
DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Granovetter, 1992].

In summary, the academic literature has not substantively looked at how state
and local fusion centers engage in collaboration within a network environment. Research
on networks and collaboration, both at the micro level (management and leadership) and
the macro level (organizations) is a growing field of study not only in public
administration, but also in the policy sciences and in economics. Interagency
collaboration is important to understanding how public policy is implemented to solve
complex problems that require substantial resources and expertise. The economics
discipline has looked to network collaboration to help solve complex principal-agent
problems that can aid in achieving more economically efficient solutions. From a
practical perspective, it is important to understand the collaborative process and network
structure of fusion center organizations in greater detail than is currently available in the academic literature. This extends to how the network environment is viewed by fusion center leaders.

This exploratory case study investigates fusion center collaboration in the context of counterterrorism as a complex, “wicked” policy problem that requires robust multidisciplinary information sharing if fusion centers are to achieve their expected capabilities. Additionally, this study argues that fusion centers can be considered “boundary organizations” with the intended goals of gathering information and providing trusted and value added intelligence products to stakeholders and partners in a network setting of collaboration, trust, and accountability.

**Research Questions**

The analysis contained in this study focuses on the following question:

- How do fusion centers collaborate in a multidiscipline and interorganizational network environment?

To investigate this question a series of elite semi-structured interviews were conducted. Nine fusion centers were contacted and the director or deputy director from each center was interviewed. The fusion centers in this sample represent three states with a single fusion center and four states with multiple fusion centers. In two of the four multiple fusion center states two centers were interviewed, to include the State designated fusion center and one major urban area fusion center. It is important to observe and understand differences in how collaboration is conducted in states that have multiple fusion centers as compared to states with only one state center. Detail on this methodology is covered in Chapter 4.
As part of this investigation into the primary research question four additional component questions will be addressed to understand fusion center collaboration. These component questions are:

1. Are fusion centers collaborating in ways that support an information sharing network and the ability to accomplish their organizational missions?

2. What factors, organizational structures, or management perspectives facilitate fusion center collaboration?

3. What factors constrain or challenge fusion centers from effective collaboration and information sharing with federal, state, and local agencies and the private sector?

4. How does having a formal governance structure or advisory body help facilitate and maintain collaborative relationships that are beneficial to the information sharing network?

As a qualitative research study the conclusions from this investigation are not statistically generalizable to the entire network of 78 fusion centers. However, the information and conclusions from this study will be beneficial to researchers in designing subsequent qualitative and quantitative studies by providing theoretical context and behavior observations that currently do not exist in the contemporary fusion center literature. Additionally, this research will benefit fusion center leadership by providing them with ideas and concepts on how their behavior and perspectives on collaboration impact their organization and influence state and local partnerships including involvement with the National Network of Fusion Centers.

**Purpose of the study**

This dissertation investigates and evaluates the how State and major urban area intelligence fusion centers collaborate in a network setting with federal, State, and local
government, tribal partners, and the private sector. While there has been considerable research into the area of collaborative networks there is a dearth of academic work looking specifically at fusion center organizations in both the public administration and political science literature. This is a noticeable gap in the literature. As studies in collaborative networks have developed there is a sense, and often a criticism, that the studies in this area are not quantitative enough and when modeled that the research has been too focused on qualitative studies (Lynn, 1996, 74; McGuire and Silvia, 2010). This does not mean, however, that qualitative methods cannot benefit research, especially in defined and emerging new policy areas such as fusion centers. Rather, the detail and granular context of empirical information provided through in-depth interviews and examination afforded by qualitative research can provide valuable context to theory and inform development and practical applications.

In 2010, Lawrence O’Tool made the following observation in his John Gaus Award Lecture about networks as a research area in public administration and political science:

In game-theoretic terms, it is clear that between or among interdependent actors, pure cooperation and pure conflict are extreme forms. The vast majority of possible “ties that bind” involve mixed motives, with those involved neither in full agreement nor in strident opposition, but somewhere in between. So too is it with organizational actors and networks (see Stoker 1991),” (O’Toole, 2010).

How, then, do we investigate and establish models of individual or organizational behavior and models of institutional change in a network environment with such a large middle area between extremes? Qualitative research methods and analysis provides an important part of the answer. This dissertation uses a qualitative, multiple case study approach which primarily relies on semi-structured elite interviews and material provided
by the interviewees. Publicly available documents and sources related to the subject matter are also used to support this research. As a qualitative study there are limits to the degree that the results can be used to generalize beyond the extent of the specific fusion centers participating in this study. However, academic research on fusion centers in the areas of public administration and political science is lacking. The findings from this study will contribute to and benefit the fields in several ways.

First, this study fills a gap in the current academic literature. Most studies on fusion centers fall in the category of “thought” pieces. Several government investigative reports from agencies such as the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Congressional Research Service (CRS) exist, but these are not specifically adding to the academic body of theoretical and empirical literature in the field. Subdisciplines, such as homeland security and crisis management studies have produced some academic and thesis work focusing on fusion centers. These studies, however, are more practitioner based and descriptive without placing organization or management structure, actions, and behaviors into a public administration or political science literature context.

Second, it is hoped that the results will provide important information to researchers by explaining how fusion center operations can be viewed in terms of collaborative network theory as it is developed in the public administration and political science literature. As will be discussed, there are many nuances in the operation of fusion centers which have not been considered in the literature. Future research should be able to use the results of this study to formulate research questions, establish quantitative statistical design models, and identify and operationalize variables to better understand the relationships that drive collaborative behavior.
Third, this research garners perspectives from fusion center leadership, the Directors of the agencies, on network collaboration and as such, their perspectives are certainly in the realm of management theory. However, this dissertation also argues that the perspectives of local fusion center leadership directly influences how fusion centers operate as a network in a new institutional setting (O’Toole and Meier, 1999). There is a need to understand how collaboration is viewed and conducted so that information sharing policy can adapt to changing and often uncertain conditions characteristic of wicked problems. Fusion centers are a new institutional design for State and local government and law enforcement to grapple with, and for the practitioner in government this research should be beneficial and informative.

The federal government, specifically the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), can benefit in many ways from the results of this research. Analysis of the findings from this research should reveal both strengths and challenges in the way fusion centers engage in and utilize collaboration to build partnerships. Because DHS provides numerous resources to fusion centers including personnel and homeland security grant funding, the allocation of these resources often become a matter of policy, such as building out the national network of fusion centers. It is hoped the information contained in this study will prove useful to the federal government as they develop new assessments measuring fusion center progress and in making determinations about resource allocations to state and regional fusion centers.

Lastly, considering fusion centers as interorganizational collaborative networks means that trust, accountability, proactive outreach, and robust information sharing must be inclusive for sustained success of the fusion center network. These elements are also
important factors to the way boundary organizations operate to address complex problems by bridging partnerships. Expanding partnerships through collaboration is at the heart of the fusion center network. However, as O’Toole (2010) reminds us about network designs in new institutions, “Adding such actors does multiple things: it enhances capacity and also complicates the set of goals – meant as constraints on action (Simon 1964); further, it can render less visible just who is doing what to whom.” And if the stakes are to prevent terrorism then we need to continue research to better understand how new institutions such as fusion centers operate and collaborate in a highly interdependent network environment to address such wicked problems.

Definitions used in this Study

Several terms are used in this dissertation that are specific to the discussion of fusion centers and require some definition for the reader. The definition of terms and concepts presented in this study are included in Appendix 1, unless otherwise noted.

Organization of the Study

This research uses a qualitative, multiple case study methodology, designed to investigate how fusion centers engage in collaborative relationships to communicate, gather information, and share information with other fusion centers and with their state and local partners in government and the private sector. By using in-depth semi-structured elite interviews with fusion center directors the results of this research will provide important context to how fusion centers are “breaking down the barriers” in the active information sharing environment. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to this study. Chapter 2 provides background information on fusion centers with an emphasis on their
current status and position within the National Network. Chapter 3 is a review of the literature and addresses the relevant issues pertaining to networks and collaboration theory with a particular focus on the impacts to law enforcement organizations, intelligence processes, and other public sector organizations that deal with “wicked problems.” Boundary organization theory is discussed in the context of how this organization structure helps participants in a network environment produce and share knowledge in uncertain policy arenas such as combating terrorism. And lastly, an overview of the academic literature on fusion centers is discussed.

Chapter 4 presents the methodology used in this study. Included is a discussion of the research design, its strengths and weaknesses, description of the interview instrument, justification and rationale of the questions and the characteristics of the interviewees and their fusion centers. The fifth chapter presents the results and findings from the study. This dissertation concludes with Chapter 6, which provides an interpretation and analysis of the findings, a discussion of the implications, and offers suggestions and observations for further study on fusion centers based on this research.
CHAPTER 2

FUSION CENTERS: DEVELOPMENT AND ISSUES

“The biggest impediment to all-source analysis – to a greater likelihood of connecting the dots – is the human or systematic resistance to sharing information.”


Introduction

The events of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, brought about change in many areas of American society including politics, the intelligence community, individual lives, business and commerce. Much of this change revolves around our collective national view of terrorism and the types of threats, risks, vulnerabilities and consequences we face and the level of security we desire to counter the terrorism risk. The answers to these questions are not easily determined and we will likely grapple with the balance between the concept of security and risk over the foreseeable future.

The domestic terrorism threat has changed in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The homeland is now a real target and this has brought about tremendous changes in how the United States addresses the domestic terrorism threat. Prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks the national intelligence community covering both foreign and domestic areas was focused primarily at the federal level with no real involvement or participation by state and local government (Chenoweth and Clarke, 2010). 16 federal entities make up the Intelligence Community, with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) having sole responsibility as the lead agency to investigate domestic terrorism and engage in counterterrorism efforts to prevent future terrorist attacks. In the post-9/11 world the
United States government has moved to improve its efforts to address threats to the nation by creating several new agencies and establishing policies to strengthen the ability of the government to prevent, detect, and deter acts of terror to the homeland. One of the largest institutional changes was the creation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2002, which integrated 22 separate federal agencies into a single enterprise. The DHS has a broad mission to keep the nation free from terrorist and related attacks, along with its directive to support national preparedness through situational awareness, hazard mitigation and recovery efforts, which is conducted through its Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) arm. This involves overarching preparedness efforts to address natural and manmade disasters, to include acts of terrorism.

As a result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, federal efforts securing the homeland now view state and local first responders, law enforcement and even the private sector as important contributors and partners in emergency management and disaster preparedness efforts. These partnerships also extend to counterterrorism efforts where local law enforcement and first responders are also considered “first preventers” because they will likely be the first to observe activity that might be terrorism related. The larger fold of the federal government to include State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial (SLTT) government and agencies, first responders and public safety, is a reflection of the several policies and directives that have emerged after 9/11 that comprise what is now commonly referred to as “hometown security.” The terrorist attacks on the United States revealed inadequacies in federal and local government preparedness capabilities not only to detect and prevent the attack, but also in the response and recovery phase of the catastrophic
The following sections in this chapter provide a brief background on fusion centers with a focus on the complexities of the American state and local law enforcement environment as it relates to collaborative arrangements and development of an information sharing environment. This chapter is not intended to be a complete history of policing practices or American law enforcement.

**The Fusion Center Model and Information Sharing**

Beginning in 2003 in the aftermath of the intelligence and information sharing failures leading up to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, several states and local government agencies started their own information gathering and intelligence centers. Law enforcement agencies realized the ability to protect their communities was compromised due to improperly directed and focused investigative and intelligence operations (Johnson and Dorn, 2008). The primary problem was a lack of information sharing capabilities of the type that contributed to the inability for law enforcement to handle gathered criminal information and link the actions and behaviors of the 9/11 terrorists to a terror plot. These early centers became models of what are now known as
State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers (fusion centers). As of July 2013, there are 78 federally recognized and independently established fusion centers located in 49 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia. Seven states have multiple fusion centers (U.S. House of Representatives, 2013).

The 9/11 Commission Final Report cited the lack of information sharing, both in willingness and capabilities, among federal, state, and local governments as a major factor leading to the terrorist attacks on 9/11. The 9/11 Commission Report also emphasized the need to integrate the SLTT government partners into the information sharing process so federal agencies comprising the Intelligence Community (IC), especially the DHS and the FBI, can access information and data collected at the local level. Likewise, the 9/11 Report encouraged federal intelligence and information be shared with state and local law enforcement and homeland security agencies. (9/11 Commission Report, 2004).

The fusion center concept represents a departure from other models of cooperative policing, such as interagency task forces, Problem Oriented Policing (POP) strategies, Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) programs, and Intelligence Led Policing (ILP) models (Masse and Rollins, 2007). This is due in large part to the expanded scope of information sources fusion centers must work with to meet their mission of critical data collection and analysis. Multiagency and multidiscipline information sources, including private sector data, go beyond the role of typical law enforcement and criminal intelligence units. Ratcliffe (2002) describes four objectives of ILP representing the departure from the reactive role of traditional policing to include a new intelligence based proactive policing approach. According to Ratcliffe, the four
tactical ILP objectives include: (1) targeting criminals, (2) managing locations exhibiting high levels of criminal activity and social problems, (3) investigations based on criminal activity with linkages and associations, and (4) implementing proactive and preventative techniques and programs supported by local police and also include social programs (Ratcliffe, 2003). Fusion centers, in many ways, are an extension and expansion of these existing intelligence gathering and analysis activities at the local level. However, the additional role of taking on homeland security activities requiring substantial collaborative arrangements with the federal government and other SLTT partners represents a “fundamental change in the philosophy” that local law enforcement must adapt to their organization (Masse and Rollins, 2007).

A fusion center is usually operated by a public safety or homeland security agency within a state or local jurisdiction, which exchanges information and intelligence, streamlines operations, strengthens and leverages resources to improve the ability to disrupt, prevent, respond to, and recover from all threats and hazards by analyzing data from a variety of sources. A fusion center is defined as a “collaborative effort of two or more agencies that provide resources, expertise, and information to the center with the goal of maximizing a center’s ability to detect, prevent, investigate, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006). Fusion centers focus primarily on the intelligence cycle through which information is gathered, integrated, evaluated, analyzed, disseminated, and on implementing the fusion process for managing the information and intelligence flow across all levels and sectors of government and private industry (see Figure 1). Following a new paradigm for sharing information in a collaborative environment, fusion centers are designed to break down barriers by
deemphasizing the “need to know” culture of law enforcement and instead emphasizing a “need to share” organization philosophy in both spirit and action (Best, 2011). This “need to share” perspective is applied to raw data and information at the analyst level and also to the sharing of finished intelligence.

**Figure 1: Intelligence Cycle**

Source: PM-ISE (www.ise.gov)

Fusion centers provide analysis and information-sharing capabilities that support the efforts of state and local law enforcement to prevent and investigate crime and terrorism. Fusion centers receive information from many sources including state and local generated suspicious activity reporting, various tips and leads, and criminal activity. Additionally, fusion centers receive federal information and intelligence at the classified and unclassified levels.
Fusion centers create relevant, timely and actionable products for their customers by “fusing” information gathered from various sources and disciplines (hence the often used term “all source fusion” (Sims, 2007). This concept is often referred to as “connecting the dots” whereby disparate and often seemingly unrelated data are analyzed to construct a threat profile providing situational awareness or actionable intelligence. Because fusion centers are designed to involve every level and discipline in government and including the private sector, the potential number of information sources is large, which adds complexity to decisions about effective collaboration in a network (Moore, 2011, 35). Fusion centers use their analytical capabilities to provide value added knowledge products to state and local law enforcement, emergency management and other stakeholders to address immediate and emerging threat conditions. The fusion process also supports agencies and the private sector with risk-based, information-driven prevention, response, and consequence management information and analysis (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005).

**State and Local Law Enforcement Intelligence Before 9/11**

The need for improved intelligence through better information sharing among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies is not entirely a new subject. The 1964 Warren Commission report pointed out several problems relating to lack of willingness or the inability of law enforcement at all levels to share information (Carter, 2009, 36). In 1970, in reaction to the growing crime problems in major cities, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals (NAC) made recommendations to local law enforcement agencies for developing a system of intelligence gathering and use
of crime data (Carter, 2009). Local law enforcement and also federal law enforcement were overwhelmed by the growth of criminal organized crime in the early 1980s due to ineffective intelligence operations, lack of properly trained personnel, inadequate records management systems, and technological shortfalls. Inexperience within the ranks of law enforcement to understand and embrace the value of a criminal intelligence unit presented a challenge to its development (Davis, Pollard, Ward, Wilson, Varda, Hansell, and Steinberg, 2010, 39).

In the 1980s the advent of large scale drug cartels and money laundering syndicates and the consequent increase in violent crime caused several of the nation’s largest cities to develop interagency task forces and other multiagency cooperative arrangements among law enforcement agencies in an attempt to counter the growing criminal activity (Carter, 2008). The interagency task force concept emerged from a realization that local law enforcement resources were limited through physical and jurisdictional boundaries in which standard law enforcement operates, thus preventing agencies from engaging an effective response. Ideally, law enforcement could leverage expertise and resources among partnering agencies and increase their overall capabilities to successfully counter crime (Ratcliffe and Guidetti, 2008). With drug trafficking a major component to the rise in criminal activity, the New York City Police Department in cooperation with various state and local law enforcement agencies instituted a cooperative agreement with the predecessor to the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, creating the Unified Intelligence Division (UID) (Graphia, 2010).
State and local law enforcement in the United States has long been recognized as being fragmented and uncoordinated in its structure and ability to share information beyond an agency’s jurisdiction (Ratcliffe, 2008, 24). Early efforts beginning in the 1970s to consolidate multijurisdictional metropolitan and urban local police was met with resistance and academic evidence indicates that consolidated police forces reduced service delivery to some communities (Parks, 1976, 261). The level of fragmentation can be seen in the large number of state and local law enforcement agencies in the U.S. According to the most recent U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) survey there were 17,985 state and local law enforcement agencies in 2008. The agencies were identified as follows (Reaves, 2011):

- 12,501 local police departments,
- 3,063 sheriffs’ offices,
- 50 primary state law enforcement agencies,
- 1,733 special jurisdiction agencies,
- 638 other agencies, primarily county constable offices in Texas.

As Ratcliffe (2008, 25) points out, the fragmented environment of state and local policing creates challenges to sharing information and joining forces to combat criminal activity, especially organized crime with complex cartel activities spanning large regions of the U.S. In the 1970s this criminal element was able to exploit weaknesses in the local law enforcement environments focused on jurisdictional boundaries and entrenched hierarchies that distrusted cooperation.

Several interagency law enforcement cooperative arrangements emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s which built on a framework of the federal task force model. Law
enforcement responses evolved from two separate national studies looking at the rise of urban criminal activity and associated increase in the illegal drug trade: the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (1967), and the 1973 National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals. These federally funded programs include the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program, The FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC), and the Regional Information Sharing System (RISS). Scholars and U.S. Government reports have discussed and identified information sharing and cooperative programs as important models establishing the fusion center concept and provide an understanding to the importance of collaborative arrangements supporting information sharing, which include vertical and horizontal coordination among federal, state, local and tribal partners (Ratcliffe, 2008; Cooney, Rojek, and Kaminski, 2011; Carter and Carter 2009; Masse and Rollins. 2007; PM-ISE, 2013; Graphia, 2010; McGarrel, Freilich, and Chermak, 2007).

The Regional Information Sharing System (RISS)\(^{10}\) was established in 1974 in response to the 1973 National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals recommended that federal, state, and local police agencies develop a uniform method to collect, organize, and share criminal information. In addition, the report outlined the need for intelligence gathering capability for the nation’s larger police agencies (Ratcliffe, 2008, 25). RISS is a federally funded program through the Department of Justice (DOJ) comprising six regional information sharing hubs operating in mutually exclusive geographic regions (Peterson, 2005). The RISS partnership with local law enforcement provides a clearinghouse for criminal information exchange among all multijurisdictional partner agencies. RISS conforms to the *Criminal
Intelligence Systems Operating Policies and federal regulation, 28 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 23, which pertains to federally funded multijurisdictional criminal intelligence database systems and provides guidance on the collection, storage, and dissemination of records to ensure protection of constitutional and privacy rights of individuals.11 RISS has grown since its inception to include several services directed toward information sharing to partner agencies including the RISS Automated Trusted Information Exchange (RISS ATIX), federated search capability, and access to several internet sharing systems such as the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN), and the FBI’s Law Enforcement Online (LEO) resources.12

The El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) was formed in 1974 by the DOJ after a report entitled A Secure Border: An Analysis of Issues Affecting the U.S. Department of Justice was submitted to the Office of Management and Budget which made recommendations to secure the southwest border from organized drug cartels and other criminal activity.13 One of the recommendations was for the federal government to establish a regional intelligence center. From this directive, EPIC was established as the nation’s first regional multiagency intelligence and information sharing partnership supporting tactical field operations and providing strategic intelligence to all levels of law enforcement (Peterson, 2005). Originally staffed by representatives of the Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Customs Service, and U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, EPIC has become a national and international resource serving federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies and other countries.14

The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program,15 established by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, provides assistance to federal, state, local, and tribal
law enforcement agencies operating in regions identified as severely impacted by drug-trafficking, money laundering and other illicit drug related offences. Specific to counterdrug enforcement, HIDTAs are intended to be collaborative multiagency operations to facilitate and support law enforcement across all levels of government by providing enhanced intelligence and information sharing capabilities. In 2013 there were 28 HIDTAs covering 60 percent of the U.S. population and involving counties in 46 states. Each HIDTA is administered through a local Executive Committee comprised of equal numbers of federal and local law enforcement officials. These boards identify specific illegal drug related threats to their affected area and establish goals and objectives to counter the problems. Carter and Carter (2009) point out that because the HIDTA is an agency under the Whitehouse Office of National Drug Control Policy, separate from the DEA, but utilizes DEA personnel, their focus is directed more toward federal, state and local task force formation. This emphasis on counterdrug operations limits the HIDTA sphere of operations, and is recognized as separate from the broader DEA mission. As a result, the HIDTA framework has remained focused on counterdrug intelligence and operations and was not viewed as an effective model for developing into the all-crimes fusion center model (Carter and Carter, 2009).

The Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) is a unit of the FBI and are multijurisdictional and multi agency task forces established to conduct terrorism related investigations. JTTFs operate with state and local law enforcement and other federal agencies to conduct terrorism related investigations and provide a framework to both gather and share critical and often classified information from partner agencies. The JTTF began as a financial crimes investigation joint venture with the New York City
Police Department (NYPD) in 1979. With the notable success of this task force model, the FBI established a counterterrorism task force in 1980 with the NYPD and expanded the JTTF into select FBI field offices. After the 9/11 attacks the FBI further expanded the JTTF into all 56 field offices and several resident agency offices (RAO) bringing the number to 103 nationwide. The JTTF is the “operational” unit that responds to terrorism leads and conducts terrorism investigations (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005). FBI Field Office Intelligence Groups (FIG) work with the JTTF to coordinate and manage all elements of the intelligence cycle and provide analysis to develop intelligence products the FBI can share with state and local law enforcement partners. In 2002 with the rapid growth of the JTTF, FBI Headquarters in Washington, DC, established the National Joint Terrorism Task Force (NJTTF) to ensure coordination among the field offices and provide support to the local efforts in preventing acts of terrorism (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005).

In the early 1990s with the increased use of integrated federal and regional task forces such as EPIC and the JTTF, and acceptance of ILP, local law enforcement began looking at the type of information and the analytical products necessary for supporting criminal intelligence gathering and analysis. The International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts (IALEA), founded in the 1980s, became the primary organization for professionalizing police and law enforcement intelligence processes. IALEA set standards for ILP and related criminal intelligence organizations and set in motion well before the 9/11 terrorist attacks elements that eventually would be adopted into the fusion center model. IALEA identified the following three primary elements to the ILP model (Riegle, 2008):
1. The production of accurate and timely intelligence and analytic products relevant to the law enforcement agency, its jurisdiction, and the problems in the intelligence unit’s specific area of responsibility.

2. Use of intelligence and analytical products to provide operational, tactical and strategic information to develop methods to address the identified problem(s).

3. Develop and use a process to evaluate, reassess, and hold accountable agency decisions to use intelligence led plans to address problems and to adjust methods and programs as necessary.

The Early Growth of Fusion Centers

Several laws, guidelines, and Presidential Directives provide instruction and support to both federal agencies and to State and Major Urban Area fusion centers. The core message and intent of these laws and guidelines revolve around the need for all of government to share information vertically and horizontally, between federal agencies and state, local, and tribal governments. Two laws, the *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004* (IRTPA), and the *Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007* (9/11 Act), called for and established, among other things, the Information Sharing Environment (ISE) to create regulation for the federal sharing of classified and unclassified information with federal and non-federal partners (Bush, 2007). Through the ISE several other initiatives were started, in particular is the Interagency Threat Assessment and Coordination Group (ITACG), which along with the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) provide direction to the Intelligence Community (IC) and other federal agencies on disseminating terrorism related information and products to the SLTT and partners. These federal initiatives were
developed to support the creation of a National Network of Fusion Centers (National Network) as directed by law (IRTPA and the 9/11 Act).

With the federal government being compelled through legislation and Presidential directives to engage in information-sharing, the State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers are “advised” and “recommended to” follow and adopt the policies outlined in the federal guidelines (Rollins, 2008). By following the guidelines, such as the Fusion Center Guidelines (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006), Baseline Capabilities for State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008), and the National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003) fusion centers would be positioned as the “focal points within the State and local environment for the receipt and sharing of terrorism-related information” (Bush, 2007, p. 20). By achieving baseline capabilities fusion centers would then have the necessary structures, processes, and tools to support the gathering, processing, analysis and dissemination of terrorism, homeland security, and law enforcement information. Achieving these goals is important to the establishment of the National Network. The establishment and implementation of these new rules and guidelines as they pertain to state and local fusion centers are discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

Several books and journal articles written after the 9/11 attacks have reviewed the political and bureaucratic responses of the federal government and the development of American homeland security. Analysis has discussed homeland security through many lenses, such as developing through a “focusing event” structure (Birkland, 2006), as a response to a governmental “system under stress” and the subsequent effects on governance and social institutions (Kettl, 2004), and from historical and legal analysis of
changes in the U.S. intelligence systems reacting to changes in the public mood and legal challenges (Posner, 2006). These books provide additional detail to this section and will not be covered here in great depth. What must be understood is that the intelligence fusion center model has a complex history that is one element in the growth of the homeland security enterprise out of which it has evolved.

Immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attacks congress began hearings leading to passage of the Homeland Security Act in 2002 and creating the Department of Homeland Security. Prior to the Act’s passage, President Bush formed the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) 11 days after the attacks with the objectives to coordinate a national strategy for the detection, preparedness, prevention, protection, response and recovery in the event of a terrorist attack on U.S. soil (Executive Order No. 13228, 2001). During the first two years after the 9/11 attacks, along with the creation of the DHS, two events occurred that influenced intelligence organizations and information sharing strategies. These were the hearings and reports conducted by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission), and the 2002 International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Criminal Intelligence Sharing Summit.

The IACP Criminal Intelligence Summit was a special meeting to discuss information sharing among federal, state, and local law enforcement organizations. The meeting focused on intelligence models used in Great Britain including ILP and the National Intelligence Model and how these information led models could be used to improve ILP in the U.S. The IACP and law enforcement participants proposed that local law enforcement must be an integral part to a new framework for intelligence and information sharing and creating a national strategy for gathering and sharing criminal
and related information (Cooney, Rojek, and Kaminski, 2011). Local law enforcement representatives believed they should be included as full partners along with federal agencies in the way information, including terrorism and all criminal intelligence, is shared. The results of this conference led to the creation of the Criminal Intelligence Coordinating Council (CICC), which would oversee and implement the new plan.

Further, the Summit set in motion several recommendations including the tenet that the federal government cannot be the sole lead in establishing a new information sharing plan and that public safety as a discipline encompasses many more disciplines than just law enforcement (Osborne, 2006, 15; U.S. Department of Justice, 2003, v).

The IACP final report proposed to create the National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan (NCISP). In response to this report the Department of Justice (DOJ) and its technology standards sharing organization, Global, assembled the Global Intelligence Working Group (GIWG) to work with the IACP to draft the NCISP. Based in large part on the IACP Summit findings, the NCISP made 28 recommendations addressing ways for law enforcement agencies at all levels of government to cooperate and support homeland security efforts by sharing vital terrorism and criminal information (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003). As the groundwork for sharing information, the NCISP utilized established IALEA guidelines, based sharing and records retention on 28 CFR Part 23 and set responsibilities for the protection of civil right and civil liberties (Government Accountability Office, 2010).

The NCISP became the accepted standard for information sharing among law enforcement agencies and for the development of criminal intelligence units. By 2004, federal DHS preparedness and homeland security grant funds were available to states
This funding provided support to local law enforcement and homeland security agencies to begin forming intelligence fusion center operations and Terrorism Early Warning Groups (TEWG) (Gilliard-Matthews, Schneider, 2010; Davis et al, 2010). At about this same time in 2004, the DOJ formed the Fusion Center Focus Group (FCFG) along with the DHS Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) intelligence working group. Both groups worked on developing an intelligence and information sharing framework specific to state and local public safety agencies for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of terrorism intelligence, which eventually led to development of the Fusion Center Guidelines (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006). These guidelines encompassed the IALEA and NCISP recommendations including the expansive definition of public safety, including private sector partners into the information sharing process, along with adding provisions ensuring protection of civil rights and civil liberties by having fusion centers implement a privacy policy (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006, 3 and 41). Additionally, the Guidelines incorporated the phrase “collaborative effort of two or more agencies” into the definition of fusion center (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006, 12). As discussed, by the time the Intelligence IRTPA of 2004 was signed codifying several of the recommendations from the 9/11 Commission Final Report several of the changes were already underway.

In 2006 DHS initiated the State and Local Fusion Center Implementation plan which identified state and local public safety as full partners with the federal homeland security enterprise and emphasized that fusion centers are the primary state and local government points of contact for terrorism related intelligence exchange with the federal government (Riegle, 2008). Further assisting the fusion center program, DHS instituted a
State and Local Program Management Office (SLPMO) to oversee and assist fusion center development in support of establishing a National Fusion Center Network. Through this program several federal assets were provided to state and local fusion centers including deployment of DHS intelligence officers and access to the classified computer network, the Homeland Security Data Network (HSDN). Roll out of these federal assets occurred over several years as fusion centers matured and met certain operational criteria.

Through implementation of the 2004 IRTPA, the President established the Information Sharing Environment (ISE) and appointed a Program Manager (PM-ISE). The ISE operates under the direction of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) and is responsible for establishing and implementing a trusted framework to enhance the sharing of terrorism related information among federal, state, local, and tribal governments and the private sector (Bush, G.W., 2007). The PM-ISE, in conjunction with the DOJ Global and DHS, coordinate efforts to bring fusion centers into the ISE as full partners. On August 27, 2004, The President issued two Executive Orders (E.O.) in support of the requirements of the IRTPA. E.O. 13354 established the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) as the primary federal agency for processing, analyzing and integrating all aspects of terrorism and counterterrorism information affecting the United States. The NCTC is under the authority of the ODNI. E.O. 13356 orders all federal agencies to place the “highest priority” to the prevention of terrorism and provides direction for the federal government to ensure that terrorism information be shared “between agencies and appropriate authorities of state and local governments” (Bush, 2007, 11).
By the end of 2008 there were approximately 58 fusion centers operated by states and regional urban areas. In compliance with the *National Strategy for Information Sharing*, the U.S. DOJ Global, issued the *Baseline Capabilities for State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers* (Baseline Capabilities) in September 2008, which provides several measurable criteria defining operational standards to support the gathering, processing and dissemination of terrorism and related homeland security information (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008). The guidance is considered an addendum to the *Fusion Center Guidelines* with the intention to better define what services, management structure, and processes are necessary for a mature fusion center as an effective partner in the information sharing environment. This Guidance details two focus areas as necessary for fusion center effectiveness: (1) an emphasis on the fusion process utilizing the “intelligence cycle” functions, and (2) focus on management and administrative capabilities including governance and privacy protections (Cooney, et al, 2011). It should be noted these criteria initially were not requirements for fusion centers, but rather guidelines and suggested best practices fusion centers should adopt to achieve capabilities to fully integrate into the ISE. Additionally, fusion centers were not expected to have all the necessary resources and expertise to achieve 100 percent compliance. They were, however, expected to coordinate with other fusion centers or operational entity to leverage a joint capability (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008, 8).

Though each fusion center is unique there are specific fundamental similarities that must be present among all centers. At the heart of all fusion center operations three elements must exist: (1) raw data from a diversity of sources must be gathered; (2) the
data must be analyzed; and, (3) trusted, actionable intelligence must be produced and shared with the appropriate customer (Carter, 2008).

From the discussion in this section and following into the next section, fusion centers appear to have gone through three stages of development. The first occurred in 2003 with the completion of the NCISP and the transformation of some state and local criminal intelligence units adopting information sharing practices involving multiple agencies and disciplines. The second stage can be seen beginning in 2005 and 2006 after the National Governor’s Association (NGA) set as a priority the development of state fusion centers along with support through the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) and DHS approval of the State and Local Fusion Center Support Implementation Plan. As Governors made fusion centers and intelligence information sharing a priority, this provided a catalyst for states to aggressively establish fusion centers (Rollins, 2008). During this second stage several policies, resources and guidelines from the federal government were developed and provided in direct support of state and local fusion centers. The third stage, and where fusion center development is currently, came about with the federal Resource Allocation Criteria (RAC) issued by the PM-I Se in June 2011 (PM-I SE, 2011). The RAC began a process of slowing the pace of establishing new fusion centers and also identified a federal process for prioritizing the allocation of federal resources to fusion centers. The RAC will be discussed in the next section.
Fusion Centers Ten years after 9/11

In commemorating the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security noted that: “Fusion centers are uniquely situated to empower front line law enforcement, public safety, fire service, emergency response, public health, critical infrastructure protection, and private sector security personnel to understand local implications of national intelligence, thus enabling local officials to better protect their communities. In September 2011, 58 fusion centers were either operating or being established. By the end of 2011, 77 fusion centers were established and in 2013, 78 fusion centers were operating. In 2013, of the 78 fusion centers, 52 were categorized as State and territorial, with 26 identified as Major Urban Area fusion centers (U.S. House of Representatives, 2013, 16). Fusion centers at the ten year mark post 9/11 face several challenges to their continued growth with reductions in federal homeland security grant funds, the expectation of building an effective national network of fusion centers, and the need to establish meaningful outcome based metrics that demonstrate fusion center effectiveness for both individual fusion centers and as a coordinated National Network (U.S. House of Representatives, 2013).

In June 2011, the Program Manager (PM) for the ISE issued the Federal Resource Allocation Criteria for fusion centers. Though the federal government recognizes the independence of state and local governments in their decisions to operate fusion centers, the RAC intends to impose expectations for federal support:

The Federal Government recognizes the importance and ability of state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments to own operate, and/or participate in fusion centers and respects that a fusion center's mission should be defined
according to its jurisdictional needs. To ensure that information sharing efforts are optimized and barriers minimized, SLTT governments should define and document how their jurisdictions intend to carry out intrastate coordination to gather, process, analyze, and disseminate terrorism, homeland security, and law enforcement information (the "fusion process") (PM-ISE, 2011).

Through the RAC, the federal government set certain criteria for prioritizing how and what federal assets will be provided to fusion centers to support two primary goals:

- Collectively supports the development of a national network of fusion centers; and,
- Effectively balances the need for supporting SLTT, as well as federal, imperatives.

In order to meet the allocation criteria, state Governors must “designate” no more than one “Primary” fusion center. States may have other fusion centers “recognized” by DHS for the purpose of implementing the RAC. Primary fusion centers, however, are first in line for allocated federal resources and must meet and maintain several criteria to remain eligible. The same eligibility requirements pertain to recognized fusion centers (See Appendix 2 for a copy of the RAC). These criteria include having a DHS approved privacy policy, and proven advancement and maintenance of the Baseline Capabilities measured through an annual assessment. It should be noted that several members of state and local fusion center leadership have stated that the RAC was the impetus for selecting the number of fusion centers for a state and weighing the importance and roles those fusion centers would take.28

To better prepare and assist fusion centers in their mission to be active partners in the National Network, DHS in cooperation with fusion center directors beginning in 2010
instituted an annual assessment designed to measure critical and essential fusion center processes and analytical capabilities. The Baseline Capabilities Assessment (BCA) data are important to building an integrated and sustainable National Network because the results provide SLTT fusion center leadership with an understanding of each center’s contribution to the homeland security architecture and the steps necessary to fully participate in the homeland security enterprise (DHS, 2012, p. v). The first assessment was conducted in 2011, with subsequent assessments occurring annually. Figure 2 shows the comparison of the 2011 and 2012 assessments along with the initial baseline capabilities assessment that was conducted in 2010 (PM-ISE, 2013). Assessments are conducted in two parts: 1) an online self assessment based on the Baseline Capabilities, and 2) an on-site validation assessment focused on the four Critical Operating Capabilities (COCs) and privacy/civil liberties protections.

**Figure 2**

The four Critical Operating Capabilities (COCs) represent the primary operational priorities determined as most important by DHS and the fusion center directors for fusion centers fully able to participate in the National Network. The four COCs are as follows (DHS, 2013, p. 11):

**COC 1- Receive**: The ability to receive classified and unclassified information from federal partners,

**COC 2- Analyze**: The ability to assess local implications of threat information through the use of a formal risk assessment process,

**COC 3 – Disseminate**: The ability to further disseminate threat information to other SLTT and private sector entities within their jurisdiction, and,

**COC 4 – Gather**: The ability to gather locally generated information, aggregate it, analyze it, and share it with federal partners as appropriate.

An additional item listed in Figure 2, is the Privacy and Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (P/CRCL) protections. Fusion centers are required to have a DHS approved privacy policy that meet at least the minimum standards set forth in the ISE Privacy Guidelines. In addition to the COCs, the assessment also measures four Enabling Capabilities (ECs) which are foundational elements for the fusion process, and a separate “cross-cutting” priority measures fusion center governance and other areas (DHS, 2013, pp 23-34):

**EC 1 – Privacy/Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (P/CRCL) Protections**: The ability and commitment to protect the P/CRCL of all individuals,

**EC 2 – Sustainment Strategy**: The ability to establish and execute a sustainment strategy to ensure the long-term growth and maturity of the National Network,

**EC 3 – Communications Outreach**: The ability to develop and execute a communications and outreach plan,
**EC 4 – Security:** The ability to protect the security of the physical fusion center facility, information, systems, and personnel,

**Cross Cutting Capabilities:** Fusion centers should have a governance structure in place, especially in multi-fusion center states, and have the ability to engage in outreach through a Fusion Liaison Officer (FLO) or similar program.

Another element affecting fusion centers ten years after the 9/11 attacks is the continual funding reductions in the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) and the changes in how DHS identifies eligibility for funding through the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI). The HSGP is a collection of several grant programs to states, territories, and urban areas to increase capability to prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to and recover from acts of terrorism and other disasters.\(^{31}\) The two primary HSGP component programs funding fusion centers are the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP) and the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI). The SHSP and UASI programs have seen severe decreases in their funding levels in recent years. In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2009, the SHSP was allocated $861.1 million and the UASI $798.6 million. By 2012 the SHSP was reduced by 65.8 percent to $294.0 million and the UASI reduced by 38.6 percent to $490.4 million.\(^{32}\) Slight increases in funding were provided in FFY 2013 for both programs. Adding to the funding difficulties, the number of UASI jurisdictions allowed to receive UASI funding was reduced from 62 eligible regions in 2009 to 31 eligible in 2012. Further tightening occurred in 2013, with 25 regions deemed eligible to receive UASI funding. State and local fusion center leadership and stakeholders have expressed concern that the downward trend in funding will jeopardize several fusion centers that require continued federal grant support for operations and adversely impact the National Network (Ashley, 2012; Sena, 2012).
Beginning in FFY 2007 and each year thereafter, the federal grant guidance has recognized fusion center capability as a funding priority.\textsuperscript{33} In 2010, DHS along with the DOJ and the ISE have used the HSGP to motivate fusion centers to align with the National Network. These initiatives include: Requiring fusion centers to have a DHS approved Privacy Policy (for FFY 2010); tying fusion center grant investments to address capability gaps identified in the Baseline Capabilities Assessment (for FFYs 2011 – 2013); and recommending fusion centers use their 2012 Assessment to fund identified capability gaps and improve their analytic capabilities (for FFY 2013) (DHS, 2012; DHS, 2013). Additionally, the HSGP Guidance specifies that no less than 25 percent of available funding to each state be allocated in direct support of law enforcement activities, which can apply to fusion centers.

Though fusion centers are identified as a funding priority under the HSGP, federal grant guidance does not mandate the amount of funding states and UASI jurisdictions must allocate to meet the priority stipulation. The HSGP is handled by each state and territory through a process established by each state. States and regions have many other programs not specific to fusion centers that have been funded in past years and which require continued federal support to exist. Hence, states are faced with considerable competitive pressures from their eligible SLTT agencies and government partners seeking grant allocations to support other worthy preparedness and terrorism prevention projects. State fusion centers face a peculiar constraint under the rules for the SHSP that require states to distribute no less than 80 percent of the SHSP grant allocation to local or tribal governments.\textsuperscript{34} Since state operated fusion centers receive SHSP funds, they fall under this cap, and often state fusion centers are placed in direct competition with other
state agencies to stay within the 20 percent SHSP allocation. Further stress is paced on the SHSP program in states with multiple fusion centers and where UASI funding was eliminated in the grant guidance. For these former UASI areas they must now compete for funding at the state level through the SHSP.

**Concerns about Fusion Centers**

From their inception, fusion centers have had detractors. The Government Accountability Office (GAO), DHS, the Congressional Research Service (CRS), and other government entities often report on the need for all agencies involved with state and local fusion centers to be vigilant to problems and issues that could jeopardize fusion center development (Rollins, 2007; Chermak, et al, 2013; Davis, et al, 2010; and U.S. Department of Justice, 2003). Such risks and hazards to fusion center development have been associated with the accelerated build out of the state and local centers without establishing the needed cultural and organizational changes in local law enforcement to conduct intelligence work. Other discussed risks are civil liberties, civil rights, and privacy violations, loss of political and popular support from bad publicity (Rollins, 2008), mission creep (Monahan & Palmer, 2009), and perceptions that fusion centers are ineffective and provide no demonstrable added value to the core mission to protect and prevent acts of terrorism (Rollins, 2008; U.S. Senate, 2012). Lastly, inadequate funding or elimination of funding and support to fusion centers poses a real risk to building and maintaining effective fusion center operations (Ashley, 2012; Sena, 2012).

In 2012, U.S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs (U.S. Senate, 2012) issued a
report highly critical of fusion centers. The criticisms covered several areas of fusion center operations and the information sharing activities defining the National Network. The report’s primary assertion is that after considerable federal investment in support of a state and local partnership with the federal government to protect the United States from another terrorist attack, fusion centers have not “produced useful intelligence to support federal counterterrorism efforts” (U.S. Senate, 2012, 1). Additional accusations included DHS misrepresenting facts to Congress about fusion center successes and fusion center deficiencies in capability to produce useful intelligence products, collecting information on U.S. persons in possible conflict with the Privacy Act, lack of federal oversight to ensure homeland security grant funds were spent effectively, and that many fusion centers deemphasize counterterrorism in favor of traditional policing.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in 2007 issued “What's Wrong With Fusion Centers?”, a paper outlining several privacy and civil liberties questions and concerns. Along with other privacy groups, this ACLU paper questions perceived “mission creep” of fusion centers in the way fusion centers collect, store, use, and disseminate not only criminal information, but also the non-criminal information from tips and leads provided by private sector partners and the public. The ACLU report points to several areas of concern related to state and local government operated fusion centers including: That fusion centers have ambiguous lines of authority; private sector participation raises the possibility of data breach; questionable participation with the military; fears that big data collection will lead to data mining and invasion of privacy; and a belief that fusion centers embrace excessive secrecy (German and Stanley, 2007). In a similar criticism, Taylor and Russell (2012) argue that fusion centers are undermined
by the “structure and mission of law enforcement” because police agencies operate with “autonomy and interagency ego.” Their conclusions suggest police agencies operating fusion centers will likely focus less on information sharing and intelligence if operating fusion centers is perceived as costly and ultimately detracts from traditional policing. The authors conclude this mixture of traditional policing and the fusion process can lead to civil liberty abuses and invasion of privacy concerns (Taylor and Russell, 2012).

The analytical capabilities of fusion centers are still in a building phase. A 2012 study conducted by the George Washington Homeland Security Policy Institute (Cilluffo, Clark, Downing, and Squires, 2012) observed that fusion centers are at a point where they need to be more than a hub in the homeland security enterprise given the host of threats state and local law enforcement encounter on a daily basis. Fusion centers need to not just disperse information, but also be able to produce actionable intelligence. The survey results indicate that people in the fusion centers conducting analytical work do not see themselves as having the capabilities and skills to produce risk-based threat assessments from data they receive. This concern is echoed in many studies as the analytical component is vital to the intelligence cycle. Quality intelligence is fundamental to fusion center success.

Summary

Often the post-9/11 transformation in government restructuring to address homeland security and protection measures along with changes in the psyche of Americans is characterized as “the new normal.” This may or may not be a truism, but what can be stated is how we think about security and risk, the role of government to
address these threats, and our expectations of safety in a world where terrorism is a very real threat to the United States homeland, are now major policy issues discussed not only nationally, but also at the state and local level.

Of the many reports, studies, and observations following the 9/11 tragedy it was the lack of information sharing among agencies which is a common thread to many of the failures to prevent the attacks and in handling the response. Many laws, policies and other initiatives have emerged in response to these deficiencies, and in the area of information sharing, the fusion center concept emerged as an important contributor to the prevention and protection of the homeland from new acts of terrorism and related threats.

This chapter outlined important background information on the history and development of fusion centers and presented the current evolving challenges and intergovernmental environment with which fusion centers must operate. An important factor to understand from this chapter and why it is relevant to this dissertation is that fusion centers did not spontaneously emerge immediately after 9/11. Rather, intelligence fusion and interagency cooperation were used by federal, state, and local law enforcement to some degree in the years prior to the terrorist attacks. Law enforcement at all levels of government, however, is fragmented and uncoordinated and this is a central problem to the continued development and maturation of fusion centers. As will be discussed in chapter three, interagency collaboration presents complex challenges to law enforcement and other state and local organizations for several reasons. For fusion centers, indirect lines of authority, ineffective or nonexistent accountability within collaborative partnerships, and lack of trust are just a few of these challenges.
CHAPTER 3 – LITERATURE REVIEW

“Collaboration among public, nonprofit, and private organizations is increasingly relied on to deliver successful policy outcomes, especially at the local level. Even when it might be politically feasible for powerful individuals, groups, or hierarchical agencies to impose their “way of knowing” the problem and solution, the subsequent lack of cooperation could render the effort less effective than it might otherwise be, or even possibly futile.” (Schneider, 2009)

This chapter presents a review of the literature on organizational theory as it pertains to the study of interorganizational networks and collaboration. The approach presented here involves a multidiscipline perspective that covers relevant literature in public administration, political science, economics, and social psychology. The focus of this dissertation is on fusion centers as organizations that deal with complex issues, which are often referred to as “wicked problems.” The goal of this chapter is to discuss and present a comprehensive review of the extant literature on collaborative networks that will be used to analyze the research questions detailed in Chapter 1.

The chapter begins with an overview of organization theory as it has developed through the rational, natural, and open system concepts (Scott, 2003). This is provided as context to understanding the recognition that organizations dealing with wicked problems must be able to adapt to their interdependent environments. Next is a discussion on wicked problems and how organizations attempt to address these complex issues. Collaboration is discussed from a public management perspective and how the concept relates to the growing interest in public sector governance and cross boundary agency interdependencies as a way to address wicked problems. Network theory is reviewed along with the role of knowledge networks and how information is shared among participants in the network. The chapter ends with a discussion on the concept of
boundary organizations and how such organizations are used to address wicked problems. As will be argued later in this dissertation, fusion centers can be considered boundary organizations with future research on fusion centers following this conceptualization.

**Reflections on the early literature influencing network collaboration**

The literature on organizational theory and public administration has grappled with and discussed in detail over the past 50 years the concept of networks and in particular how collaborative networks are increasingly important to addressing complex public policy issues (Agranoff, 2007, Agranoff and McGuire, 2003; Berry, Brower, Choi, Goa, Jang, Kwon, and Word, 2004; Granovetter, 1973; Heclo, 1978; North, 1990; Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1994; Weber & Khademian, 2008). Integrating collaboration into network theory, however, is relatively recent. Early 20th century public administration literature such as the writings of Mary Parker Follett (1997/1926, 53-60) observed intraorganizational behavior involving managers and employees and suggested transactional cooperation and “horizontal authority” be used to achieve organizational goals. Along with the work of Barnard (1938), Maslow (1943), Mayo (1986, 96-102), and McGregor (2001/1957), studies of organizational behavior moved away from strict impersonal scientific management theory as conceptualized by Fredrick W. Taylor (1911) and the rationalized, legal and administrative bureaucratic order observed by Weber (2001/1922, 73-78). What emerged was a human resource theory that took into consideration human needs and wants and a belief contrary to McGregor’s Theory X suggesting that individuals dislike working. Instead, as suggested by Theory Y, people found meaning in work and when provided the right work environment employees along
with management would be more productive in an enlightened positive workplace (McGregor, 2001/1957, 179-184). Along with the normative understanding of Theory Y, McGregor’s reflection that managerial assumptions about employees become “self-fulfilling prophecies” (Shafritz and Ott, 2001, 148) provides an important stepping-stone to understanding the importance of organizational leadership influences on organizational behavior.

Chester Barnard in the Functions of the Executive (1938) wrote on a need for individuals in organizations to cooperate as a way to better achieve goals and effectiveness (293). To Barnard, the goal of effective organizational cooperation is survival of the organization (1938, 5). This can only be accomplished through effective leadership and the imposition of incentives influencing people’s actions to act collaboratively with others in (and outside) of the organization, which otherwise would not occur. Barnard also perceives the risk and uncertainty that hinders cooperation, writing that successful cooperation is the “abnormal” condition for organizations (1938, 5). He adds that “The ethical ideals upon which cooperation depends requires the general diffusion of a willingness to subordinate immediate personal interest for both ultimate personal interest in the general good, together with a capacity of individual responsibility” (Barnard, 1938, 293).

An important early contribution to how we understand network theory and the role of cooperation is through the conceptualization of organizations emerging through the developmental triad as rational, natural, and open systems (Scott, 2003). Rational systems are organizations that are self-contained, autonomous, bureaucracies that rely fundamentally on a command-and-control paradigm with a heavy focus on goal
specificity and a formalized structure (Scott, 2003, 34). Scientific management and Taylor’s search for “the one best way” to organize tasks is an example of a rational system. It was used to bring rational order to the behavior of individuals working in an organization through the overall management of the organization. The Humanistic school of organizational thought along with neoclassical organization theory pushed back on the rational system emphasis on economic efficiency and strict administrative order. These reactions are seen in the work of Barnard (1938), and Selznick (1948) who argued that organizations are more than a means to an end in a production process, but rather were social systems with collective pursuits. These social actors -- involving employees and managers -- view the organization and sustaining the organization as important. Natural systems, as described by Scott, reflect this shift in emphasis from the individual to the collective, and “system survival was seen as the overriding goal and adaptation as the master process” (in Thompson, 2004, xvii). Herbert Simon in two of his early works strongly criticized the lack of consistency in the arguments put forth by the classical organization theory and its deep-seated reliance on rational theory. In his article, “The Proverbs of Administration” (1946), Simon critically observes the inconsistent descriptions of administration and management of the rational system and questioned how such confusion could form the “principles” of an administrative theory. Likewise, in Administrative Behavior (1997, 118-129) Simon rejects the use of “economic man” as the perfectly rational decision-maker and argues instead for an idea of “administrative man” who is “boundedly rational” and “satifices” when making decisions.

In his description of the open systems model, Scott asserts that “organizations are congeries of interdependent flows and activities linking shifting coalitions of participants
embedded in wider material resource and institutional environments” (2003, 29). Open system models of organization accept the interdependencies organizations have with their environment. Early theoretical work by Katz and Kahn (1978) and Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) recognized that exogenous factors outside of the core organization directly and indirectly influenced organizational function and form. Often these organizations have goals that are not uniform and stable because the social and organic connections among the interdependent parts are ill-defined and unstructured. Hence, such complex organizations have internal structures that are often referred to as “loosely coupled” systems (Scott, 2003, 88). As such, open system organizations are a clear departure from the formalized bureaucratic and inward-looking rational organizational model, which is considered a “closed system.”

Scott’s definition of open systems is in itself complicated as it entails both the behavioral activities of organizational “participants” and the “institutions” with which organizations represent and interact (Scott, 2003, 29). This, however, makes open systems the best framework for understanding the fusion center organizational structure and the law enforcement component associated with fusion centers. Open system theory has been used increasingly to analyze police organizations. Scholarship recognizes a shift in the demands and interdependent structure of police and law enforcement organizations that clearly depart from the rational, closed, and traditional bureaucratic organizational systems (Chenoweth and Clarke, 2010; Chermak et al., 2013; Schaible and Sheffield, 2012; Zhao, Thurman, and Lovrich, 1995). Wilson (2005) conducted a study entitled “Determinants of Community Policing: an Open Systems Model of Implementation” in which he applied a combination of contingency theory and
institutional theory to study Community Oriented Policing (COP) programs. According to Wilson (2005, 27), analyzing the effectiveness of police organizations implementing COP programs requires taking into account both the task environment (agency demographics, resources, technology, and community characteristics), and the institutional environment (expectations of the community, legal constraints, civilian review boards, police unions, etc.). The importance of this research shows that the degree of a police agency’s openness to implement a COP program is a function of uncertainty, though affected differently based on context (Wilson, 2005, 96). When the uncertainty results from elements outside the organization this facilitated COP implementation and adaptability (openness) to the environment. However, when the uncertainty resulted from changes in organizational leadership, COP implementation was hindered and not successful, hence supporting Thompson’s (2004) proposal that organizations facing uncertainty will close off to protect the technical core.

Identifying contingency theory and institutional theory as elements based on the open system model contributes to the theme of this dissertation. Contingency theory, as discussed by Scott (2003, 111-118) emerged from the early work by Herbert Simon (1997) and also his association with James March (March and Simon, 1958) and the subsequent scholarship of Richard Cyert and March (1963). Simon, in his book *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-making Processes in Administrative Organization* introduced a behavioral perspective that organizations operate under conditions of bounded rationality and that administrators “satisfice” (1997, 118 -112). The later works by March and Simon (1958) and Cyert and March (1963) took these concepts further by developing a decision theory involving formal and informal
organizations and including elements of coalition building and the impact of negotiation on the organization. Issues of environmental complexity and the uncertainty imposed on organizations were also considered in their models (March and Simon, 1958).

Thompson (2004) in his landmark book, *Organizations in Action*, brought together these early behavioral theories of organization, incorporating elements of the humanistic school, to develop a theoretical model to understand the uncertainties organizations must deal with when interacting interdependently with their environment. Thompson’s model brought together elements found in both closed and open organizational systems. The open organization elements include conflicting or uncertain goals, perceived or real threats to the organization from the environment (Thompson, 2004, 6, 13), and employee reaction to and tolerance for uncertainty and constantly changing circumstances (101-103). The closed organizational elements involve protecting the core tasks, which define the primary performance of the organization, from attacks both within the organization and from the outside environment. In contingency theory, uncertainty determines structure. Thompson (2004, 19) proposes there are three basic activities that all complex organizations deal with to be successful: 1) input activities, 2) technological activities, and 3) output activities. Input activities and output activities represent the organization’s connection to the external environment, whereas the technological activities represent core tasks that must be protected. Complex organizations grapple with these three activities to find a solution that allows the organization to be successful. “Under these conditions, organizations try to achieve capability and self-control through regulation of transactions at their boundaries through negotiation, by buffering, or by varying their own activities to match fluctuations in the
environment” (Thompson, 2004, 160). Though this model suggests the major “threat to organizational success lies in interdependence with the environment,” complex organizations as open systems can be flexible and adaptive to its environment (Thompson, 2004, 159-161). This is achieved when organizations make decisions about their boundary interaction and the use of resources to address uncertainty through contingencies while rationally pursuing effective performance.

Institutional theories have been conceptualized as two schools of thought: Old-Institutionalism (or historical institutionalism), and New (or neo-) institutionalism. Though the concept of new intuionalism is used in this dissertation, a brief mention of old institutionalism is provided here. Old institutionalism can be seen in the descriptive nature of legal, political, and cultural rules and norms that govern a society, such as Weber’s descriptive and formulaic view of bureaucracy (2001, 37-43). This “iron cage” included a rational and economic view of society that tended not to value the person but instead focused on the formal institution as governed by the rules of technical economic efficiency (Jones, 1999, 86-87). More descriptive of the institutions, and recognizing the social environment was the work of John R. Commons (1934) and Thorsten Veblen (1994/1899), however their historical perspectives were too factual or abstract and lacked explanatory qualities. The same criticism also applies to the functionalists such as Selznick and Parsons (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991, 2).

The new institutional theory emerged in the 1970’s with scholarship looking at organizations as social systems shaped by the social, cultural, economic and symbolic environments and including technical demands and resource dependencies (Powell, 2007). Through the early work of Meyer and Rowan (1977), DiMaggio and Powell
(1983), and North (1990) organizations are no longer viewed as simply reacting to core needs for coordination and control to achieve technical efficiency. Instead, the organization is entwined with the social and political environments in such a way that organizational change, operations, and structures are either reflections of or influenced by environmental expectations, ideas, and opinions. Meyer and Rowan (1977) offer a concept that highly complex and formal organizations must make choices based on this institutional environment where ideas, beliefs and rules are perceived as “myths” that must be incorporated “ceremoniously” for the organization to have legitimacy.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) outline how they perceive organizations deal with three important environmental elements: 1) “coercive isomorphism” from dependent partners and the expectations to conform, along with political issues in the form of regulations; 2) “normative” pressures from professional interaction and interdependencies; and 3) “mimetic” behaviors that copy perceived success in production as a way to avoid uncertainty or not appear too different. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), organizations will likely adapt to their institutional environment at the expense of organization performance. In other words, there is a drive to conform. And when the strict rationality rule is relaxed and the cognitive abilities of individuals are considered, then “Boundedly rational behavior is reasonable, non-maximizing behavior based on the limited cognitive abilities (in comparison to those imputed in rational models of choice) of the “decision-maker” (March, 1978). When non-maximizing models are used, the characteristics of the decision-maker matter.

Since organizations are comprised of people there is also a need to understand how decisions are made. Irving Janis’ influential study on organizational behavior
looked at how decision-making within organizations can lead to a pathological excessive form of concurrence-seeking among members (Janis, 1971. See also Janis 1972; Hart, 1991). This behavior, which Janis labeled “groupthink,” was one of many paradigms offering alternatives to the rational homo economicus model of decision-making. Groupthink is a study of the interaction among members, usually the leadership within an organization, often within their professional environments, where the value of the group overrides any individual criticism that deviates from unanimity. As Janis points out, as a decision-maker group becomes tight-knit and cohesive the common thought is that members should feel less stress to conform and “censor what they say out of a fear of being socially punished” (Janis, 1971). Instead, groupthink is consensus involving “a distorted view of reality, excessive optimism producing hasty and reckless policies, and a neglect of ethical issues” (Heart, 1991). Though the literature has criticized groupthink as a theory (suggesting that it is anecdotal along with a lack of empirical evidence) research has shown that power, social pressure, and politics within organizations can contribute greatly to policy choices (see for example Allison, 1971; and Casamayou, 2005).

Of course the historical and contemporary public administration and political science literature on organizations is large and arguments can be made as to what has or has not influenced the current applications and understanding about collaborative networks. However, the literature presented in this section outlines several important elements that have contributed to the understanding of individual and organizational choice in complex environments and is relevant to this dissertation. Scott (2003, 30) reminds us that organizations “are vital mechanisms for pursuing collective goals in
modern societies. They are not neutral tools because they affect what they produce; they function as collective actors that independently possess certain rights and powers.”

**Collaboration and Networks as Theory**

The concept of networks as a research agenda, and in particular collaborative networks, have received considerable attention in not only the public administration literature (Agranoff, 2006; Agranoff and McGuire, 1999; Innes and Booher, 1999; Provan and Milward, 2001; McGuire and Silvia, 2010; Kickert, et al, 1997; Provan and Milward, 1995), but also in political science (Robinson, 2006; Fountain, 1994), and economics (Kalu, 2012; Batie, 2008; Williamson, 1993). Interest in networks and the focus on intergovernmental relationships as a way for public organizations and public managers to address complex and often intractable public policy and social issues, often referred to as “wicked problems,” (Rittel and Webber, 1973) has grown steadily since the mid-1980s (Weber and Khademian, 2008). More recently, domestic counterterrorism has been conceptualized as a complex wicked problem requiring innovative approaches in an effort to prevent acts of terrorism in the homeland (Pfeifer, 2012; Whelan, 2011).

Collaborative networks present challenges to many public sector organizations as it requires a substantive shift in governance from a traditional chain of command or hierarchical set of intra-organizational relationships to a new set of relationships where the locus of administrative control is not well defined (Caruson and MacManus, 2011; Kettl, 2006; Gray, 1985). Public sector networks have shown positive outcomes when all members exhibit trust, reciprocity, and agreement on a mission or a goal, and often the collaboration leads to more effective outcomes that could be (or had been) undertaken by
a single agency (Silvia, 2010, Chap. 6; Provan and Milward, 2001). O’Toole (1997), in his often cited research, argues that in complex policy environments, such as health care reform, that public sector agencies should consider using collaborative networks because “pressures to offload direct service provision while also assuming policy responsibility catalyze further networking through more complex patterns that aim at splitting or sharing labor and responsibility.”

The research literature proposes several explanations for the acceptance and use of public sector collaborative networks. Trist (1983) argues that the “fast changing environment” of modern society produces complex problems (what he refers to as “meta-problems”) that are beyond the capability and capacity of a single organization to solve. Inter-organizational collaboration is necessary to successfully address these complex problems. Other research has proposed that in both nonprofit and public sector organizations collaborative alliances are a way “of enhancing competitiveness and effectiveness that would not be possible through the traditional governance mechanisms of market or hierarchy (Powell 1990)” (Proven and Milward, 1995). Additionally, Proven and Milward, (1995) point out that most scholarly work about networks focuses on theory based on “resource dependence, and related exchange perspectives, and transaction cost economics,” while little is written about network effectiveness and outcomes. There are also indications that the scholarly research, though “vast” and “multidisciplinary” and covering many case studies, “lacks coherence” particularly in how collaboration is defined and theoretically conceptualized (Thomson, Perry and Miller, 2009).
Ambiguity, complexity and tensions are all part of the collaborative network paradigm. Ospina and Saz-Carranza (2010) identify four primary network management research areas of which they contend all impose considerable stresses and tension on managers in complex administrative arenas who need to engage in interorganizational collaboration to do their jobs. The literature indicates that collaborative arrangements arise usually in response to agencies facing complex problems (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003, 177; Agranoff and McGuire, 2001; Gray, 2000, 243-244). As collaboration has become a method of policy implementation, there are some legal initiatives that compel agencies to engage in collaborative relationships, such as the Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act (GPRAMA) of 2010, which requires cross-agency collaboration in the federal government (Fountain, 2013). At the state and local level such legal requirements for intra-organizational collaboration do not exist. However, federal devolution of certain responsibilities to the state and local levels, especially when federal grant dollars are involved, often carries guidelines requiring states and local governments to share capabilities (equipment and services) purchased with grant funds. Mullin and Daley (2010) investigated collaboration among state and local government agencies in the context of cooperative federalism and the need for local governments to address complex public problems. Their research showed that the strongest determinant to ensure collaboration between state and local governments was for states to use performance evaluations that are tied to collaborative efforts. Levels of collaborative action between a state and local government agency can be limited if local government is a large bureaucracy. Interestingly, Mullin and Daily (2010) found that problem severity had no impact on inducing collaborative behavior, which contradicts research on
collaboration between government and nongovernment actors (see for example Agranoff and McGuire, 2003, 23; Gray, 1985).

Vangen and Huxham (2012) take the perspective that managers and organizations seeking to engage in collaboration need to address a “goals paradox” that comes from the academic literature indicating that both “congruence” in organizational goals and “diversity in organizations goals” have positive effects on collaboration. In order to deal with this paradox, Vangen and Huxham (2012) suggest that public managers need to acknowledge the conflict exists and avoid searching for collaborative solutions that do not involve “compromises or trade-offs,” and instead remain actively engaged with the participants to find a common understanding. Constant and dependable engagement with collaborative partners in a network environment are viewed as critical to maintaining a network (Mischen, 2013; McGuire, 2006; Zhang and Dawes, 2006). Sharing information and building trust is based in large part on “shared understandings” which “must be actively developed” (Dawes, Cresswell, and Pardo, 2009). However, wicked problems pose challenges to establishing well understood goals among all participants in a collaborative network (Weber and Khademian, 2008; Thompson and Perry, 2006). Vangen and Huxham (2012) point out that much of the confusion and difficulty establishing interorganizational collaborations comes from goal characteristics “having a large number of ill defined interrelated elements.” McGuire (2006) provides a historical overview of collaborative public management in network settings and suggests that intergovernmental relations necessitate collaborative endeavors based on American federalism. He points to Grodzins’ (1960, 34) assertion that “federal – state – local collaboration is the characteristic mode of action,” and his metaphor of this relationship
being akin to a “marble cake” as representative of the cooperative nature in American intergovernmental relations (see also Agranoff and McGuire, 2003, 37). McGuire (2006) points to early implementation literature, such as Pressman and Wildavsky’s (1984) descriptive analysis of the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) investment in Oakland, California, to address poverty and unemployment problems. In this analysis, McGuire (2006) suggests that the federal and local government joint venture was representative of the early “collaborative nature of public management,” though disjointed and conflicting policy goals persisted. Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) described the considerable levels of participation in the Oakland EDA program, however, they write: “the structural position of those who set targets – top federal officials who wish large accomplishments from small resources in a short time – and those who must implement them – career bureaucrats and local participants characterized by high needs and low cohesion – …causes…setting targets that are unlikely to be met” (xxv).

Thomson and Perry (2006) argue that collaboration is an integral part of the American political process with roots “in competing political traditions: classic liberalism and civic republicanism (Perry and Thomson, 2004).” Classic liberalism is a process of aggregating individual preferences into a collective choice usually through self-interested negotiation, whereas civic republicanism views collaboration as a mutually dependent and collective decision process using deliberation to reach a collective choice (Thomson and Perry, 2006). The tension that comes from these competing views of collaboration is seen in practice and also in the academic literature. Is collaboration only valuable if it can be shown that through organizational self interest “it produces better organizational performance or lower costs,” or can collaboration as a learning process provide
information leading to solutions that otherwise would not be attainable by a single organization (Thomson and Perry, 2006)? The authors suggest that public managers need to understand the important elements inside the “black box” defining actions of the collaborative process. Five elements are presented: governance, administration, organizational autonomy, mutuality, and norms (Thomson and Perry, 2006). As the authors point out, each set of individuals participating in a collaborative process must determine how to balance these actions for their particular situation as they are constrained through bounded rationality, limits of time and resources. There may not be a perfect combination, but understanding and acknowledging these five elements can increase the likelihood of collaborative success (Thomson and Perry, 2006).

The use of the terms “networks” and “collaboration” to describe organizational structures or frameworks have been used interchangeably (Kickert and Koppenjan, 1997; O’Leary and Vij, 2012) and also as separate types of taxonomy (Vangen and Huxham, 2003). Agranoff and McGuire (2003, 4) define collaborative management as “a concept that describes the process of facilitating and operating in multi-organizational arrangements to solve problems that cannot be solved, or solved easily, by single organizations. Collaboration is a purposive relationship designed to solve a problem by creating or discovering a solution within a given set of constraints.” The degree of interdependence among the actors who are engaged in purposeful pursuits in many ways determines the level of collaboration in a network. Network management then becomes a framework in which collaborative behavior can be observed. One line of research has observed how public officials working across governmental, jurisdictional, and multi-discipline boundaries solve a common task. They manage the situation by identifying
needed resources and communicating with partners while engaging in a learning process to understand the intergovernmental opportunities and constraints so they can successfully work within the system (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003, 36).

Kickert, Klijn, and Koppenjan (1997, 170), provide a different way of conceptualizing strategies for network management. These researchers begin with an understanding that when interdependencies exist then network management involves both issues of governance and public management. They contend that network management “is aimed at coordinating strategies of actors with different goals and preferences with regard to a certain problem or policy measure within an existing network of interorganizational relations” (original text italicized) (Kickert, et al., 1997,10). The authors provide a matrix were the network management structure can be viewed as either a “game level” or “network level.” The game level deals with management bargaining and conflict resolution along with influencing perceptions, whereas the network level is a broader interrelated concept where reaction can influence the game level (Kickert, et al., 1997,168-170). Kickert, et al. (1997) also distinguish two sets of strategies. One involves the ideas and perceptions of members, which includes “influencing perceptions,” “bargaining,” and preventing or introducing new ideas. The second, considers the interactions among members and is concerned with how network actors set arrangements, organize confrontations, and engage in facilitation, broker, mediation and arbitration activities (Kickert, et al., 1997, 170). The application of this model shows how new networks can emerge or exiting ones “open up” when the “game” element is changed and changes in the network rules can modify the game element. Strategic choices by actors to modify certain perceptions may help break down boundaries,
whereas the introduction of members into the network can influence new ways of thinking about interdependent problem solving (Kickert, et al., 1997, 170).

Research conducted by Van Buren, Hans-Klijn, and Koppenjian (2003) build on the work conducted by Kickert, et al. (1997) creating a framework for understanding network management. By adopting a policy network concept, Van Buren, et al. (2003) use a game theoretic approach within various “arenas” to modify and influence problem perception, formulation, and solutions to complex problems. The authors identify three types of uncertainty that correspond to wicked policy problems and which need to be addressed in order to solve a problem. First is “cognitive uncertainty,” which emanates from the lack of technical knowledge about a situation. Secondly, “strategic uncertainty” exists as a function of the human network – the more people or agencies involved in the network add to the complexity of different perceptions and ideals in addressing a problem and solution. Third, “institutional uncertainty” is present because decisions made by individuals in the network are made in different political organizational environments and boundary spanning problems. Identifying these three distinct types of uncertainty led the authors to suggest that dealing with “wicked problems is – to a large extent – a problem of interaction” (Van Buren, et al., 2003). When faced with complex problems (such as counterterrorism) where governments must move quickly and be dynamic and the risk of failure is very high, the status quo for agencies to not engage collaboratively because of differences in perception and disagreements in approach is often unacceptable.
Knowledge Networks and Collaboration

In a 2008 essay entitled “Wicked Problems, Knowledge Challenges, and Collaborative Capacity Builders in Network Settings,” Weber and Khademian analyze management practices in dealing with the effective “transfer, receipt, and integration of knowledge” within a complex network environment. They begin with the premise that when faced with wicked problems interorganizational collaborative networks can be a positive solution or a means to address such problems. Networks provide flexibility, efficiency, and offer “innovative organizing hybrids that enable participants to accomplish something collectively that could not be accomplished individually (Powell, 1998).” Weber and Khademian (2008) argue that in the wicked problem space there are unique challenges to sharing knowledge in the network which diminishes effectiveness. Their definition of effectiveness incorporates “collaborative capacity (long and short term problem-solving capacity), improved policy performance, and the maintenance of accountability for public action.” Knowledge sharing is a key factor to establishing collaborative capacity and knowledge, and must be understood and comprehended uniformly by all participants in the network. Without this uniform level of understanding creating new knowledge in the network is challenged because the participants often hold different perspectives, which hinders or prevents the transfer and receipt of information. In order to address this knowledge transfer problem Weber and Khademian (2008) build on their prior work (Khademian, 2002; Weber, 1998; Weber, Lovrich and Gaffney, 2005; Weber, Lovrich and Nice, 2000) that looked at managerial decisions in complex problem environments. Their objective is to evaluate the “mind-set” of the public manager, who they describe as a “collaborative capacity builder” (CCB), and understand how
“knowledge can be sent, received, and integrated as part of a broader effort to build and sustain collaborative capacity for addressing a wicked problem” (Weber and Khademian, 2008, 335).

The concept of wicked problems is discussed earlier in this chapter. However Weber and Khademian (2008, 336) provide some interesting elements to this discussion. They agree with the literature that wicked problems are “unstructured” and have no determinable end. They agree with Rittel and Webber (1973) that “each attempt at creating a solution changes the understanding of the problem.” This is akin to positive feedback systems where no predictable equilibrium or steady-state exists. Such complex problems are nonlinear and cut across multiple levels of government and impact various policy domains. Weber and Khademian (2008) point out that often these crosscutting effects impose conflicting values when trying to solve a wicked problem, such as “homeland security and privacy protection” or “environmental preservation and economic development.” Not only are wicked problems difficult to address, but how they are perceived changes as individuals involved in searching out a solution move in and out of the problem space. And finally, Weber and Khademian (2008) suggest that wicked problems are “relentless,” meaning they do not go away.

Though wicked problems pose considerable challenges to finding an appropriate and acceptable way to manage such problems, solutions must still be sought out. Weber and Khademian (2008, 337) argue that a mix of traditional bureaucratic processes, new approaches to problem solving, and diversity of participation are all part of the solution to addressing wicked problems. What is missing in the academic literature and what the authors see as necessary to utilize these elements is a way to ensure “the effective
transfer, receipt, and integration of knowledge across participants in a network” (Weber and Khademian, 2008). To effectively address these issues requires cooperative and collaborative efforts that cross over multiple hierarchies, bureaucracies, and jurisdictions to foster new knowledge creation.

Networks and their inherent collaborative framework, then, are seen as a vital component to address complex problems and have “distinct efficiency advantages not possessed by pure markets or pure hierarchies (Podolny and Page, 1998)” (Weber and Khademian, 2008). One such efficiency capability is the transfer of information across networks and connecting the participating organizations while using the structure that is in place, often working through the various relationships comprising the network. Information can be transmitted a number of ways, such as through technology or interpersonal relationships. The functional form of the network also impacts the flow of information. The degree a network is centralized or diffuse, the number of members in the community, the interdependencies among the members, shared common interests and values, geographic separation, and the capabilities of managers within the network organizations to effectively communicate can impact the speed and effectiveness of sharing information over any particular point in time (Weber and Khademian, 2008).

Weber and Khademian (2008, 338) define knowledge as “socially mediated information (Berger and Luckmann, 1967).” They argue that information exists in a number of social environments (such as neighborhoods, professional organizations, communities) and the individuals in these groups attach or form perspectives and values about this information. This becomes localized knowledge that often times is different than the knowledge held within the network. Individual localized knowledge poses
challenges to CCB managers who need to find ways to persuade network participants to share their knowledge so it may be integrated into the network. This new network knowledge becomes the basis creating effective collaboration processes to address wicked problems.

Weber and Khademian (2008, 338) argue that the research on knowledge acquisition and knowledge transfer can be viewed in three ways. The first, and what the authors refer to as a “traditional approach” is a view that knowledge is an “asset” which is an object akin to property. In this case knowledge is something tangible or an idea fixed in time, but is not a process. The primary focus is on sending information to participants in a network setting where the barriers for sharing this information are easily overcome through standardized procedures or common protocols (Weber and Khademian, 2008). Usually this type of knowledge being transferred is “not complex (Hansen, 1999),” and there is general agreement on how it is interpreted. The second approach looks to how knowledge is received by “recognizing the role interpretation plays in receiving and disseminating knowledge” (Weber and Khademian, 2008, 338). This view takes into consideration the barriers and limits to sharing information as a consequence of the way each individual participant in the network interprets the information being sent. The third method Weber and Khademian (2008) identify is a “pragmatic view of knowledge” where knowledge transfer takes into consideration not just the identification of the differences among the participants (people or organizations) receiving and sending information, but also searches for commonalities that can be used to improve knowledge transfer. Differences that challenge knowledge transfer often result from practices and ways of doing activities that are unique to a local population.
Geographic separation, cultural separation, perceived costs and trade-offs, and temporal separation can contribute to individual and organizational perceptions that can impede or inhibit the willingness to share knowledge. As an example of these tensions and trade-offs, Weber and Khademian (2008, 339) provide an illustration from Carlile (2002) in which he discusses the conflict and challenge to share knowledge between two divisions within the same organization:

They are reluctant to change their hard-won outcomes because it is costly to change their knowledge and skills. The cross boundary challenge is not just that communication is hard, but that to resolve the negative consequences by the individuals from each function they have to be willing to alter their own knowledge, but also be capable of influencing or transforming the knowledge used by the other function (Carlile, 2002).

Weber and Khademian (2008) present six recommendations for how a network can accommodate and effectively incorporate “practice-based knowledge” through a collaborative process. The catalyst is the collaborative capacity builder (CCB) who should have certain qualities that form a “mind set” (the authors note this is analogous to leadership) with a commitment as a manager to the “sending, receiving, and integrating knowledge for collaborative capacity.” The six commitments are as follows:

- A commitment to governance with government.
- A commitment to govern within the rules yet think creatively.
- A commitment to networks as mutual aid partnerships with society.
- An acceptance that the CCB can be someone without an official government portfolio.
- An understanding of the intrinsic inseparability of performance and accountability in wicked problem settings.
- A persistent commitment to the collaborative process.
It is important to note that the first point, a “commitment to governance with government,” sets the tone to the direction for the other five points. The term “governance” is used by the authors to acknowledge that because of the vast interdependencies among all levels of government, nonprofits, and the private sector, to address complex wicked problems, government alone is not the answer. Weber and Khademian (2008) discuss how this burden is shared with government institutions, but that collaboration among many participants also share the burden. They further state:

Indeed, this is fundamental to the knowledge challenge posed by wicked problems. Precisely because the definition of a problem, the design of a capacity to address it, and responsibilities for funding and implementation will not be concentrated in a single government entity, and the need to share, understand, and integrate diverse understandings of the wicked problem is paramount (Weber and Khademian, 2008, 341).

In a subsequent research article entitled “From ‘Need to Know’ to ‘Need to Share’: Tangled Problems, Information Boundaries, and the Building of Public Sector Knowledge Networks,” Dawes, Cresswell, and Pardo (2009) apply 15 years of their research involving public management projects, primarily in New York state (Zhang and Dawes, 2006), to develop a new network concept they call “public sector knowledge networks” (PSKNs). They propose that “PSKNs treat information and knowledge sharing across traditional organizational boundaries as a primary purpose to address public needs that no single organization or jurisdiction can handle alone” (Dawes, et al., 2009, 392). The PSKN framework is an effective approach to dealing with complex problems, which Dawes, et al. (2009) term “tangled problems.” Potential benefits include improved communications among the participants in the network with the expectation that shared information and knowledge will be more effective, efficient, and above all useful to identifying and solving complex problems.
PSKNs are “sociotechnical systems” that share mutual dependencies in functional form between social institutions and organizations, and information technology components including technical processes, policies, and procedures (Dawes, et al., 2009). Similar to the research by Weber and Khademian (2008) where information sharing is crucial to addressing wicked problems, information technology solutions are only part of the solution. Technical solutions are “nested within a variety of organizational, sociological, ideological, and political contexts” (Dawes, et al., 2009). Establishing a capable PSKN requires developing specialized public management skills and perspectives to understanding the importance of collaboration in complex environments and understanding how management behavior influences information sharing. The management perspective in a PSKN also influences organizational learning as employees and others learn to understand others’ “knowledge and experiences” (Dawes, et al., 2009). Organizational learning improves network capability to engage with, react to, and more importantly, adapt to environmental uncertainties (Dawes, et al., 393, 2009). In a separate research article, Powell (1998) suggests that this type of organizational learning involving partnership linkages is important for establishing “routines and norms that can mitigate the risks of opportunism, and learning how to distribute newly acquired knowledge across different projects functions.”

Dawes, et al. (2009, 393) provide a typology for understanding variation in PSKNs. Organizations can be categorized in one of three ways in a PSKN: as units within the same organization, organizations within the same jurisdiction, and organizations crossing multiple jurisdictions and levels of government. Problem-solving is described as either focused on a specific problem with an identifiable end or as a
domain requiring a broad open-ended “systemic” knowledge and information sharing capacity (Dawes, et al., 2009). Initiatives involving wicked problems that impact multiple jurisdictions and cross levels of government require a systemic approach to knowledge networking. As policy problems move from being simple and uncomplicated (residing within a single organization, defined with specificity and has an endpoint) to the more complicated wicked problem, there are identifiable trade-offs to both costs and benefits. Costs can be in the form of higher risks involving the need to collaborate and make decisions within an interorganizational environment including the uncertainty managers face from ill-defined authority (Dawes, et al., 2009). Such “transaction costs” have shown to be a challenge to establishing collaborative interorganizational relationships. In a separate study, Kalu (2012) points out that organizations facing difficult and complex interactions may decide to protect their organization and this then leads to “collaborative inertia.”

As organizations and public managers address complex problems they adopt adaptive behavior to their environment (see also Mandell and Steelman, 2003; O’Leary and Vij, 2012). Pursuing information and knowledge sharing in the PSKN will likely produce capabilities and capacity to address the problem at hand, but also enhance the network’s ability to address emergent problems. Some recent scholarship on network theory has identified these positive interorganizational collaborations as enhancing “social capital” formation (Mandell, 1999; Provan and Milward, 2001). Mandell and Steelman (2003) agree that network approaches to complex problems inevitably lead to benefit and cost trade-offs and that public managers and decision-makers in an
interdependent environment choose collaborations the authors term “interorganizational innovations.”

Assumptions about what is “obvious” can lead to long-term misunderstandings that are detrimental to the network (Dawes, et al., 2009). As with the arguments made by Weber and Khademian (2008), the authors point out that information in its transformation to knowledge is contextual to the individual’s environment, and this includes geography and distance, temporal aspects, political boundaries, and in the way participants’ mental models perceive problems and solutions. Collaborative capacity building to support PSKNs must involve several elements, including: leadership and management support, emphasis on building and maintaining trust within the network, a governance structure to address new ideas and divergent views, and having adequate resources (Dawes, et al., 2009, 396).

**Trust and Accountability**

Establishing and maintaining trust is vital in any network environment addressing complex social problems (Agranoff, 2006; Mandell and Steelman, 2003; O’Toole, 1997; van Bueren, Klijn, and Koppenjan, 2003; Vangen and Huxham, 2003) including general public trust (La Porte and Metlay, 1996). Dawes, et al. (2009, 396) suggests that trust is not a homogeneous commodity. In fact it exists as different forms based in large part on the same factors that influence knowledge creation and sharing. In situations where risk is high and interdependencies are large, such as in knowledge sharing environments, trust is a necessary social and behavioral construct for successful collaboration (McGuire, 2006). However, findings by Isett and Provan (2005), from their study of a community
mental health center, refuted the common refrain of an inverse relationship between increasing levels of trust in decreasing needs for formal agreements. Instead of relying primarily on informal collaborative relationships, “the need for formal contracts generally remains constant among publicly funded organizations, and trust is not negatively affected by the presence of contracts” (Isett and Provan, 2005, 162). This does not mean trust is diminished in a particular way. On the contrary, trust is a key provision in establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships (Caruson and MacManus, 2006; Fountain, 2013; McGuire, 2006; Vangen and Huxham, 2003). And regarding the focus of this dissertation, law enforcement agencies in general and fusion centers specifically have shown the importance of establishing and maintaining trust in relationships as fundamental for an effective and efficient information sharing environment (Bean, 2009; Brown and Brudney, 2003; Choi and Choi, 2012; Joyal, 2012; Nicholson-Crotty and O’Toole, 2004). “Trust does not require common belief, but rather obligation and expectation” (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003, 182).

Legal authority and accountability are important elements to knowledge networks. Dawes, et al. (2009, 398) along with Weber and Khademian (2008, 341) both discuss the importance of legal authority and recognition when it comes to public commitment in the form of financial support and administrative efforts to sustain network capabilities. Mischen (2013) developed a theory of “collaborative network capacity” by conducting a comparative case study on early childhood development readiness networks. The theory emphasizes the critical need for collaborative networks to have “sufficient financial, social, and knowledge capital to achieve its goals” (Mischen, 2013, 9). Additionally, a “credible commitment” to not just the collaboration process, but also to the organization
was deemed important to knowledge network success (Mischen, 2013, 20). Whereas much of the research on knowledge networks discusses the “softer skills of collaboration” (Weber and Khademian, 2008), Mischen (2013) discusses “technical skills” necessary for collaborative network success.

Accountability has been discussed extensively in the academic literature (Kettl, 2009; O’Toole and Meier, 2004; Kickert, Kiljn, and Koppenjan, 1997; Agranoff and McGuire, 1999; Provan and Milward, 1995). In both Dawes, et al. (2009) and Weber and Khademian (2008), accountability is linked to their definitions of governance. As discussed by Dawes, et al. (2009), governance can be viewed in two different categories. One, as the diminished traditional government role in favor of other public sector, private business, and non-profit organizations to develop ways to govern the collective organization. The second is a government response to the inevitable layers and interdependencies that exist in collaborative, multi-organizational institutions. Dawes, et al. (2008) view accountability as a combination of government supporting a network process and as a collaborative management approach based on partnerships. The public manager cannot use the coercive heavy hand of government to influence network participation to send, receive, and integrate knowledge as a way to address a wicked problem, as “such an approach risks breeding resistance and alienating the very people necessary for successfully managing to cure wicked problem” (Dawes, et al., 2008).

Accountability remains an issue in the literature when looking at multijurisdictional, multi-actor collaborative networks. Power and control are difficult to formally establish in collaborative management structures along with identifying who should be held accountable. Kettl (2006) points out this vexing “accountability problem”
resulting from the increase in complex social problems, wicked problems, and the impact on traditional administrative boundaries:

But when responsibility for program implementation propagates through the larger and more complex system, who is ultimately accountable for the performance of public programs? Because responsibility inevitably is shared – across governmental organizations and levels of government, as well as across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors – is it possible to clearly fix accountability on anyone? (Kettl, 2006, 16).

Agranoff and McGuire (2003, 187-191) also discuss the challenges facing accountability in collaborative networks. They argue that in a multijurisdictional context is difficult to identify the principal and agents within a network. The traditional top-down, single agency bureaucratic model with legal authority doesn’t seem to apply to collaborative processes. O’Toole (1997a, 458) asks, “Does networked public administration pose a threat to democratic governance or offer the prospect of its more complete attainment?” (In Agranoff and McGuire, 2003, 189). O’Toole’s analysis leads to his assessment that network management “provides both complications and opportunities” to democratic process (1997b, 458).

**Boundary Organizations**

Collaborative networks involving public, nonprofit, and private organizations are increasingly used to implement complex public policy initiatives at all levels of government and especially state and local level (McGuire, 2006; Ospina and Saz-Carranza, 2010; Zhang and Dawes, 2006; Mischen, 2013; Agranoff, 2006). Such collaborative relationships have emerged as government agencies realize that the “wicked problems” and increasing interdependencies they encompass cannot be solved successfully by a single organization (Mullin and Daley, 2010). As discussed earlier in
this chapter, however, collaborative networks face several challenges establishing ongoing interagency relationships to address complex problems. Identifying and enabling institutional structures for effective and sustained interagency collaboration requires strategic understanding of each organization’s internal and external environments. As Fountain (2013, 16) states in her study of cross agency collaboration: “If oversight bodies could simply order cooperation, they would do so – and in fact have done so with varying success. But the information and incentive structures to support interagency collaboration are too complex to yield to simple fiat, even from legitimate authorities.”

Boundary organizations have emerged as an interesting concept for addressing wicked policy problems by bringing together participants from multiple agencies while crossing over traditional “boundaries” that normally would prevent collaboration. As an institutional construct, a boundary organization is considered a “bridging organization,” it establishes critical linkages between those who have knowledge and information and the users who need that knowledge and “recognizes the importance of location specific contexts” (Batie, 2008). Several definitions of what a boundary organization is and the elements important to understanding its construct are found in the research literature, with much of the academic research on boundary organizations situated in the natural resource and environmental policy arenas (see for example Clark, Tomich, Van Noordwijk, Dickson, Catacutan, Guston, and McNie, 2010; Clark and Holiday, 2005; Guston, 2001). The definition of a boundary organization used for this dissertation comes from Guston (2001), as cited in Batie (2008):
Boundary organizations are situated between different social and organizational worlds, such as science and policy. According to advocates, boundary organizations succeed when three conditions are met. First they must provide incentives to produce boundary objects, such as decisions or products that reflect the input of different perspectives. Second, they involve participation from actors across boundaries. Third, they have lines of accountability to the various organizations spanned [by the boundary organization] (Guston, 2001).

Schneider (2009), however, suggests that the definition just cited is “too static” and that the elements do not allow for strategic interpretation by key leadership and management to make decisions based on processes needed in their organization. The concept of “lines of accountability” seems to imply an \textit{a priori} hierarchy and not provide flexibility to build more informal “trust-based” relationships built on common goals (Schneider, 2009).

Though much of the academic discussions on boundary organizations is found in the areas of sociology, ecology, resource management, and sustainability science the basic paradigm can apply to the fusion center model. But not all research are in these areas. Schneider (2009) conducted a comparative case study on juvenile justice at the local level analyzing the success and failure of each based on how each system engaged in processes using the boundary organization model. Michelau (2010) used the boundary organization model, along with other policy models, to understand how interstate policy organizations influence decision-making in higher education. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, fusion centers are a collaborative network involving the federal government, state, local government, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments, and the private sector. State and Major Urban area Fusion Centers operate in a middle ground serving both local and regional law enforcement and public safety needs along with being the “Nexus of the homeland security intelligence enterprise at the state and local level” (DHS, 2013, v).
How fusion centers specifically fit into the boundary organization model will be discussed in Chapter 6. At this point the existing literature on boundary organizations is presented keeping in mind that the model is dynamic and can apply to any number of wicked problems (see for example Crona and Parker, 2012).

Much of the work on boundary organizations has focused on science and environmental problems, specifically sustainability of natural resources (Batie, 2008; Crona and Parker, 2012; Guston, 1999; Cash, Clark, Alcock, Dickson, Eckley, Guston, Jager, and Mitchell, 2003). Sustainability policies and projects often involve an interplay of decision-makers who need to understand the science and technology involved in meeting the needs of addressing such complex issues. This requires a high degree of interaction among various disciplines and government agencies working across boundaries. As a tool for the scientific community the concept of “boundaries” is formalized to protect their knowledge and to ensure quality control of scientific information (Boissin, 2009). These boundaries are “not a simple demarcation line that sets an established limit between two different areas of authority, but an intermediary zone of variable size, permanently challenged” (Boissin, 2009). Some boundaries exist as a consequence of the American federalist structure where limits on government control separate lines of authority (Kettl, 2006). Organization theory informs us that most organizations are exposed to their environment to some degree and as such they need to be adaptive. However, as Thompson (2004, 23-24) points out, organizations may allow some exposure and interaction with their environment but there is also a “technical core” that the organization works to protect and often “buffer” from environmental changes.
Building knowledge networks is one way to overcome boundary issues (Dawes et al., 2009; Weber and Khademian, 2008; Cash, et al., 2003; McNie, 2007). However, researchers grapple with how to define and measure knowledge production in boundary organizations (Crona and Parker, 2012; Clark, et al., 2011; Hellstrom and Jacob, 2003).

The Public Sector Knowledge Network (PSKN) concept, as discussed earlier in this chapter, focuses specifically on facilitating information and knowledge sharing across interorganizational boundaries (Dawes, et al., 2009; Zhang and Dawes, 2006). Similarly, establishing a knowledge network requires collaborative efforts involving management and all participants within a network to remain “constructively engaged” for the long term as complex problems are addressed (Weber and Khademian, 2008). Yet, challenges persist with coordination in both networks and organizations. Roberts (2011) points out that just focusing on the different parts of a system, the various “silos” and “smokestacks,” without fully understanding how relationships can be built to tie disparate and often fractured organizations together to address a common problem, has shown disastrous results. “Our complex and tightly interwoven systems have increased rather than diminished our vulnerabilities to natural, industrial, and terrorist disasters (Perrow, 1999; Vaughn, 1996). Although they are called ‘accidents,’ ‘failures of intelligence,’ and ‘oil spills,’ and usually blamed on ‘poor leadership’ and ‘inefficient/ineffective organizations,’ they often are but manifestations of our inability to manage a fragmented, complex, interdependent, and dynamic world” (Roberts, 2011).

Boundary organizations are conceptualized as holistic, long-term institutional frameworks designed to handle a wide range of interorganizational relationships and encourage the production of knowledge (Boissin, 2009). They tend to be formal
institutions that are identifiable at the nexus between groups who are both users and suppliers of information and knowledge (Boissin, 2009). As such, boundary organizations serve as a “forum where multiple perspectives participate and multiple knowledge systems converge,” and where groups interact with an understanding of the diversity of cultural perspectives (Carr and Wilkinson, 2005). Boundary organizations link knowledge to the users and these linkages can involve individual actors or organizations and cross over disciplines, governmental structures, and bureaucratic hierarchies to “facilitate communication and enhance some form of collaborative output” (Crona and Parker, 2012). They manage interactions across boundaries and “cross the gap between different fields of expertise” and are accountable to all participants in the network (Boissin, 2009). It is through accountability and established trust that boundary organizations are stable institutions because they are held accountable by and are also responsive to the participants in the network (Guston, 2001).

In the same way that public sector knowledge networks operate and rely on collaboration to facilitate information sharing, boundary organizations build upon this idea (Dawes, et al., 2009; Weber and Khademian, 2008). Boundary organizations identify the type of social environments, geographic and physical conditions, and the political environment necessary to understand the best way to facilitate collaboration among the different groups to achieve knowledge sharing and knowledge use for practical purposes (Crona and Parker, 2012). By interacting with various participants in the network who have knowledge and information the boundary organization can effectively create new transformational knowledge and shared understanding of a particular complex problem (Batie, 2008). In analyzing the need for the agricultural
economics discipline to take seriously the complex issues related to wicked problems, Batie (2008) provides the following reflection:

Boundary organizations can function to reconcile supply and demand of existing knowledge; co-create new knowledge; translate, negotiate, and communicate among the multiple parties on both sides of the science – use nexus; make transparent tacit assumptions and values embedded in models, paradigms, and assertions; identify uncertainties; seek alternative framing of problems; build hybrids (objects such as indicators or maps that contain both science and policy information); and build capacity to link knowledge to action (Batie, 2008).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework for understanding important concepts of organization theory relating to fusion centers, with a specific focus on how collaboration is discussed in the academic literature. This dissertation argues that the counterterrorism role of fusion centers, and the fusion center integration with state and local law enforcement, involves dealing with wicked problems. Counterterrorism is presented as a wicked problem that requires new and innovative organizational institutions. As such, understanding how fusion centers collaborate from the perspective of their senior leadership and how this fits with the concept of collaborative network theory is an important contribution to the literature.

This chapter began with a discussion on the development of organization theory expanding from the inward looking, instrumentally rational perspective of organizations through the lens of scientific management to models and theories that take into account the impact of the environment on an organization. Thompson’s work on contingency theory and how organizations in complex environments cope with uncertainty by buffering its strategic core while at the same time recognizing organizational
interdependence with the environment was discussed. Supporting Thompson’s concept was a discussion on open and closed organization models. It was argued that fusion centers, and more generally law enforcement organizations, should be characterized and understood through the open system model. This is because in open systems both the behavioral and institutional elements of how an organization interacts with its environment are considered.

A robust discussion of the research on collaboration literature was presented. The collaboration literature is seen both as a single research area but more commonly it is discussed in terms of network theory and inter-organizational relationships. The primary focus of this literature review is on collaborative networks and how these networks have been conceptualized and oftentimes empirically tested in the literature. In following O’Toole’s (1997) challenge to “treat networks seriously,” this literature review considered in some detail the concept of how knowledge is developed and transferred among participants in a network setting. Trust and accountability within the network structure was also discussed as necessary elements for the long term and sustainable collaborative relationships in dealing with wicked problems.

Lastly, the concept of boundary organizations was discussed as a way to understand how multidisciplinary and highly interdependent organizations share information and build knowledge through a collaborative network. This discussion touches on areas beyond traditional public administration and includes the policy sciences, political science and in some cases economics. But this multidisciplinary perspective may be the direction needed to address such a wicked problem as counterterrorism. As O’Toole (2010) pointed out in describing how future research of
networks should be conducted, there are connections among the disciplines, and these
“ties that bind” need to be considered.
CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGY

“Our theories determine what we measure.”
(Albert Einstein, quoted in Senge, 1990, 175)

Research Design

This dissertation uses a qualitative case study approach to explore how State and major urban area intelligence fusion centers collaborate in a network setting with federal, State, local and tribal partners. This investigation uses open-ended, semi-structured elite interviews with nine fusion center directors (or deputy directors) from nine different fusion centers to understand their perceptions of collaboration and the level of collaboration in their respective centers. How fusion center senior leadership perceive and conduct collaboration in context of how the academic literature has addressed the ways public agencies have grappled with “wicked problems” is an important contribution to the literature. This chapter outlines the research methodology used in this study and explains why the selected case study approach is an acceptable strategy. The methodological limitations of this approach are also discussed.

The case study method was selected as an appropriate approach to investigating the primary research question of this dissertation, which is: How do fusion centers collaborate in a multidiscipline and interorganizational network environment? The case study approach is substantiated in two ways. First, there is a paucity of discrete information on the functions of fusion centers, and specifically how these functions are connected as a collaborative interorganizational network. The literature on collaboration and networks have looked at many public agencies and there is a body of research literature on the federal arm of homeland security; however, very little research, both
theoretical and empirical, have focused on state and local fusion centers. Second, the approach this dissertation takes to understand the role of collaboration in fusion centers and how collaboration takes place requires understanding what Weber and Khademian (2008) refer to as the “mind-set” of the collaborative manager in an organization. This is important because the perceptions of fusion center managers shape the performance of the organization. Likewise, following the discussion on collaborative knowledge networks in Chapter 3, there are complex sociotechnical interactions that fusion center directors must consider as part of their decision-making processes. These can be technical, institutional, process oriented, culture based, and political, just to name a few. This fits with the argument that counterterrorism as a “wicked problem” is an extremely complex policy issue and problem. If knowledge transfer and information sharing are to be viewed as a function of collaborative capacity as the literature suggests (Dawes, et al, 2009; Provan and Milward, 2001; Weber and Khademian, 2008) then a good first step to parsing out valuable information and creating an analytical set of questions is through a qualitative research design.

The case study research approach used in this dissertation follows the methodology outlined by Yin (2012; 2014). Though there are competing methodologies on how to conduct case study research (Gabrielian, 1999; Silverman, 2006) and even energetic debates in the discipline (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994),43 Yin’s approach is widely cited and accepted in the social science literature. Yin (2012, 4) defines a case study as “An empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., a “case”), set within its real world context – especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” Information about fusion centers, how they function as
an organization and the complex information sharing processes and relationships fusion centers undertake are not well understood. Additionally, fusion centers are relatively new institutional models having been in existence since 2006, and as they mature new demands and expectations are placed on these organizations. As such, using a case study research method utilizing elite, semi-structured interviews is an appropriate strategy to explore collaboration in fusion centers. Further supporting this research selection, Yin (2014, 2) argues that case study research is the preferred method when three criteria exist: “1) when the main research questions are ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions; 2) a researcher has little or no control over behavioral events; and 3) the focus of study is a contemporary (as opposed to an entirely historical) phenomenon.”

**Research Questions**

Research contained in this study is both descriptive and exploratory and presents analysis based primarily on the following research question: How do fusion centers collaborate in a multidiscipline and interorganizational network environment? To better approach this broad research question, four sub-questions are developed to help answer the primary question. Each of the four sub questions present findings based on selected themes that emerged from the interviews. The database software and the process used to develop these themes is discussed later in this chapter. A discussion of the research questions and associated themes is presented in chapter 5 at the beginning of each section.
These four sub-questions and the themes related to each are listed as follows:

1. Are fusion centers collaborating in ways that support an information sharing network and the ability to accomplish their organizational missions?

   Themes:
   b. Breaking down barriers.
   c. The counterterrorism mission and the all-crimes/all-hazards direction.
   d. Self-organizing and adaptive network approach.

2. What factors, organizational structures, or management perspectives facilitate fusion center collaboration?

   Themes:
   a. Outreach and partnership-building.
   b. Interpersonal relationships and trust.
   c. Network-building.
   d. Fusion centers as learning organizations.
   e. Policies and procedures that incorporate and support interorganizational and multi-discipline outreach.
   f. Value added services.

3. What factors constrain or challenge fusion centers from effective collaboration and information sharing with federal, state, and local agencies and the private sector?

   Themes:
   b. Interagency partnerships can be inconsistent and uncertain.
   c. Mixed messages from DHS and top-down implementation challenges.
   d. Regional issues/Discipline and agency differences.

4. How does having a formal governance structure or advisory body help facilitate and maintain collaborative relationships that are beneficial to the information sharing network?

   Themes:
   a. Governance helps to coordinate operational process, information sharing, and funding issues in multi-fusion center states.
   b. Internal advisory committees help to break down information silos and provide critical feedback.
   c. Provides accountability.
From the interviews conducted in this study, subsequent analysis and answers to these questions should provide researchers and practitioners alike with valuable information and insight to the way fusion centers use collaboration to support information sharing through an interorganizational network.

**Data Collection Instrument**

An elite, semi-structured and focused interview instrument was the primary source of data collected for this dissertation. This is considered an “elite” study because only directors or deputy directors of fusion centers were interviewed (see for example Yin, 2014, 32). The interview questions followed a general script that was used uniformly with all interviewees. However, the interview process allowed for some interaction between the interviewer and interviewee so that salient and interesting points could be further discussed and elaborated upon by the interviewee. In addition to the interview data the researcher collected and reviewed selected open source material pertinent to each of the fusion centers that provided interviews such as information from the agency website and available state and federal government documents. Additionally, some of the fusion centers provided internal documents to the researcher including such documents as privacy policies, governance or advisory body information, concept of operations, and information sharing and collection policies.

The original research design protocol called for the director or deputy director from 10 fusion centers to be contacted and to participate in the interview. However, one of the 10 fusion centers contacted did not respond to the initial introductory email and
invitation to participate nor was there a response to two follow-up emails. Directors from nine fusion centers participated in this research project.

The interview instrument went through a pretest process. Three individuals were asked to review the survey and provide comments for improvement, keeping in mind the focus of this dissertation. The three individuals included a senior law enforcement official with a fusion center, a Department of Homeland Security senior intelligence officer assigned to a fusion center, and a retired federal law enforcement officer who also served as a state governor’s homeland security advisor. Several comments and suggestions were provided and incorporated into the survey instrument.

Interviews were conducted primarily as a teleconference, except two interviews were conducted in person at the respective fusion centers. Initial contact with fusion centers began in June 2013, with the first interview occurring in October 2013 and the final interview taking place in April 2014. Prior to the interview an introductory email was sent to each fusion center director explaining the purpose of the research project including the goals and methods of the interview. The email also included information about the confidentiality of the information provided in the interview and the informed consent form (an example of the introductory email, and the list of interview questions can be found in Appendix 3 and Appendix 4, respectively). A similar process was followed for the two on-site interviews, except that the informed consent document was presented and signed at the time of the interview.

Each interview took approximately 65 minutes with the longest interview lasting a little more than two hours. To ensure accuracy each interview was digitally recorded after receiving permission from the interviewee as documented on the informed consent
form. All eight interviewees provided permission to be recorded and all accepted the interview protocol as outlined in the informed consent document.

**Data Preparation and Organization**

To provide confidentiality, each of the fusion centers cited in this study is identified by a capital letter of the alphabet (e.g., A, B, C, D, E, or F). Each capital letter represents a state in which one or more fusion center directors participated in an interview for this research project. Four states used in this study have multiple fusion centers and for those states the fusion centers are designated with a 1 or 2 along with the capital letter. For multiple fusion center states the designation of a letter with a numeral 1 represents a state sponsored fusion center for that state, whereas a letter with a numeral 2 represents a regional (major urban area) fusion center. Additionally, the fusion center represented as C2 is a recognized regional fusion center in a multi-fusion center state and is not the state designated primary fusion center. As of December 2013 there are nine states with multiple fusion centers, and the number of fusion centers in these states range from two to seven.

Recorded interviews were submitted to a transcription service specializing in academic and medical transcription and was recommended by a professor in my department. Any personally identifying information was deleted from the recording prior to submission to the transcription service. Returned transcripts only indicated “interviewer” and “interviewee.” Using the transcription service allowed for a more complete written record of the interview and possibly reducing researcher bias rather than the researcher transcribing the taped interview. The completed transcripts were then
reviewed by the researcher and matched up with additional notes that were taken during
the interview and any potentially identifying information was removed from each source
document. During this initial review of the transcripts the researcher identified keywords
in possible themes and associations for later analysis.

The qualitative data management computer program HyperRESEARCH version
3.5.2 was used to facilitate management, retrieval, and analysis of the interview
transcripts. Qualitative data management software is an effective way to visualize,
manage, and systematically organize large amounts of data. This software application
program was selected because it uses a case-based approach that fits well with the
research design of this dissertation. The prepared transcript source documents were
converted to a rich text format and uploaded into HyperRESEARCH. The software
program assists with the development of theoretical linkages and identification of
common themes that can provide revealing elements during data analysis. It should be
noted that the software only provides for the management of data; it is the researcher who
makes decisions regarding the importance and selection of associations and trends among
the data, not the software program. Some scholars have noted a concern that qualitative
data management software programs can inadvertently influence the researcher during
the initial stages of research by trying to design research questions to work with the
software.47 Thereby the possibility that the software might alter the nature of inquiry
(Staller, 2002).

After the transcript data was in the database, the researcher reviewed the data and
established relevant codes for cross comparisons with each interview subject. The code
structure was based on tying associations to the primary research question and the sub-
questions as identified in this chapter and in chapter 1. From the interview data six categories and 88 codes were developed. Using the four research sub-questions the researcher combined similar codes then used a matrix showing the incidence of occurrence for each code, selecting codes with the highest occurrence to establish themes. Appendix 5 provides a list of the codes and categories used to establish the themes.

**Data Selection: Participants**

A research protocol was prepared prior to contacting fusion centers and gathering data. A total of nine fusion center directors were included in this study (see Table 1). The protocol outlined the primary research question and sub-questions to be investigated. Additionally, because the unit of analysis is the fusion center, the demographics of the selected fusion centers was considered as part of the selection criteria. This increases reliability of the case research. The original data collection procedure proposed a selection of ten fusion centers be considered for this study and this would be a sufficient representative sample of the 77 federally recognized fusion centers. This selection would also identify the ten fusion center Directors to be contacted for the interview. However, one director who was contacted did not respond to the initial invitation email or the follow-up emails. The reduction of one fusion center in the sample selection does not significantly alter the reliability of this research. The selection of the nine fusion centers was based on the following factors: the timeframe of the study, convenience, the size of the center (number of personnel), single and multi-fusion center states, and regional and state designations (to include primary and recognized fusion centers in the same state). Purposive sampling (Yin, 2011, 88) was the primary goal to selecting the
fusion centers for this study. This was based on a national perspective of fusion centers and keeping in mind a needs for a spectrum of organizational attributes (see Table 2). Convenience was included as a consideration because gaining access to senior fusion center leadership is difficult especially with the law enforcement and classified nature of fusion center operations.

Table 1: Profile of Fusion Center Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Tenure in position</th>
<th>Tenure with Fusion Center</th>
<th>Background: Civilian or Law Enforcement (LE) and years in LE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Deputy Commander</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Civilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>4.5 years</td>
<td>LE (Local and Federal, 36 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>LE (State, 15 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>LE (Local, 20 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Director and Chief</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>LE (Local, 38 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>LE (State, 35 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1 year, 2 months</td>
<td>1 year, 2 months</td>
<td>LE (State and Local, 25 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>LE (Federal, 22 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>LE (State, 11 years)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The designation of a “1” refers to the state sponsored fusion center in a multi-fusion center state. A “2” is a regional fusion center. If a letter has no numeral designation then it is a state sponsored fusion center and the only fusion center in the state.
Table 2: National Profile for Fusion Centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Fusion Centers(^1)</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States with Multiple Fusion Centers(^1)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Length of Time a Fusion Center has been in Operation(^2)</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Area Involvement(^2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterterrorism</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Crimes</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Hazards</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Staff (Average)(^2)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Staff (Median)(^2)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHSGP and UASI funds Used to Cover Operating Costs (See footnote)(^3)</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. As of September, 2013.

Table 3 provides descriptive information of the nine fusion centers that participated in this research project. The fusion centers span a representative geographic area of the United States.\(^49\) As mentioned earlier, each capital letter represents a state and if more than one fusion center was included in a state the designation will have a 1 or 2, with 1 representing a state sponsored fusion center. All fusion centers are designated by their respective state Governor and are also recognized by the federal Department of Homeland Security. Additionally, all states with one fusion center and most state-sponsored fusion centers in multi-fusion center states are the governors designated primary fusion center for that state. The exception in this study is fusion center B 2,
which is the designated primary fusion center. The mission areas of the fusion centers
have some variation (such as all-crimes/ all-hazards), however, all have a
counterterrorism (CT) component because each center is part of the National Network of
Fusion Centers and participates in the National Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR)
Initiative (NSI).50

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fusion Center</th>
<th>Single or Multi-Fusion Center</th>
<th>State or Regional Fusion Center</th>
<th>Primary or Recognized Center</th>
<th>Primary Agency Operation</th>
<th>Area of Responsibility</th>
<th>Mission Area</th>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th>Percent Grant funds used for Personnel and Operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Multi-Fusion Center</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>State / Emergency Management</td>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>Strategic/All Crimes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Recognized</td>
<td>Regional Sheriff Office</td>
<td>Multi-county/ District</td>
<td>Counterterrorism³ / All Crimes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Multi-Fusion Center</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Recognized</td>
<td>State / Public Safety</td>
<td>Statewide &amp; Multi-county/ All Crimes</td>
<td>All Crimes/ All Hazards</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Recognized</td>
<td>Regional Sheriff Office</td>
<td>Single County</td>
<td>All Crimes/ All Hazards</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Multi-Fusion Center</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Recognized</td>
<td>Regional Sheriff Office</td>
<td>Multi-county</td>
<td>All Crimes/ All Hazards</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>State / Public Safety</td>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>All Crimes/ All Hazards</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Multi-Fusion Center</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>State / Public Safety</td>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>All Crimes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>State / Public safety</td>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>All Crimes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>State / Public safety</td>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>All Crimes/ All Hazards</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The designation of a "1" refers to the state sponsored fusion center in a multi-fusion center state. A "2" is a regional fusion center. If a letter has no numeral designation then it is a state sponsored fusion center and the only fusion center in the state.
2. All fusion centers have a counterterrorism component in their mission area due to their participation in the National Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative (NSI).
3. Counterterrorism was specifically mentioned as part of the fusion center’s stated mission.

Fusion centers A1 and A2 and B1 and B2 are located in the Western portion of
the United States. Site A1 was established in 2005 as was site A2 and both are mature
fusion centers housing multiple jurisdiction agencies in their operation centers. Site A1 is
operated by the state Office of Emergency Management and is the designated primary
fusion center. It has approximately 30 employees and is a strategic information hub with
an area of responsibility encompassing the entire state. Site A2 is a regional fusion center operated by a county sheriff’s office and has approximately 32 employees. The area of responsibility for A2 is a multicounty jurisdiction. Unlike fusion center A1, fusion center A2 operates a Terrorism Liaison Officer (TLO) program, and other outreach programs. The type of governance and agency oversight is conducted in two ways for each of the fusion centers. Both fusion centers have their own internal oversight committee and have membership comprised of stakeholders and agency partners within the respective fusion centers. The state also has an advisory body that is comprised of senior level fusion center representatives and other staff. This body serves the state’s multiple fusion centers and provides a forum for communication and oversight to ensure each fusion center is operating at the highest level. This statewide advisory body is guided by a strategic plan agreed on by the fusion centers with the goal to provide clear, effective, efficient information sharing services.

Fusion center B1, established in 2008, is operated by the state Department of Public Safety and is a mature fusion center; it has 10 employees. There are several state agencies working directly or indirectly with fusion center B1. This center’s area of responsibility is the entire state, though fusion center B2 has a primary responsibility for its AOR. All fusion centers in the state use an all crimes/all hazards approach to their fusion center mission. Both fusion centers have an internal advisory committee that provides oversight and advice to the respective fusion centers. Fusion center B2 was established in 2006 and is considered a mature fusion center with approximately 64 employees and includes both federal and local agency assigned personnel working in the center. This fusion center is operated by a county sheriff’s office and is also the primary
fusion center for the state. The area of responsibility is a single county, which is also the most urbanized area within the state. Additionally, both fusion centers operate separate TLO programs and also provide training to their stakeholders (fusion center B2 uses a Fusion Liaison Officer, FLO, designation for their program). As of January 2014 the state does not have an official governance or advisory committee representing the state’s multiple fusion centers. The researcher was informed by fusion center officials that the fusion centers intend to have such a group constituted in the near future.

Fusion center C2 is a DHS recognized regional fusion center, established in 2002, and is located in the South Central region of the U.S. It is a fully functional fusion center and has 20 employees and includes multiple police agencies and National Guard representation. The fusion center is operated by a county sheriff’s office, has an all-crimes/ all hazards mission, and operates in an area of responsibility covering several counties. This fusion center operates a Fusion Liaison Officer (FLO) program that is used to engage with law enforcement and other partners in the field. Fusion center C2 has an internal advisory board that provides oversight and recommendations and is comprised of stakeholders and representatives of member agencies providing support to the fusion center. Additionally, fusion center C2 is located in a multi-fusion center state. There is a statewide governance structure advising all fusion centers in the state, which is codified in state law. The governance body is designed to assist the State’s primary fusion center operating under their Department of Public Safety (not interviewed as part of this study) in facilitating information sharing and other practices as outlined in the

*Baseline Capabilities for State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers* ⁵² (U.S.)
Department of Justice, 2008). Membership on this advisory body is limited to representatives from the state and regional fusion centers exclusively.

Fusion center D is located in the Western region of the U.S. and is the primary state run and only fusion center in the state. Established in 2004, this fusion center operates under the State Department of Public Safety and considers its mission as all-crimes/ all-hazards. It is a mature and large operation fusion center having over 90 employees and includes several federal and multi agency representatives as part of the intelligence and information sharing operation. It operates a large TLO program. Fusion center D has two separate governance bodies. One is an executive advisory board that provides recommendations to the center and has a membership comprising a number of stakeholders involved with the information sharing operations. The second is a formal oversight committee that is established by the Governor’s Executive Order. This oversight body is chaired by the Governor (or designee) and includes membership from federal, state, and local agencies.

Fusion center E1 is located in the southeast region of the U.S. and was established in 2007. It is the primary fusion center in a multi-fusion center state and it is operated by the state’s Department of Public Safety. This is an established fusion center with over 30 employees and it operates an outreach program they call an Interagency Fusion Liaison (IFL). It has an all-crimes mission area and a statewide area of responsibility. Governance for fusion center E1 is facilitated through an internal advisory group that has membership comprising stakeholders from the different agencies and disciplines working with the fusion center. There is also a recently established executive advisory board that
provides recommendations to the state’s fusion centers. The fusion center directors comprise the membership of this executive advisory board.

Fusion center F, established in 2007, is a single fusion center state and is located in the Intermountain West region of the U.S. It is designated as the state’s primary fusion center, operating under the state Department of Public Safety, and it has a statewide area of responsibility. The fusion center has approximately 25 employees and operates with an all-crimes mission area. The fusion center has a large Intelligence Liaison Officer (ILO) program with membership that is comprised primarily of law enforcement officers. The ILO program is looking to expand and include other non-law enforcement disciplines in the future. There is a Governor’s Executive Order advisory board that provides advice and recommendations to the fusion center. The advisory board’s membership includes representatives of the major stakeholders participating in fusion center activities and operations.

Fusion center G is located in the Western region of the U.S. and is the primary state run and only fusion center in the state. Established in 2003, this fusion center is operated by a homeland security division that is under the State Department of Public Safety and considers its mission as all-crimes/all-hazards. It is a mature and large operation fusion center having over 34 employees and includes federal and multi-agency representatives as part of the intelligence and information sharing operation. It operates a large TLO program with over 500 members. Fusion center G is governed through an advisory committee that makes recommendations in several areas of the center’s activities that include: the identification of strategic threats to the state, the need and value of federally funded homeland security projects, and establishing goals for
homeland security projects. This committee is only advisory and has no statutory authority.

**Validity, Reliability and Bias**

This study relies methodologically on qualitative data and analysis. Some researchers have argued that qualitative research is diminished when compared to quantitative research because of the lack of or inability to provide for methodological validity and reliability (King, et al, 1994). This is not the case and several research studies and academic methodology approaches argue that validity and reliability are necessary elements and must be expressly considered when doing qualitative research (Gabrielian, 1999; Yin, 2014).

Validity and reliability are necessary measures for judging the quality of a research design; it refers to the way data is collected and analyzed so that the research findings accurately represent the focus of the study. Yin (2014, 46) points out that for exploratory research both construct validity and external validity should be considered as part of the research design.\(^5\) Construct validity involves ensuring that measures of the concepts under review are correct and accurate, and external validity ensures that the research outcomes can be analytically generalized to the entire domain under study. Reliability provides assurances to “minimize the errors and biases in a study” (Yin, 2014, 49).\(^4\)

To address construct validity, Yin (2014, 46-48) suggests using “multiple sources of evidence” that can be used to show congruence with the data and in analyzing the research questions. This approach is sometimes referred to as “triangulation,” which
refers to looking at data from different angles. Establishing a clear “chain of evidence” to
the data collection protocol is also important to ensure that data is efficiently and
effectively gathered and organized for analysis. This also allows for the reader to follow
a continuity of approach to the research design beginning with the research questions and
how data are analyzed (including any changes or modifications to the procedure).
External validity is addressed through the use of theory and how the study can be
analytically generalized from the case to theory. This should not be confused with
statistical generalization in which the generalization is from the data sample to the
population. Finally, reliability in a qualitative study using interview source data can be
strengthened through such means as: digitally recording interviews, using due diligence
in transcribing the interview, and coding the interview material in a logical way that can
be explained to the reader. Using a case study protocol and a well organized case study
database is highly recommended to ensure transparency of the information needed for
replication (Yin, 2014, 48-49).

This research follows as best as possible the recommendations suggested by Yin
(2014) to ensure validity and reliability. The basis of this research methodology is the
use of a protocol that provided a roadmap to the data collection and data analysis. The
initial protocol was used as the basis for the information provided to the University’s
Institutional Review Board. This provided for an early conceptualization of the specific
research questions, research design methodology, and identifying theoretical arguments
presupposing how the data relate to the research questions. Specifically, in support of
construct validity, research questions were developed and a delineation of the type of data
required was established. This included the selection process of fusion centers from
which the directors would be interviewed. Additionally, written documents available through the federal government or the fusion centers were identified for use in the research. The protocol provided for a clear “chain of evidence” detailing the process used to develop and carry out this research project.

To address external validity the research protocol incorporated a multiple case study approach which helps with comparing theoretical similarities (and dissimilarities) among the fusion centers participating in this study (Yin, 2011, 225). However, Yin (2011, 225) suggests that multiple case studies should follow a “replication logic” as opposed to a “sampling logic.” This study does not necessarily apply a replication logic to the multiple cases, but rather the multiple case design is used to enhance understanding of the variation among fusion centers relating to the research question. This could be analogous to the “theoretical replication” rather than a “literal replication” that Yin describes (2014, 57). Theoretical replication looks for patterns and similarities based on theoretical propositions. The argument for using a case study for this research is primarily based on the need in the academic literature to better understand through an exploratory study how fusion centers collaborate in network settings, and this can be supported through theoretical replication. Arguably, proving external validity in qualitative research designs is not easy and often relies on the researcher’s interpretation and approach to methodological design (Yin, 2011, 77; Gabrielian, 1999, 194). However, by using this logic the case observations can be analyzed and generalized to the theory presented in this research.

Reliability was addressed through use of a research protocol that provided a “road map” to the intention of the researcher and the steps taken to ensure data quality and
transparency. This dissertation follows a logical design that should provide to the reader how the research questions were developed, the theoretical literature used to analyze the cases being studied and how the evidence supports the finding and ultimately the conclusions. A “chain of evidence” was followed to develop and document procedures for data acquisition including the selection of the cases (fusion centers and interviews). A qualitative database management system was used to store, manage, and analyze the interview data. Though there is no agreed upon process for analyzing qualitative data, there is agreement that a structured database or clearly defined data management system is important to ensure reliability of the information in the study (Yin, 2014, 124).

To some degree, research bias exists in most studies, qualitative and quantitative, and it is the responsibility of the researcher to show dedication and intention to minimize known and inadvertent instances of bias. All effort was taken to reduce observer bias and to the extent possible reduce bias that may result from the survey instrument used and in the selection of secondary support documentation gathered for this study. Because qualitative studies usually require the researcher to have an understanding of the issues and potential conclusions beforehand this can potentially influence how subjects are selected and on the interpretation of the evidence in order to sway an outcome. Likewise, the research subjects and interviewees could hold back information or provide answers that do not honestly reflect the situation within their organization. This dissertation relies primarily on data from elite, semi-structured interviews in which the respondents are believed to answer questions honestly and truthfully. But this may not be the case, though the researcher has no reason to believe that the responses were anything other than honest. In addition, during the course of the interviews the researcher could impose
unnecessary leading questions or provide a tone that might influence how a respondent
answers a question. Further complicating this particular research subject, because fusion
centers and certainly the directors of the centers are in a law enforcement environment
there is a need to be careful with how certain questions can be answered. This is
especially true in the fusion center business because of the classified nature and national
security issues that are dealt with on a daily basis. It should be noted that the researcher
took care in formulating the interview questions so as to make them freely answerable
and not cause confusion to the respondents. To ensure that the questions avoided
confusion the interview instrument was preliminarily tested by three individuals who
work in or have worked in fusion centers and their comments and suggestions were used
to correct potential problems with the survey language.

The researcher was the only individual who conducted the data-gathering and
analysis for the study. It needs to be noted that the researcher is considered a participant-
observer in this study because of his employment position in state government working in
a homeland security area. The researcher’s position, which he has held since 2007,
involves close interaction with the fusion centers in the state and also interaction with the
federal Department of Homeland Security. In addition, the researcher has access to law
enforcement sensitive information and holds a national security clearance through the
Department of Homeland Security. This closeness to this dissertation research subject
provided unique advantages to understanding many of the day-to-day issues and concerns
facing fusion centers, which could be used to formulate well structured and nuanced
research questions and provide insight to the data collection design. However, the
participant-observer role needs to be handled with caution. Participation in the research
area can result in intentional or unintentional adverse data selection and also influence the way interview subjects respond to questions. As much as possible efforts were made to minimize any undue bias imposed by the researcher as an active participant – observer during the course of this project.

**Ethical Considerations**

Privacy, confidentiality and ethical treatment of the participants in the study and the data resulting from this study was conducted in accordance with the rules and procedures of the University’s Research Integrity Office, Institutional Review Board (IRB). The research proposal was submitted and approved by the IRB. The research protocol used an informed consent form that was presented to each interviewee prior to the interview. All interviewees provided consent verbally and then in writing prior to the interview. The researcher determined that the interview subjects and their organizations would be provided confidentiality for reasons discussed earlier in this chapter. Additionally, confidentiality was suggested by the individuals who provided preliminary interview testing along with the researcher’s knowledge of the cultural, political, public media and other sensitive issues involving fusion centers. The purpose of the confidentiality assurance is to provide additional protections that might allow interviewees to more openly express and share their opinions with the researcher. This also provides additional reliability to the data.

**Limitations of this Research Methodology**

As with any type of research study there are strengths and weaknesses to each type of methodology chosen to investigate an issue. Often, qualitative research methods
are criticized for not having the same or similar rigorous statistical parameters as found in quantitative research methods. It is believed that the qualitative research case study method outlined in this chapter is most suitable for an exploratory analysis of state and local fusion centers. Several of these weaknesses and limitations have been discussed earlier in this chapter. This section outlines some of the more pertinent weaknesses and limitations that are present with this research study’s methodological design, collection and use of data, and analytical approach.

One argument is that the data collection methodology using a qualitative study design is open-ended and dependent on the researcher’s selection and identification of the data that could be arbitrary or intentionally biased with the intention to influence the results of the study. This is compared to a quantitative study were samples are scientifically selected through a random process. Because the sample selection of the cases in this study follow a purposive selection criteria the conclusions that emerge cannot be statistically generalizable to the population under study. As pointed out earlier, qualitative research findings can be analytically generalizable to other cases sharing similar descriptive properties, but were not part of the original study. Another way of looking at the differences is that quantitative research tends to have analytical results that are deductive, whereas qualitative research uses an inductive approach.

Qualitative studies are limited in the way the research design can account for validity and reliability. These issues were discussed in an earlier section of this chapter, but it should be noted that quantitative statistical sampling and quantitative research methods in general have available several statistical diagnostic treatments that can be applied to data that cannot be used in qualitative case studies. Qualitative case study
research does not have uniformly defined or formula driven processes to establish validity and reliability (Yin, 2011, 99). This does not preclude qualitative analysis from striving toward a deliberate transparency in methodology so the research study can provide validity and reliability. These differences result in the trade-offs between the statistical inference of quantitative research and the holistic and descriptive nature of qualitative research.

**Summary**

This chapter provides a detailed account of the qualitative design methodology used in this dissertation to study certain aspects of collaboration in fusion centers. The design methodology was established to analyze the research questions presented in Chapter 1. The design methodology used in this research is shown to be ethical, deliberate, and well thought out in a way that preserves the confidentiality of the participants, provides a research protocol to protect the data collection and its management, and uses an analytical process that preserves data validity and reliability and at the same time minimizes potential bias.
CHAPTER 5 – RESEARCH FINDINGS

Intelligence is knowledge production under conditions of profound uncertainty that can be overcome only by encouraging diverse lines of inquiry and thus competing preconceptions, perspectives, methods, and organizational cultures. (Posner, 2006, 60)

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings for this research project based on nine interviews with Directors representing nine different fusion centers. The goal of this chapter is to present the findings from these interviews to answer the primary investigative research question: “How do fusion centers collaborate in a multidiscipline and interorganizational network environment?” The primary research question with its broad implications is separated into four categorical questions used to answer the primary question, as presented in Chapter 4. Each of the four main questions were addressed by using particular themes which emerged from the interviews. From this, several findings in support of the primary research question were revealed in the course of this research. The findings suggest that as an organization fusion centers are perceived as post-9/11 multidisciplinary and law enforcement institutions, which are continually improving their abilities to create an information sharing network supporting federal, state, and local counterterrorism prevention activities through an enhanced all-crimes mission area. Several factors were identified in this research impacting the success fusion centers have from their collaboration efforts, especially with their outreach programs, such as the terrorism liaison officer program. Additionally, information provided by the interviewees reveals fusion center leadership are strongly goal oriented toward establishing an information sharing network. Complementing this perspective was evidence indicating
fusion centers learn and adapt to various challenges and use this ability to create opportunities for collaboration and building partnerships. Interviewee responses also indicated they generally have an entrepreneurial attitude and customer service perspective with a focus on bringing value-added services to customers, partners, and stakeholders.

The research also revealed fusion centers face several challenges to establishing a fully functional collaborative information sharing environment. Perspectives provided by the Directors interviewed for this research uniformly acknowledged they faced several challenges based on a variety of resource constraints and limitations, which are primarily financial. Interestingly, though not surprising, are the apparent challenges fusion centers have with relying upon partners and customers to interact with and provide information to the fusion centers. The findings also suggest the interviewees have some disagreement with the way the federal government is measuring fusion center success and with the buildout of the National Network. This apparently could adversely impact the type of services fusion centers provide to their customers, which subsequently could challenge fusion centers with maintaining their currently established collaborative relationships. Regional relationships among fusion centers, especially within multi-fusion center states, appear mixed in the way the Directors who were interviewed for this project described their relationships with other fusion centers. Though the interviewees uniformly expressed optimism and had positive attitudes regarding interstate and intrastate interaction with other fusion centers, challenges and some weakness in this area was apparent.

Finally, the findings from this research strongly suggest that governance or advisory bodies are important to establishing and maintaining successful information
sharing environments for fusion centers. Whether internal to a single fusion center or, in the case of multi-fusion center states, representing several fusion centers in a state, these advisory bodies appear to be an important element, arguably a necessary element, supporting effective interagency multidiscipline collaboration efforts.

This chapter begins with the findings for the four research questions and the supporting themes for each question. The particular themes used in this chapter were determined through a methodology as described in Chapter 4 and each generally represent shared perspectives from a substantial percentage of the Directors interviewed for this research. Following the findings is a section describing information provided during the interviews from each of the Directors regarding their perception of collaboration with several sector partners. This information is presented in a table format and provides the reader with a general perspective of the types of disciplines and agencies discussed in this chapter along with an understanding of how some of these relationships are structured and interact with the fusion centers participating in this research.

**Research Question 1: Are fusion centers collaborating in ways that support an information sharing network and the ability to accomplish their organizational missions?**

One aspect of this research project was to assess how the fusion center Directors who were interviewed perceive the ability of their respective fusion centers to engage collaboratively with various partners to achieve their agency missions. This is an important measure of how fusion centers as organizations with strong internal identity interact with its environment. Fusion centers being “a collaborative effort of two or more agencies…” present many challenges to leadership as these organizations have matured
and moved into complex networks involving interorganizational relationships (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006). As an organization, fusion centers must engage in processes that span boundaries and challenge the traditional law enforcement culture which is not overly willing to share information outside of the law enforcement community. The participants’ perspectives of how their fusion center meets the challenge of establishing information sharing capabilities with partner agencies and other fusion centers within the national network reveals important insight to the development of a multiagency, multi-discipline information sharing environment.

The nine fusion center Directors interviewed for this study were asked several questions involving their fusion center’s approach to facilitate or establish collaborative relationships among law enforcement and non-law enforcement entities. It is almost an a priori argument that fusion centers are collaborating in some way with partner agencies. However, what is uncertain, and an area of this research to investigate, is the degree and nature of this collaboration and the ability of fusion centers to meet the expectations of their partners and customers.

Four themes were identified that express how the interviewees view collaborative behavior as a way to achieve their fusion center’s goals and objectives. The first focuses on how the post-9/11 world has changed the way law enforcement deals with public safety threats in a highly interdependent environment. Secondly, interviewees revealed how the fusion center model has provided a way to “break down the barriers,” which have prevented or restricted information sharing among the law enforcement community and other disciplines not traditionally considered part of public safety or law enforcement. The shift from fusion centers being primarily a counterterrorism
organization to incorporating an all-crimes, and for some, an all-hazards approach to their missions was credited by several of the interviewees as strengthening their ability to gather and share relevant information with partners and customers. Lastly, an interesting aspect that was revealed through the interviews was how several Directors described activities involving adaptive behavior in the way they approached collaboration and meeting the needs of their partners and customers.

Post-9/11 World has Changed: New Interdependencies Influence Collaboration

Several Directors interviewed for this research acknowledged that after the attacks of September 11, 2001, there was a tremendous paradigm shift in the way federal, state, and local law enforcement engage with all sectors of the public safety community, first responders and the public when it comes to preventing, detecting, and deterring terrorist threats to the United States and in their local jurisdictions. The Director of fusion center F, a retired FBI Special Agent, commented on this when asked about the shift in direction the fusion center enterprise represents. He said, “I think it’s a no-brainer. I’ve been in law enforcement for over 30 years and, I mean, generally and even up to 9/11, in the FBI, we were completely reactive. Nobody was trying to connect dots to prevent things.” In a similar statement, the Director of fusion center A2 commented that the collaborative environment of fusion centers was a necessary direction for the law enforcement and public safety communities to embrace. He stated:

I firmly believe that if we try to go back and don’t have this collaboration that we do now, and just pretend and put our heads in the sand [and consider] Okay, there’s a threat and if it comes, don’t worry. Well guess what? We’ve lost all the inroads we’ve made if we go back, as I said earlier, without this collaboration to a pre-9/11 mindset. And then, when the bomb goes boom and people don’t want to hear about that [possibility]. But instead of 3,000 people killed, you have 30,000
people killed. The threat streams that we see [don’t go away]. So it is a commitment we make, to building collaboration, which is what we should be doing.

The level of complexity of what the fusion center mission is all about, dealing with what this dissertation has argued are wicked problems, expands the universe of information sources and relationships fusion centers need to engage with. As pointed out by the Director of fusion center F, these interdependencies require cognizant and deliberate interaction to maintain the intelligence fusion process:

I agree 100%. These relationships are the key to success. With so many levels and sources of information it is not possible to have visibility on all events all the time. Trusted partners provide us critical notifications and information during investigations and responses to incidents. The fusion center model completely relies on this ability.

The perception that interdependencies related to information sharing and gathering and the ability to “connect the dots” have increased in the aftermath of 9/11 is often discussed as a driving force to creating collaborative networks among law enforcement and public safety agencies. One such response from the Director of fusion center E1 supports this proposition:

I think the first thing [and] the major influence is the need to [collaborate]. In order to complete our job, I think we are in a day and age where we have to collaborate at least on some level. We can’t just operate independently anymore. The world has brought us all together and there’s that need and the expectation that we’re all working together. That would be the first one. Obviously, the leadership of our agency in which our current leadership sees great value in the collaboration with them. In other areas besides the fusion center, our agency [State Police], that’s really what our role is in the state, [it] is the collaboration and the facilitation [in] a lot of different areas… we’re more the facilitators of the response in any kind of crime or hazard.

In a more direct statement, the director of fusion center B1 argued that the federal government, in looking at the state and local information sharing environment,
understood that relationship building is better done through local efforts. The local area
interdependencies are complex and it is through established relationships and familiarity
fusion centers have with local public safety officials and stakeholders that support
collaborative engagement. As he pointed out:

[The federal government] doesn’t know these local areas like the locals do. So,
the point being is they reach out to the states and the states have a better
connection, they understand the area and they have all those local relationships
with those locals, and those locals have all their relationships with their
constituents, right, so we’re building it from the ground up and taking a leveled
stepped approach. So, in my opinion, intergovernmental collaboration and
stakeholder collaboration are the key to counterterrorism. They’re the eyes and
the ears, starting from the lowest level on up and people know what’s suspicious
and what’s not suspicious in their own [areas].

The Director of fusion center A2 confirmed this perspective when analyzing the
interdependent reliance each of the fusion centers have as part of the National Network:

“We are only as strong as our weakest link.” And when I say weakest link, I’m
not saying [other centers are] bad. I’m saying that if you think of the fusion
centers as all 78 of us, we have to thrive together because if one slips and we
don’t pay attention to that, we as a system can be greatly affected by the failure of
one.

Breaking Down Barriers

Fusion centers are built around relationships, and these relationships often
represent new associations which cross over agencies and disciplines. Several fusion
center Directors interviewed for this project indicated the fusion center concept provides
an environment conducive to building and nurturing these new relationships and that the
quality of the relationships continue to improve over time. Prior to 9/11 it was difficult if
not impossible for law enforcement organizations to include non-law enforcement and
the first responder community into their structured environment. However, as the
Director with fusion center A2 mentioned in support of the fusion process, “breaking down those barriers is fortunately what the fusion centers do now [and this] has been a great help in trying to work…with our partners. [And] the breaking down of those barriers are very, very important on the federal side.”

Establishing collaborative network relationships was described by the director of fusion center B1 as requiring almost a constant and hands-on approach that involves leadership involvement. He explained:

I think its key. It’s a big part of it, but you have to be able to get out there and make those relationships and it can’t just be a once a year type of “hey, how’s it going?” Realistically, I think the director has to be constantly involved in outreach, probably more so than anything else because they’re the ones that are [going to] help them bring in the information…the best that they can.

Several interviewees reflected on how they perceived improvements in the way their centers have engaged with other agencies and disciplines to improve information sharing capability. These discussions revealed establishing collaborative relationships, especially with new partners not traditionally engaged with law enforcement activities, posed several challenges during the early development of their fusion centers.

Overcoming these challenges was shown to be important to the directors as they realized the necessity and the benefits from having a diverse network of stakeholders involved with their fusion centers. The Director of fusion center D discussed some of the challenges he faced after being appointed director of his center:

When I took over the center here a couple years ago one of the things that I looked at that we were missing [involved] three critical areas. Tribal was an area we were really lax on, emergency management and public health were areas that we really should have been involved in and were not. So we’re starting to transition. Two years ago I would have said we were probably a one [on a scale of 1 to 7]. So I think, in my opinion, we’ve come a long way to get to a five. As I talked about earlier, same with Emergency Management, they were not even part
of the center I shouldn’t say not part of it, they were a small part. But when we became an all-crimes, all-hazard [fusion center] in the last two to three years, we created a position on the executive board for them. And one of our TLOs is a part of the health department. So again, five probably doesn’t sound great to you, to me that’s a great improvement

From a similar perspective, the Director of fusion center of E1 pointed out how the need to share and gather information to support their counterterrorism mission influenced the way his fusion center established collaborative relationships:

I think the best example that I would give would be areas that we didn’t typically get information from like the Department of Health, [and] the departments of finance. We have two agencies in [our state], the Department of Health and the Agency for Healthcare Administration, and then our Department of Business and Professional Regulations, which regulates all the private industries. They have access to a lot of business information that has benefited us in detecting irregularities. It has also created avenues for relationships to be developed. When people see things that are suspicious to them, before they didn’t know who to call, now they have a formal communication path to notify us.

The information sharing process also involves the relationship between fusion centers and the federal government. Most Directors who were interviewed made a point to discuss past and current challenges their fusion center have with certain federal agencies, such as the FBI. Often these challenges are the result of federal agencies not wanting to expose classified information to state and local partners, or in the case of federal law enforcement their concerns about sharing information regarding ongoing criminal investigations. These challenges can constrain how fusion centers effectively meet their mission. But like much of the information sharing challenges discussed in this chapter, the research participants mostly agree that the state and local fusion center relationship with federal agencies has improved over the years. The director of fusion center B2 substantiated this perspective:
[I see] the evolution of our agency and our relationship with some federal agencies. In the months and years after 9/11, there was a tremendous amount of distrust. And programs were put in place because of that. But now I think I see that evolution. I think programs are being put in place because we truly do want to collaborate more together. Are there always going to be those tensions? Yes, …because we’re state and local, and they’re Feds. You know, you’re never going to erase those. But I know it is much better than what it was when we first started.

A particular challenge for fusion centers is assessing the information needs of their customers and stakeholders. Each of the fusion centers participating in this research use some formal process to ascertain what these needs are in their particular area of responsibility. This information is used to prioritize efforts to produce products and services for their customers. DHS refers to this process as standing information needs (SINs). While some fusion centers use this designation, others do not. Several participants in the study indicated their SIN process provides an important conduit to connect with stakeholders and customers, to understand what concerns those customers may have, and ultimately provide feedback to the fusion center. The Director of fusion center C2 provided his thoughts on this process:

We do have standing policies and a plan that addresses standing information needs. [Standing information needs provide] the guiding light. I don’t know how you would perform these functions without having that in place. I think it’s critical to our mission. I think [SIN collection] is one of the things that we do that’s really enhanced our performance, not just in assessment, but in [the] expectations of our stakeholders.

The Director of fusion center D explained how his fusion center’s collection plan provides a way to reach out to the various disciplines and organizations within the state:

I don’t know that we use state and local SINs. We use our collection plan, which is kind of the same thing. These are [the fusion center] standing information needs or wants. And again, as I said, we revise that every year. I shouldn’t say revise it, [we] review it and make any appropriate changes as necessary. But we send it out to all of our several hundred…over 400 active TLOs, all of our agency
heads, and law enforcement agency heads in the state. So I think we’re getting out that these are the important things.

And, as the Director of fusion center G stated, the use of his fusion center’s information collection plan helps to build trust in the collaborative environment:

Yes. In addition to marking all [fusion center] products with SINs, we annually develop the collection plan. This collection plan clearly identifies the needs of the [fusion center] and our Federal, State, and Local partners. By doing this outreach, we build greater trust in our partners and our products better reflect their needs.

The Counterterrorism Mission and the All-Crimes / All-Hazards Direction

What effect does incorporating an all-crimes and all-hazards approach into the fusion center mission have on the fusion centers’ capability to collaborate? As discussed in earlier chapters, there has been a gradual shift in fusion center missions away from pure counterterrorism to a more complex mission involving criminal activity and various threats from man-made and natural hazards. Table 2 and Table 3 (in Chapter 4) show the mission area involvement from a national perspective and for the nine fusion centers participating in the study, respectively. There is some consternation among fusion centers about the counterterrorism role as envisioned by the federal government, specifically pertaining to the National Network, and the acceptance of an all-crimes and all-hazards mission. The expanded mission is argued to better accommodate information sharing at the state and local level for both the fusion center organization and its customers. Several fusion center directors interviewed for this project provided perspectives supporting the inclusion of an all-crimes mission, while others also include all-hazards in their mission. The participants indicated that embracing a larger mission area helped with their collaboration efforts. The Director of fusion center D supported
this perspective, stating, “I think prior to three years ago we were primarily a terrorism information center. And when we kind of gravitated to all-crimes, all-hazards that’s when we started bringing in all these other partners.” Likewise, the Director of fusion center A1 provided insight to the importance of the mission and how it impacts the organization:

We have a strategic plan that we believe covers all of the elements within our center. So we like to think we can walk it all the way backwards up to the mission statement. And everything falls out from under that. So you have your mission statement, and you have your goals, and you have your objectives supporting your goals. And it all folds together, and it supports a mission.

Fusion centers exist, some would say, in the middle ground area of the information sharing matrix. The federal Intelligence Community (IC) needs the support of the state and local level intelligence gathering and analysis capabilities fusion centers provide. However, federal investigation agencies do not have the local connections that already exist among the state and local law enforcement and public safety agencies. This perspective was explained by the Director of fusion center A2:

The IC community at the 50,000 foot level, which I was a part of, cannot do what [the fusion centers are] doing. The FBI...through the Joint Terrorism Task Forces, their focus is investigations. To get the cooperation of state and locals, which is necessary, they can’t do what we’re doing. So we’re sandwiched in between this 50,000 foot level of the IC community, [the] NSA, CIA, FBI and then the bottom tier of the [interagency] task forces that do the investigation. They can’t do it. So we’re that middle part of the sandwich, which is exactly what the 9/11 Commission and the International Association of Chiefs of Police told us that we needed.

Many participants commented about the vast amount of information their fusion centers generate through outreach, such as through their TLO programs. They expressed both concern and belief that some obscure tip or lead relating to a common crime will be the critical “dot” that needs to be connected to prevent or disrupt terrorist activity. Such
concerns support statements from the interviews indicating the all-crimes and all-hazards mission helps to facilitate collaborative relationships across disciplines. A retired FBI special agent and fusion center Director commented, “those collaborative efforts and those relationships are very much a part and parcel to the success of our counterterrorism mission. I firmly believe it’s going to be the first line responder, again, that sees something that actually doesn’t make sense and we analyze it; we look at it; we morph it; we give it to the FBI.” Additionally, the director of fusion center C2 shared this perspective and stated:

I agree, and I would say this as simply as there are examples of how looking at all crimes, all hazards, and having the pulse on that is going to be the origin of discovering that person [who] is a threat as a terrorist in our region. And I believe that one of the great collaborations that came … was the terrorist screening center figuring out, hey, we have these fusion centers, and we have someone that’s stopped on an encounter by law enforcement in their area of responsibility, let’s send that to them and have them follow up on all the information on local databases.

Finally, the perspectives of the participants in this research have shown to strongly support the theme that expanding the fusion center mission to include all-crimes (and in some cases, all-hazards), while also keeping a deliberate focus on the counterterrorism mission, contributes to how fusion centers are motivated to engage in interorganizational and multidisciplinary collaboration. Finding the balance between the counterterrorism expectation of the federal government and the National Network and also meeting the expectations of fusion center partners and stakeholders is not easy, as the Director of fusion center B1 pointed out:

I think there’s an expectation at the federal level that terrorism take a bigger role in what the fusion centers do and I think it’s shortsighted. And I think the report recognized the importance of local crime and how [it] may have ties into terrorism information. So, I think it’s shortsighted to just say terrorism and
nothing but terrorism and I think that the value in fusion centers lies in not only addressing terrorism issues, but [also] addressing local issues because ultimately homeland security isn’t just about terrorism. It’s about security from all criminal activity in my mind. And even hazards. [T]hat’s one of the things I think they failed to recognize, too, is that all hazards perspective at the federal level and there’s a lot of value to that. I think information sharing across the board, across the United States, has increased dramatically since 9/11. I’m not saying it’s perfect. I’m not saying we don’t have a long way to go, but it’s a lot better.

Self-Organizing and Adaptive Network Approach

This theme emerged separate from any direct line of questioning with the participants, and was revealed in how the Directors discussed their individual fusion center’s ability to work differently from what is normally referred to as standard policing. Several fusion center Directors in the course of their interview described unique situations posing challenges to their missions, especially focusing on the ability to share and gather information in the course of providing services to their stakeholders and partners. As suggested by the title of this theme, responses revealed how fusion centers “adapted” to complex challenges by leveraging current practices in novel ways, or finding new ways to collaborate, interact with, and establish new partnerships. The “self organizing” perception will be discussed at the end this section, though it pertains to both the individual fusion center organization and the network. It also encompasses a concept expressed by several of the interviewees of how fusion centers as an enterprise need to interact and collaborate with each other in order to form a functional national network of fusion centers.

Several elements were identified contributing to the way interviewees perceived the need to address how their organization could improve information sharing capabilities with groups and organizations. One factor was the fusion center area of responsibility
(AOR) that almost all the Directors who were interviewed said contributed to the unique relationships and challenges specific to their region or state. The Director of a regional fusion center discussed the ethnic and cultural population diversity in his AOR and the global perspective fusion centers face to building relationships and acquiring knowledge and cultural understanding, as he explained:

You know, no one fusion center can just do it all...and this kind of sounds ridiculous, but it’s such a global world we live in. You know, it’s small now. And you have to communicate, you have to collaborate, and isn’t that what we’re all about? [It] is that information sharing and that analysis of that information, and that awareness of what another AOR may have going on, and how that can impact us. Or what another country may have going on and how it can impact us.

He continued,

You know, people often ask us, well why are you sitting in a Homeland Security briefing talking about Syria or Egypt? They don’t understand we have communities here with a significant amount of East Africans. You know, and that East African community here still has ties to that region of the world. How do they feel about it?...Are they sympathetic to those issues that are going on over there? Are they upset that something may have happened over there, and blame the U.S.? They’re in our community. So we need to understand how they feel.

Fusion center outreach and participation with the private sector was revealed as a challenge when discussed by the participants in this study. Several directors, especially those operating state-sponsored fusion centers (see Table 4), indicated the private sector partnerships are critically important to their information sharing outreach and initiatives involving critical structure and cyber security. In particular, private business is cautious when interacting with government and other business interests due to concerns about breaches to corporate intelligence and divulging proprietary business practices.

However, the perspectives shared by most participants in this study indicate that fusion centers have improved their outreach relationships with private business over the last
couple of years. For example, one interesting private sector initiative started by an interviewee, a state operated fusion center Director, involved creating a nonprofit organization:

I think with the explanation that three years ago we really weren’t very interactive with the private sector. And now since I’ve been here we have brought a private sector liaison into the center here. And we are also in the process of creating a – well, actually we already did create a [nonprofit] company between the [fusion center], InfraGard and the FBI, a private sector information sharing group. It was the three of us, the president of InfraGard, myself and a representative from the FBI that actually got together and brainstormed this group, and we kind of created it from scratch. And basically it is designed to share cyber information, cyber threats between our CIKR partners…And that has been one of the biggest obstacles is getting [the private sector] to share information. It’s a work in progress. We’re getting there, but it’s a work in progress.

The fusion center Directors interviewed who operate in states and regions with a high incidence of natural disasters, such as hurricanes or earthquakes, indicated their state and local law enforcement and public safety first responders were already engaged and coordinating efforts among different agencies and disciplines prior to 9/11. These interactions are primarily described as interagency collaborations of resources and effort in preparation of, or in response to, natural disasters. After 9/11, these interagency relationships were viewed differently and to a degree laid the early groundwork establishing an information sharing framework used by some fusion centers. This perspective was discussed by the director of fusion center E1:

In my opinion, it’s a good thing. In the [State] because of our response to hurricanes and other types of disasters, we already had…intergovernmental collaboration. When 9/11 happened, I think it opened our eyes up to really how much more information and how much more support from these agencies [have] benefited us in our response to not only national disasters, but manmade events. It has greatly helped us in more ways than just [as] a fusion center.
Providing a conceptual perspective, the Director of fusion center F reflected on his efforts working with other fusion center Directors and leaders on a draft document outlining a possible path forward for fusion centers in the National Network. He proposed that fusion centers must find a way to coordinate efforts to establish a network, while at the same time acknowledging and incorporating into the process strengths that result from the independence of individual fusion centers. He commented, “that the development of a National Network strategy is both a unique challenge and significant opportunity that will require rigor and creativity.” He went on to explain how developing a network approach for fusion centers can be understood in terms of other complex organization challenges, such as the development of the credit card industry:

[T]he one thing about fusion centers, if you look historically, and this is kind of an obscure example, but back in the late 1960s, major credit cards wouldn’t work efficiently because [several] different banks with different governance boards, and different operating environments [were] competing with each other, and it was a disaster. Nothing was working. It was flawed. [It was a banker], Dee Hock, who…built the modern credit card industry on … a decentralized principle-based operation. [H]is quote is, “Simple, clear purpose and principles give rise to complex intelligent behavior. Complex rules and regulations give rise to simple and stupid behavior.” [H]e got all these competing banks together, and said, “Here are the principles we’re…operating on…[we will] be jointly owned,” and…it worked.

He further explained:

[E]ssentially we’re saying that the National Network of Fusion Centers is a self-organizing, self-governing network that operates on a foundation of common purpose and trusted relationships. It’s decentralized with each member free to innovate and develop operations that are effective in their unique, legal, political and cultural operating environment. I think that’s the way you have to go with this.

Similarly, the Director of fusion center A1 outlined how his state operates their state and regional fusion centers through a decentralized, but coordinated, approach. The model he presented can be viewed as a state level network version of the national network approach as described in the above paragraph:
That’s exactly right. So let me just build the picture of what it’s supposed to look like. So each of the AORs, each of the regions is supposed to understand their domain. They’re supposed to rank and prioritize their own threats, do their own threat assessments, and understand their constituency, build their own TLO programs, run their own suspicious activity reports, and support their own JTTFs. What we do at the state, we’re supposed to take from each of the regions all of this information and aggregate it and create a bigger statewide picture.

Summary

Research findings indicate, based on perspectives of the interviewees, there is a belief and common understanding among the state and local law enforcement and first responder communities that the amount and quality of information sharing has increased dramatically with the advent of fusion centers. Fusion centers appear to be an important contributing factor to breaking down communication barriers which have traditionally hampered information sharing. Most notably, the interdependencies existing within the fusion center network, especially the multiagency and multidiscipline relationships, appear to influence and encourage collaboration. Interestingly, the interviews revealed fusion centers have embraced an entrepreneurial spirit, at least to a degree, in which collaborative partners are viewed as customers and that fusion centers need to understand the customer in order to provide relevant services. It appears the fusion center focus on providing information sharing services to their partners contributed in large part to the shift away from a pure counterterrorism fusion center model to one that incorporates an all-crimes and all-hazards mission. However, some tension was expressed by the interviewees regarding the trade-offs in finding the right balance between the counterterrorism mission and the all-crimes and all-hazards mission. Fusion centers appear to struggle between meeting the counterterrorism requirements of the developing
National Network of Fusion Centers and retaining a level of independence as a state and local center.

Research findings also suggest that fusion centers are expanding their information sharing capabilities proactively by listening to their customer’s expectations and also by understanding their area of responsibility and identifying challenges to building partnerships. Evidence from this research indicates fusion centers work through these challenges and are willing to try unique and novel ways to build partnerships. It was also shown that in some cases fusion centers show sensitivity and understanding to the cultural demographics within their areas of responsibility and this understanding and interaction with diverse communities strengthens collaboration.

Research Question 2: What factors, organizational structures, or management perspectives facilitate fusion center interagency collaboration?

Fusion centers are conceptualized to share critical and strategic information across a number of boundaries in a concerted effort to prevent and detect potential acts of terror. These boundaries involve various federal, state, and local governmental jurisdictions, agencies, disciplines, sub governmental entities, and private sector organizations. The fusion center model is now reality with many of the 78 state and local fusion centers having been in existence for five years or more. Several federal DHS and DOJ guidelines, such as the Fusion Center Guidelines (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006), the Baseline Capabilities for State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008), and the annual fusion center capabilities assessment (DHS, 2013), have identified managerial, organization, and technical elements considered important to the development and operation of each fusion center. At the center of implementing these
directives and operating fusion centers is the role of interagency collaboration. Fusion centers must build boundary spanning relationships with stakeholders and partners in a network environment. This requires the fusion center organization to identify their customers and determine the needs and expectations of those customers with the goal of identifying threats to prevent terrorism.

The discussion about collaboration often focuses on the relationship fusion centers have with partner agencies that are co-located in a fusion center. As will be discussed in this section, co-location partner agencies are an important factor to improved and effective information sharing. However, to accomplish their counterterrorism and all crimes missions fusion centers must find ways to gather information which can then be analyzed. To do this, fusion centers are structured to use the intelligence cycle, a process which relies upon interactive outreach and partnership building so that individuals and agencies have an established or known process to share information with partners, stakeholders, and customers. These relationships extend well beyond the doors of the fusion center and are vital to the data collection efforts fusion centers rely upon to “connect the dots” in their effort to identify threats.

The participants in this research were asked a series of questions relating to how their respective fusion centers establish and maintain collaborative relationships with partners and stakeholders. These questions were designed to elicit the interviewee’s perspectives of their fusion center’s collaboration efforts and also their management approaches to collaboration. Responses revealed several themes showing how certain management perspectives and organizational initiatives have facilitated information sharing. From a policy perspective, it is important to understand how various factors
influence collaboration especially when these factors are shown to support interorganizational collaborative relationships within the fusion center framework.

Six primary themes were identified based on the interviewee responses. These are:

1. Outreach and partnership-building.
2. Interpersonal relationships and trust.
3. Network-building.
4. Fusion centers as learning organizations.
5. Policies and procedures that incorporate and support interorganizational and multi-discipline outreach.
6. Value added services.

The findings revealed that outreach efforts, such as the TLO programs, are highly important to building partnerships among agencies and that this type of outreach helps to integrate multi-jurisdictional and multidiscipline partners into the information sharing process. Interpersonal relationships were described as important. Interviewees indicated that the concept of creating a network and working in a network environment influences collaborative behavior. The image of “trust” and “reciprocity” in relationships emerged as an important theme to establishing reliable and honest partnerships. Several directors described how events or unintended consequences influenced a different way of thinking, where learning occurred, leading to improving relationships and strengthening cooperation efforts. Interestingly, the participants discussed the importance of policies and procedures to establishing long-term reliability in relationships which often was juxtaposed with the perspectives about interpersonal relationships. Another theme was how the interviewees embraced a business perspective for their fusion centers and acknowledged how they strive to provide value added services as a way to remain relevant to their partners and stakeholders. The findings also indicated that having embedded partners working directly in the fusion center facility, especially the federal
partners, provides critical information sharing capabilities to the fusion center. And finally, the participants in this research expressed the importance of accountability to their partners, which is often done through feedback loops to better understand customer needs and the usefulness of fusion center services.

**Outreach and Partnership Building.**

All nine fusion center Directors participating in this research project indicated strongly that much of their efforts aimed at enhancing and improving their fusion center’s information sharing capability and services are directly tied to outreach programs. These outreach programs vary among fusion centers, though it is the terrorism liaison officer (TLO) or similar program that received much of the credit for establishing a wide array of collaborative partnerships. As stated by the Director of fusion center C2, “…the most essential piece of collaboration that we have is a fusion liaison officer program.” These TLO programs have seen tremendous growth in both membership in the diversity of the agencies and disciplines brought into the information sharing sphere. One such program was described by the Director of fusion center G:

> Since 2007, the [fusion center] has supported a robust Terrorism Liaison Program. This program is composed of 60% Law Enforcement from Local, State and Federal Partners, and 40% from non-LE partners such as: Fire, Emergency Management, Public Health, Private Sector, Public Safety Communications, etc. The [fusion center] supports 864 TLO’s statewide as of today. We support TLO’s by serving as a clearinghouse for multi-jurisdictional criminal cases and intelligence support during disasters and crisis.

Several Directors who were interviewed discussed their views on the importance of outreach. These perspectives indicated a well thought out and purpose driven mindset
to how their fusion centers engage, interact, and build long-lasting partnerships. The

Director of fusion center A1 enthusiastically described his position:

Outreach. [T]he first step is outreach! We do a lot of that. We have to go and
educate them. The folks who don’t readily already fit within the IC community,
even at the local, state, and federal levels, we have to go out and educate them and
let them know that we exist. And once we do that, we generally will get them on
our distribution lists, and let them get acquainted with the type of products that we
have, and let them see if and where there’s value to their organization being a part
of this system. And if we can find the sweet spot [where] there is value, then we
look to areas where we can collaborate or we can support them in a direct way, or
vice versa.

The Director continued his thought by explaining that the process of outreach relies upon
personal interaction with each partner or potential partner. When aspects of outreach are
discussed, and especially when this involves services that are offered by the fusion
center, there is a message of entrepreneurialism and customer service that one would
expect to see in a study of private business. This is an important observation because
fusion centers are designed to be different from traditional law enforcement and police
organizations. So outreach is considered more than just a mechanized “checkbox” as
explained by the Director of fusion center A1:

Right. And we don’t like to just check the box. So if we’re going to go out, and
we’re going to meet with somebody, we’re going to try to make that as
meaningful as possible to them and not just to us because, at the end of the day,
what do we want? We want something [and] we’re clear. We wanting something
we want [new partners] to join into the system. We want [them] to buy in.
Because we believe in it, why wouldn’t we? We need them to know that it’s okay
if they don’t, but [inform them of] the benefits they gain if they do. And the trust
that is inherent within the system. So it can’t be a check the box. It has to be very
personal.

And as the Director of fusion center D suggested, there is the very practical side
to collaborative relationships:
And I think when we build relationships and partnerships with other agencies we’re more apt to share and work together than if we just try picking up the phone and calling somebody from another agency… Well, if we’ve developed this relationship I think we get a better response and a better working relationship and information sharing.

Fusion centers offer a variety of products and services to their customers. In the area of services, several of the fusion centers that were part of the study reported they provide a wide range of training to their outreach partners. Such training can cover areas involving counterterrorism, how to report suspicious information to the fusion center, historical understanding of terrorism and its relation to law enforcement, and general law enforcement training with an emphasis on homeland security. Several interviewees discussed the importance providing training has on their effectiveness to engage in outreach and establish partnerships. Often the focus of the training is to increase awareness of these partners who are in the field so they become sensitive to elements and observed activities which might otherwise go unnoticed, and subsequently report suspicious activity to the fusion centers. Their active engagement becomes an important data collection tool for fusion centers. Keeping in mind that the information sharing is a two-way street, as one director put it, “So the challenge is, for us internally and externally, to let them know: 1) We’re here for them and, 2) We will provide the robust training. And we make sure they have a voice in getting their information back up through to the federal entities.” Likewise, the Director of fusion center C2 commented on the importance of having trained individuals in the field as part of the collaborative network and who understand the specialized information needs of fusion centers:

So the role is for us to receive classified and unclassified information, then let the information disseminate [as appropriate], and then gather other local intelligence. Sometimes it’s tough to do, but our fusion liaison officer program is growing
[and] that will be a better mechanism. [If] I just call an agency and say, “I want to talk to someone in your criminal intelligence area,” more than likely, you’re going to get somebody that’s a crime analyst. They think different than an intelligence analyst. By having these people that are trained, they’re networked, ingrained in the law enforcement agencies, [and] they know why we’re calling. They know what we’re asking for. And they will follow up and get us additional details. But without having that network…established, that’s a tough thing to do across 240 [local] databases.

The private sector relationship with fusion centers poses unique challenges to information sharing, and this has been discussed in earlier parts of this dissertation. Fusion centers must engage with the private sector as business and commerce are the largest sectors of the economy, where a variety of business transactions occur, and it is the private sector that owns most of the critical infrastructure nationwide. In the same way that law enforcement and first responders are the eyes and ears of the fusion centers in their respective communities, it is the same with industrial security and representatives of private industry who interact with people on a daily basis. Education outreach and building partnerships with the private sector is important, as mentioned by the Director of fusion center A1:

We have one of our coordinators here, he’s going out to all 16 sectors and meeting with all of the associations. We’re building distribution lists. We’re educating them on the state threat assessment system and the fusion system process. We’re getting them looped into the appropriate civilian courses on indicators and how to report [suspicious activity].

Outreach efforts can be complicated when working with many partner members and agencies having different levels of clearance to receive bulletins and other products from the fusion centers. Though there is increased sharing of law enforcement sensitive information, some products still must be controlled and certainly this applies to classified national security information. The Director of a state fusion center described how his
center developed a methodology to disseminate products to partners based on their level of clearance. This innovative process allows for efficient distribution of the products and eliminates much of the confusion and sets the expectation about who should be provided a particular product:

Yes, it’s multifaceted, but with state partners you’ll hear us to refer to ILO’s and ISL’s, which are different but similar. ILO’s are Intelligence Liaison Officers that do not have a security clearance. We decided to change the name to make it easier for dissemination of our products. ISL’s are Interagency Fusion Liaisons. Those folks we meet with weekly and they make up most of the [outreach members]. Our local partners, we really collaborate with them through our regional fusion centers because they’re the touch point to the locals. [T]ribal would be very similar, and also the private sector. We do this [outreach] in three ways: Through our regional fusion centers, through our partnerships with the private sector and then through critical infrastructure in the prevention side.

During the course of this research several the interviewees expressed the importance of having good critical feedback from their stakeholders and partners. Without good feedback about how fusion centers engage, support, and provide services to partner agencies and other stakeholders, the situation becomes, as one Director put it, “a black hole.” In many ways, the perspectives provided by the directors who were interviewed indicated not only must fusion centers “sell themselves,” but that the fusion process is ongoing, recursive, and constantly building capacity. This thought was explained by the Director of fusion center B2:

I think with the state, local and tribal, we have 17 contributing agencies. So we’ve made it, from the onset, our goal to reach out to these agencies and to basically show them the benefit of having resources within the fusion center…and what the fusion center can offer them; not only as a contributing agency, but also [as] a customer. They are right at the forefront of the information sharing process. They contribute to, and in that contribution, they immediately get information and intelligence that’s pushed out through the fusion center. With respect to our private sector partners, you know, I think we’re a model fusion center for private sector partnerships.
He continued:

[This is done in a] number of ways. Through those relationships, through verbal communications, through them asking us for things, from us pushing it out and saying, “Is this helpful? Is this hitting the mark? Does this give you information that you need? Have you been able to take this information and implement any kind of action?” So, through all of [our interactions]...[W]e make sure that we’re asking those questions when we meet with them, when we talk with them, in these monthly meetings that we have, especially with our private sector partnerships. “Are you getting what you need from us? Is it actionable?” Is it something that you can use? Or are we wasting your time?

Interpersonal Relationships and Trust

Fusion centers, like many organizations, are comprised of people who are influenced by many factors, such as discreet management qualities and bureaucratic direction, while other influences involve less formal institutions, such as cultural beliefs, personality traits, work ethic, and organizational cohesion. The fusion center model has a rich background that includes formal guidelines, technical assistance, and other instructional documents to help guide fusion center leadership with managing such a complex enterprise. The DHS since 2010 has conducted a formal assessment of each recognized fusion center. These assessments provide important and useful information about functional capabilities in the fusion center organization; however, they do not provide measures of individual and organizational personality and how this might impact or influence fusion center operations and the ability to successfully meet its mission. Given that fusion centers are based in part on law enforcement organizational models (such as task forces), it is not surprising this research revealed that interpersonal relationships and trust emerged as major themes based on the participant responses.
Without exception each of the nine fusion center directors who participated in this research project expressed the importance of interpersonal relationships to establishing effective information sharing and interagency collaboration within their fusion center network. Several behavioral and social traits comprise what is normally defined as “interpersonal relationships.” One such trait, “trust,” was specifically mentioned in several contexts during the interviews. For this reason, trust is specifically highlighted in this section. However, the role of interpersonal relationships encompass several areas which interviewees elaborated upon and these will be presented in terms of the various aspects of informal behaviors and other traits affecting interagency collaboration, information sharing, and fusion center success.

Fusion centers function based on interdependencies and dependencies, many of which rely upon human action and decisions impacting the flow of information fusion centers receive from partner agencies. Likewise, fusion center personnel make decisions every day about communicating with partners and stakeholders. The nature of intelligence and information sharing requires considerable interaction with partners, stakeholders, and customers in the fusion center network. Several Directors who were interviewed provided perspectives indicating their belief that personal interaction and relationships are critically important to their fusion center success, such as this comment by the Director of fusion center F, “…as you well know, it’s all personality based. [Its about] building those structured relationships with people you can call up and [who] know you by a first name basis, and you can trust to share information.” Collaborative relationships that build on a customer service attitude can be difficult to maintain and as
the Director of fusion center A1 suggested, there is no steady-state to interagency collaboration:

And everybody who comes in has to be brought into that same philosophy. And that’s absolutely right. And everybody has to be taught to nurture it. [O]ne little dynamic can ruin an entire collaborative effort. One bad personality can ruin everything.

Senior leadership brings to an organization certain philosophies, style, and personality traits that have a tremendous impact on an organization’s direction and image. Just as important, leadership values are adopted by employees and members of the organization. Several interviewees were very clear about their belief that fusion center leadership must have a positive and active approach to interagency collaboration. Two directors discussed challenges they faced after taking over leadership of their respective fusion centers. Many of these challenges were attributed to prior leadership’s inability to fully appreciate the importance of interpersonal relationships to creating an information sharing network supported through interagency collaboration. As one state fusion center director explained:

I think that’s the critical part. One is you can bring all these people together…under one roof, but the personalities of the people either make it or break it. And I can give you some examples that prior to me, actually prior to the previous fusion center director before me, so back two, that person almost caused the agencies [partnering in the fusion center] to basically leave. Just because of his philosophies [and] his lack of desire to work with other agencies and…coordinate with other agencies.

He continued:

And then there was the director just prior to me…who was kind of a status quo [person]. He didn’t really cause things to move forward, but he didn’t really cause issues either. And then when I got here [is] when we started bringing in health and emergency management and tribal. So even though everybody was under one roof, I think personalities of the individuals played a huge part in that.
This thought was reaffirmed by the Director of fusion center B2 who commented that his personal involvement with fusion center customers along with the image he projects is important to open communications:

As a bureau commander, I need to know our customers as well, and they need to feel comfortable with me, comfortable coming to me if they have an issue. And that’s something that’s part of my relationship with them. They need to know who I am. They need to have my contact numbers. They need to know that I’m receptive to their concerns. You put a lot of trust and faith in your folks, and it’s not just your people. Sometimes it’s your systems. Or sometimes it’s what you have set up.

An interesting perspective that emerged during the course of this research was the importance of the intelligence analysts to fostering collaborative relationships among the various agencies, disciplines and jurisdictions in support of the fusion center enterprise. As with many individuals who work in the fusion center environment, but especially the intelligence analysts, these employees act as collaboration emissaries and they are often the service providers to the fusion center partners and stakeholders. For example, the Director of fusion center F stated, “We embed analysts in the major task forces. The analyst does two things. One, they provide a service, which gives them credibility and helps them develop trusted relationships. [Second] they gather intelligence and [produce] a series of gang products.” Similarly, the same Director described how his analyst establishes a positive image with partners and stakeholders:

It has some impact, but I have a couple of superstar analysts that people love. In fact, I’ll go to speak at a group and I’ll ask law enforcement, “Who knows what the [name of fusion center] is?” and maybe 30 percent will raise their hand. And then I’ll say, “Who knows [name of analyst]?” They all raise their hand. So a good criminal intelligence analyst will help build those collaborative relationships.
One particular behavioral trait, “trust,” was often discussed or mentioned by the interviewees in the context of collaboration and partnership building. In a way, what was revealed is the element of trust in the collaborative environment appears to be all but required to have an effective and efficient information sharing environment. To use a metaphor, in the sharing of information, collaboration might be viewed as the venue for the exchange, whereas trust becomes the medium of exchange. The context of how the interviewees described the importance of trust to their relationships with partners and stakeholders indicated they see trust providing reliability to information sharing. Additionally, informal and formal relationships built on trust and reciprocity can provide efficiencies to the organization. The Director of fusion center A2 stated succinctly, “we are only as good as that trust factor,” and similarly the Director of B1 said, “when you talk about sharing information, it ultimately comes back to relationships and trust.” This also relates to effectiveness and efficiencies as stated by the fusion center G Director:

These relationships are the key to success. With so many levels and sources of information, it is not possible to have visibility on all events all the time. Trusted partners provide us critical notifications and information during investigations and responses to incidents. The Fusion Center model completely relies on this ability…The stronger the relationships/partnerships are with outside agencies, the easier it is to request information when needed. Without a statewide database for criminal activity, I must rely on my partners to provide information and intelligence directly.

Establishing and maintaining a collaborative environment and building trust in relationships was revealed as requiring ongoing efforts by all members of the fusion center organization and network. Interviewees discussed in detail how it is not just their leadership style and direction, but more importantly, it is the people comprising the entire
organization and also the larger network relationships who support and influence
collaboration and build trusted relationships. “...it all comes down to personnel that are
behind this that make it work,” was one such statement by the A2 Director. Focus on the
internal fusion center organization and giving employees the ability to make decisions
based on their knowledge of the job and what is needed to be successful was described by
the Director of fusion center A2, “One of my old mentors put it best, if you want success,
there are three things you’ve got to give your team or your people: the ability to enlist,
entrust, and empower.” In looking at the relationships fusion centers have with their
partners outside the organization, the Director of fusion center C2 commented that
sharing trust involves all parties:

[T]he common denominator is relationships in this region. And it’s knowing
people as the denominator. Other than knowing someone, is trusting someone,
and building that trust. [I]t’s a two-way thing. It’s not just me trusting them. It’s
them knowing and trusting me. That’s the common denominator for collaboration
that exists in our culture.

Some interviewees indicated the often tenuous conditions they face by relying, as
they must, on a broad collaborative interorganizational network. They commented on the
inherent risks involved by relying on trust. The reputation of the fusion center enterprise
could be at risk by the inappropriate actions of a single individual within the fusion center
organization. Likewise, relationships built on trust can falter and organizations relying
on such networks face a degree of uncertainty in the collaborative process. The Director
of fusion center A2 discussed this risk factor:

Well you could face failure and I addressed this while speaking at [a local
university] yesterday. About the cascading effects of trust, [that] are always high.
Better relationships; better integration; confidence and respect for the
organization. You need that in the public arena. But once you lose that trust
factor and you start cutting corners… [it] is hard to…regain it back.
This particular section on interpersonal relationships and trust has disaggregated several personality traits and behaviors as a way to identify specific elements that were identified in this research as important to creating a collaborative environment. However, as has been discussed throughout this dissertation, fusion centers are complex and interdependent organizations that interact with a multitude agencies and individuals who sometimes have competing interests or directives different from those of the fusion center. Such competition and possible conflict are neither unexpected nor insurmountable. The participants indicated their leadership qualities and perspectives on interorganizational collaboration are important factors supporting their fusion center’s mission to gather and share information. Additionally, the service aspect of the fusion center organization is highly dependent on the employees having a shared vision with leadership. The Director of fusion center B2 explained his perspective on collaboration and trust and how established relationships can work through challenges when there is a shared belief in a common goal:

Well, in my mind, it’s going to always be about those relationships. You know, in times of crisis, when things are really happening, the ability to pick up the phone and know the person on the other line and know their capabilities and resources, and what they can offer you or what you can offer them when they’re in time of need, is the most important. [W]e have to rely upon that… And we should all have the common goal and that is homeland security, keeping our community safe….So the belief in what we’re doing, I think, more than anything, influences me to continue that collaboration, to continue that relationship building, to make sure that even though I disagree with someone or they don’t like the way we’re doing something, that we still understand and we still act professional, and we still have that instance where, if something were to happen, we’ll put our differences aside, and we know we can still rely upon each other to get the job done. And that job is to keep this community safe and our state safe, and nation.
Network Building

Based on interviewee perspectives, a theme directed toward network-building emerged as an important factor to facilitating interagency collaboration in fusion centers. This theme of network building is similar to the discussion in the previous two sections about outreach and interpersonal relationships. However, discussions with the interviewees revealed a particular focus on the network concept. This is interesting because it shows acceptance of the fusion center philosophy, which requires establishing many partnerships with various agencies and disciplines and often extends across jurisdictional boundaries. Accepting the challenge of adopting a network design in the complex fusion center environment is not easy because, as several participants stated, to do it right is financially expensive, requires specialized personnel, and specialized resources. Additionally, participants discussed their concerns with perceived risks and uncertainty of working in a network. Collaboration was noted as a way to overcome some of these challenges by sharing resources and establishing information sharing relationships among partners who share the common goal of protecting people in their communities and preventing terrorism.

The fusion center culture has evolved over the past several years due in large part to the direction and guidance provided by the DHS. This includes documents such as the *Fusion Center Guidelines* (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006), and initiatives such as the National Fusion Center Assessment. These documents and assessments were mentioned during the course of the interviews and were seen as helpful to fusion center leadership in setting a tone and direction for creating a fusion center network. The fusion center annual assessment was specifically credited by several of the interviewees as helping to
set technical standards for all fusion centers. This was supported by statement from the
Director of fusion center A1 who commented on how the federal guidance has helped
unify the fusion center landscape:

We have different mission sets. We have different customers. That’s hard to do. I
think, again, guidelines have served the fusion system well. You have the
information sharing guidelines. You have all the BJA products that have come
out over the years to support the effort. I think that is good. This new national
assessment model they’ve done over the last three years, I think it’s appropriate
because it tests the intelligence cycle, the critical operation capabilities. That’s
your intelligence cycle. And can you do the basics? Can you gather? Can you
analyze? Can you disseminate?

The Director of fusion center F mentioned he is working with other fusion centers
and the National Fusion Center Association to build on existing federal guidelines with
strong input from the state and local perspective to further improve the network:

That’s been championed by the fusion centers themselves. There’s a pretty good
draft document that outlines the mission, the concepts, the principles of the fusion
centers. And then following that, I believe they’re going to develop a federal
strategy to complement the national strategy. So bottom line is…I think the
COCs and the ECs and the annual assessment of fusion centers provides enough
guidance for fusion centers to stay focused and to stay within the rails.

A Director who is a retired FBI Special Agent, discussed how his interaction with
a state fusion center had provided substantial network support to his JTTF (Joint
Terrorism Task Force) operations. He mentioned how this interaction influenced his
perspective about the importance of the state and local component to building a network
approach to information sharing that can be used to identify threats and prevent terrorism
and other crimes. This experience brings perspective to the job and can influence the
collaborative direction. The Director of fusion center F provided this insight based on his
past experience:
When I was developing the FBI’s field intelligence group in [a major city], fusion centers were just coming about. So they weren’t real significant. When I became a JTTF supervisor subsequent to that, I viewed the fusion center as a perfect complement to what we were doing. We [had] very limited staffing and we were focused once we had intelligence, we needed to either investigate it or assess it…I utilized the fusion center for trip wires. In fact, I think I was one of the first JTTF supervisors to actually put that in my annual report to headquarters. When they were asking me, “How am I establishing trip wires to detect and prevent terrorism throughout the community?” I had maybe six agents on my JTTF. I had 80 fusion center intelligence liaison officers that I could go train, tell them what we’re looking for, and within days, they would be reporting back. So I saw the fusion centers as a huge force multiplier for the gathering of intelligence to detect and prevent terrorism activity.

Based on the interviews, fusion center directors indicated they had received generally good feedback from the federal partners such as the FBI on their combined efforts to both gather and share information. Fusion centers are designed to break down barriers and provide ways to share information both horizontally with the federal government and vertically with state, local, and private sector partners. Participation of the FBI through the local JTTF is often credited as important to building the fusion center network. For example, the Director of fusion center A2 discussed his experience working with the JTTF and outlined how the fusion center network approach complements JTTF activities:

The JTTF’s were never meant to do what the fusion center is doing. The JTTF’s were never meant to disseminate information; never meant to train, or to have that really strong connectivity with the locals. Although locals are part of the JTTF’s. We get that. But what we have done is that we have become the eyes and ears of the Joint Terrorism Task Force...[W]e’ve integrated very much with them [and] the field intelligence groups. Their SCIF (Secure Compartmented Information Facility) is integrated with our SCIF and that’s exactly what the Joint Terrorism Task Force has needed.

He continued, adding that his fusion center’s TLO program takes a network presence:

We do it in several ways. The first one I want to address is our terrorism liaison officer program. We have a very robust process where we train approximately,
on a calendar year, about 1,300 local, state and federal officers in the TLO process. We train them in counterterrorism, domestic terrorism and 13 other topics that relate to law enforcement issues, to include human trafficking, and after-shooter investigations. And through that process, in the [several] counties that we cover, those officers become our network. They reach out to [the fusion center] through the suspicious activity reports that they report to us.

An interesting factor emerging from this research was how the participants described their motivations to operate in a network environment such as a fusion center. Several descriptions provided during the interviews outlined in some detail how fusion centers conduct information sharing services supporting partner agencies and how this information was used to counter criminal activity or provide situational awareness. Interviewees indicated they are motivated by several factors and not only accept, but believe in, the network concept. Understanding the need to build a network influences the desire to collaborate and also break down barriers that might otherwise prevent collaboration. One example is this description of motivation and success provided by the Director of fusion center A2:

I’ll tell you what motivates me is see[ing] what we do in our special threat assessments. It motivates me when …I have a sheriff say, “Thank you for passing on that information. That made a difference to our investigators,” or “Through an intelligence bulletin, by the way, that your center put out, we made a car stop because of that bulletin.” And then, on the reciprocal side, when the FBI…says, “We generated over 100 threat assessments based on your information. That’s information that we never would have had, [and cases] that we never would have opened.” Now maybe those threat assessments didn’t go to a full field investigation, but guess what? They opened up other cases where they were able to develop sources.

He continued:

So when you hear those performance measures that lead to successes, then you realize this does make a difference. And in the world that we work in, the work that we do is not going to be on the front page of the New York Times, L.A. Times or the [local paper]. It’s the tedious, day-to-day information work that we do every day that can make a difference. And it’s putting these little pieces
together and all of a sudden, it blossoms into an investigation. And maybe, just maybe, down the road it stops that one major threat stream that we intervene on, that stops a major counterterrorism issue. That motivates me.

The “old way” that law enforcement has customarily relied upon to share information, through an informal relationship based process, was suggested by several the interviewees as being functional but often unreliable. Consequently, law enforcement individuals who didn’t have the right connections couldn’t easily participate in this informal network. As discussed throughout this dissertation, the network environment for fusion centers requires both formal structure and interpersonal relationships to ensure information sharing is conducted effectively and efficiently so partnerships and stakeholders are actively brought into the information sharing process and not cut out.

The Director of fusion center E1 who has several years in law enforcement provided his perspective on the importance of a formalized fusion center network:

It’s funny you say this because I was just giving a talk last week to a regional group in training, and I used the analogy that is very real to me. [Information sharing] was being done before, it was just on a very informal basis, which meant that sometimes it was very successful and sometimes it meant that it went horribly wrong. So the way it was done was trough who you knew. If you had been to school, training or had relationships with somebody in another state or another city and kept up those relationships, you were able to get information quick and amaze people with how you could solve a case or get a picture of somebody who lived in another state and came to our state to commit a crime. [However], there was no formalized mechanism or communication channel for that to be done, so if you were that person who hadn’t had the ability or didn’t have that network, then you would fail at your attempts. To me, it’s just common sense. [The fusion center concept] formalizes those communications with other states and agencies and other disciplines so that we can share what needs to be shared.

**Fusion Centers As Learning Organizations**

Fusion centers operate in complex and interdependent environments. In much the same way as a private business, fusion centers work to understand their customers’ needs
and try to find ways to accommodate those needs. A common refrain stated by the interviewees was fusion centers and their leadership cannot “rest on their laurels” or accept the status quo as a long-term business practice model. The research revealed that fusion centers are constantly challenged by new and emerging events or new technology, by new partnerships, or confront changing world views and perspectives as the organization interacts with the external environment. Though not a direct line of questioning during the interview process, several participants described challenging situations they personally faced in their leadership positions and had to address. What emerged was a theme pointing to how fusion center organizations “learn” from their environment and interactions. The learning was often transformed into a new initiative or policy that could better serve the customer and also help the fusion center accomplish its mission.

The following discussion provides evidence supporting this theme. Fusion center Directors participating in this study indicated both a philosophical understanding toward organizational learning and also used action based results to address customer and stakeholder needs. The Director of fusion center B2 recognized these challenges to the fusion process by stating, “You need to evolve, you need to change. You need to recognize that first and foremost.” He continued, elaborating on this perspective:

I think really getting them to see the benefit of being part of a fusion center. You know, fusion centers continue to evolve and change and mature. You would think after all of these years we would really have it dialed in and really have a national network kind of a strategy. But we don’t. So we are constantly learning and, hey, now something new comes along like cyber. Is that something we should get into? Or are we just going… to that shiny object and that new biggest thing? When really, what is our role in cyber?

And he continued,
So if we don’t have all of that down and we don’t look like we know what we’re doing with respect to those programs, you know, how are you going to convince people that you have something to offer?

Interviewees pointed out that often a standard review of fusion center operations and evaluating the information sharing environment revealed concerns about a particular policy or direction of a fusion center. In some instances the analysis pointed to an information sharing gap which could be addressed by extending existing services to meet a customer’s need. The gradual redefinition of fusion centers away from purely counterterrorism centers to incorporate an all-crimes and all-hazards approach to information sharing brought about a new way of understanding the fusion center concept. This includes the way partnerships are developed and maintained, understanding customer needs, and the changes required to support information sharing, as stated by the Director of fusion center A1:

The all hazard [approach], and there was a second kind of [learning]. Over the last year or so we all began to understand the efficiency of resources and deficiencies of resources and the connectivity that we had to have between emergency operation centers and the regional centers certainly during times of crisis. And that information sharing was appropriate and the appropriate people were hitting the right information. So what we did was, and certainly at the state level, we crafted our protocols. And the protocols allow for us to put a what we call a technical specialist, [who is] an intelligence analyst, within the state emergency operations center…during activation.

Similarly, the Director of fusion center D pointed out how customer desires for an all-crimes, all-hazards fusion center impacted his decision to make changes:

So, I just realized if we want to be what our partners wanted us to be…our customers wanted us to be an all-crimes, all-hazards [fusion center]; well, the only way to do that is to have representation from more areas than we had, which was traditionally fire and law enforcement. And that’s when I started bringing in health, emergency management, [and] the tribal component.
After action reviews for large disasters and other high-profile emergency response situations involving public safety and law enforcement create conditions for learning about sharing resources and interagency engagement. The Director of fusion center D discussed how his fusion center was brought into a conversation with his state Forester after a large wildfire event in the state had taken the lives several firefighters. The Director realized his fusion center had access to technology that can help in the event of the next wildfire, which he offered in support: “If we have a major fire and you deploy a command post and incident command, we can provide [technology] that can track your firefighters out in the field.”

The same director discussed another situation in which an element of “shared learning” occurred when a police chief who was not all that familiar with the fusion center saw firsthand the benefits of having a trained intelligence officer on scene to assist with information sharing during a child abduction case:

In [a major city] there was a child abduction and the first intel officer on scene was a fire department personnel from a different city that helped the [major city] Police Department. The chief was so impressed with that that they created a group of TLOs that respond to all their major events now.

Service improvements to accommodate customers’ expectations about the types of products disseminated and the number products disseminated by the fusion center was mentioned by some directors as requiring their attention. Managing the vast amount of data and information distributed by fusion centers has been criticized by some customers and stakeholders as being “out of control.” Likewise, interviewees expressed concern that if their products are not customized probably they may not be read, which is a major
problem to the information sharing model. The Director of fusion center E1 explained how he and his deputy are working to address this issue:

Yes. We’re always concerned with that. A discussion of push versus pull of information has been a big one since we started here a year and a couple months ago. We’re trying to use systems that allow our customers to pull the information that they want specific to them and try to greatly reduce how much we push out to them. We still have to push out those higher level issues and BOLO’s and events. You still run the risk [of excessive information], but we’re trying to be very sensitive to that.

Another example of this learning process was provided by the Director of fusion center A2 in which he described introducing a new threat review process to his fusion center that he had once used when employed by the FBI:

The TRP is the Threat Review Process that the FBI started using I guess about two years ago when I was [with the FBI]. It was mandated through Washington, D.C. It’s a great process by the way. So my center and the [other fusion centers in the state] all have adopted that process because it gives you an analytical backdrop and a process to turn to when you go to your stakeholders, your chiefs and sheriffs. And in our case, the governor…and the HSA. [We can] say, “We have identified these threats in our region and here are the state threats, [and] here is the process that we use,” kind of a review prioritization process or TRP.

Community outreach is another area in which fusion centers were shown to have learned from interaction with various communities and individuals. As discussed earlier in this dissertation, fusion centers use various programs to build trusted relationships with groups and individuals covering a wide array of disciplines and organizations including private sector organizations and nonprofits. Given that fusion centers incorporate aspects of community oriented policing it is not surprising part of this learning process comes from direct interaction and feedback from community organizations and groups. For example, the Director of fusion center B2 explained how he learned the “terrorism” title
used in his fusion center’s TLO program was considered insensitive to members of the Muslim community:

We went from calling our outreach program TLO, terrorism liaison officers, to FLOs, fusion liaison officers. And I’ll tell you why. We were at last Ramadan, some of our TLOs, [now FLOs] were at a mosque, and they were approached by some members of the mosque, and they said, “Hi, I’m [a member of the community]. What do you do?” And [the officers] said, “Well, I’m a TLO.” They asked, “What’s a TLO?” They said, “Terrorism liaison.” They were immediately taken aback. They were like, “We’re not terrorists. We are Muslim, but we’re not terrorists. Why would you have terrorist liaison officers?” So like I say, sometimes it’s not the person or what the person says. Sometimes it’s your systems or your programs that you have in place, that you really have to take a look at and see if that’s tearing down those relationships or potentially doing harm.

In a similar situation, the Director of fusion center B2 explained how he and his team came to understand the value of learning about cultural norms and traditions that directly influence his fusion centers community outreach to the Muslim community. He stated:

[W]e just recently started what we call a FET team, which is a female engagement team…. We had a huge gap there. We were missing that relationship, building that contact with female Muslims. Because in that culture, in that religion, the females cannot talk to male officers. So especially during Ramadan, when we’re in the mosque and we’re going to visit them. [W]ho knows the most about a lot of things, and that is the women who are in those communities. Very influential. But there are rules, and they follow those rules. So we brought in a female FLO to start engaging that portion of the community that we just were missing.

Policies and Procedures That Incorporate and Support Interorganizational and Multidiscipline Outreach

The research findings showed certain policies and procedures are important contributions to how fusion centers establish, measure, and maintain interorganizational collaborative relationships. Based on the interviews, several directors indicated their fusion center concept of operation (CONOPS) and strategic plans incorporated specific
language detailing goals and objectives for interagency and interorganizational outreach and partnership building. The use of memorandums of understanding (MOU), memorandums of agreement (MOA), and Interlocal Agreements were also mentioned as important elements to building their collaborative fusion center enterprise.

The MOU solidifies relationships and sets expectations between the fusion center and its partners, the CONOPS sets goals and objectives over the long-term and helps to establish collaborative relationships. Together these two formal documents are used to establish interagency collaborative relationships by holding parties accountable, especially the fusion center, to stated goals and objectives. The MOU codifies relationships and adds durability and tenure to these relationships in the information sharing environment and reduces the risks associated with relying solely on informal relationships. As stated by the Director of fusion center E1 regarding use of MOUs, “I think they are important to lay the groundwork and frame out the expectations for participation.” Using MOUs to establish partnership expectations was also supported by the Director of fusion center A1, “it memorializes our commitment, and it memorializes the expectations and the asset and the work that we’re promising… it also serves as a mini road map.” The A1 Director explained his perspective in more detail:

Absolutely. We do use [MOUs]. Those are the backbone. Most people are comfortable with those. They’re familiar with them. They’re easy to get through legal for the most part. We use them to make arrangements for having folks come into the center. If we wanted to institute a longer term initiative [for certain projects], we would use it to outline the roles and responsibilities. Our governance board for the center is built on an MOU…IIt is a very swift vehicle in the world in which we’re working when we’re trying to move relationships forward, and we’re trying to be proactive and not playing catch up, and we want to ignite something or institute a new program policy partnership, we can use the MOU, and we can do it in about a day to get something set up. So I think it’s a
very important vehicle. It’s user friendly. People in this industry, they know it, they understand it. So I am a supporter of the MOU.

The Director of fusion center B2 shared his perspective on the value of using MOUs:

Why do we use them? I think it sets, to some extent, the expectations. It gives you guidelines with which to operate. You have to have an agreement as to what each agency is going to do to continue this relationship, what each agency is going to contribute at bare minimum. Of course, outside of those MOUs, oftentimes they do more than what those MOUs could just say. But it gives you those guidelines. Number 1, it satisfies the legal folks.

The use of MOUs in fusion centers can be extensive. For example, the director of fusion center C2 stated, “So we have around 175 Interlocal agreements or MOUs with different government entities across the region.” Not all fusion center directors stated they used as many agreements. However, all interviewees indicated they use types of agreements in some fashion and often MOUs are used when personnel from outside agencies are assigned to the fusion center. The Director of fusion center D outlined his fusion center’s use of the MOU:

We have Memorandums of Understanding with all the agencies that are actually housed here in the fusion center. And then we have Memorandums of Understanding with some of the agencies that we’ve provided equipment to, or they’ve got to provide so much time towards the fusion center activities. And then some agencies we do not have Memorandum of Understandings with…could be TLOs out there, but we don’t provide them equipment, therefore they’re not mandated to provide a certain amount of time with the fusion center. But all of our agencies in the center itself, whether it be state, local, or federal, we have Memorandums of Understanding with.

While the use of these agreements were credited by the interviewees for helping their fusion centers move forward with information sharing collaborations with agencies and individuals not under the direct authority of the fusion centers home agency, MOUs do have limitations. The Director of a regional fusion center pointed to some concerns
his agency has with an MOU agreement with the FBI regarding information sharing, which appears to be somewhat common concern among fusion centers:

From a state and local perspective, and from major city chiefs’ perspective, it’s felt that there’s not the reciprocity there that needs to be. In other words, it’s felt that the Feds, specifically the FBI and the JTTF, get a lot of information from us, get a lot of value out of the information, and they’ve always been hesitant to share the information that they have with the state and locals. And the latest example of that is Boston. I honestly think that Boston kind of drove home the fact that we really need to take a look at this MOU and how the FBI shares information and distributes information and works in conjunction with state and locals.

Participants in this research indicated having a working document, such as a CONOPS or strategic plan, was beneficial to building collaborative interagency relationships. Interviewee perspectives reflected these documents provide “guidance” to outreach efforts, such as described by the Director of fusion center C2: “The CONOPS is an outline establishing relationships with other jurisdictions [and the] outreach we do. We have a program that’s focused on community outreach, one to explain our mission for the public, the other for our stakeholders.” Similarly, the Director of fusion center A1 stated how his agency CONOPS supports the fusion center mission:

It helps us accomplish missions. And one of our mission sets is establishing relationships…we do have a section in there on partnerships and outreach. We have an outreach plan. We have an outreach and communications plan. We have policies and procedures that dictate how we go and do outreach, what our primary mission is for outreach. One of the unique things we did was there’s a federal requirement as part of the COCs, and one of the enabling capabilities, if you’re familiar with those, is that you do privacy, civil liberty/civil rights privacy outreach program.

Both the CONOPS and strategic plans are considered “living documents” as they are usually updated periodically or when conditions impacting the plans change substantively. The Director of fusion center G stated his fusion center strategic plan is “updated and adjusted annually,” while his center’s CONOPS “is updated yearly and
adjusted to reflect our capability, staffing, and funding.” He also indicated these
documents are provided to the fusion center partners for input and review. This type of
collaborative decision-making in the fusion center process of establishing policies and
procedures impacting aspects of the fusion center enterprise was a shared perspective
among the interviewees. This thought was reinforced by the Director of fusion center
A2:

The CONOPS…They give us guidance, internally. And I think they give us a
way forward as far as how we identify our priorities. In this case, to our
customers. So I would say yes. A Concept of Operations is critically important if
you want to move forward. Not only, as I said internally, but externally. Because
it gives you that roadmap to follow. That’s not to say that those CONOPS cannot
change because the can. And they should. Depending on the threat matrix, the
threat streams that you see year to year.

And the Director of fusion center B2 explained how the CONOPS provides direction to
his fusion center on building relationships:

On the strategic plan and CONOPS…Yes, that’s the purpose of those, for the
fusion center. How does the CONOPS help establish relationships? So within
those goals and those objectives, we detail the strategies and tactics of what
basically each part of the fusion center, the TLO program, the CT side of the
house, responsibilities are. And that is primarily on the TLO side, the outreach,
the distribution of information, the intake of information and intelligence, the
analysis of information and intelligence, and how that is distributed to our
partners.

Value Added Services

The principal role of the fusion center is to gather information and raw data,
analyze this information, and disseminate usable intelligence to partners and customers to
support both strategic and tactical efforts to prevent, detect, and deter terrorism and
criminal activity. Conducting these activities and providing information-sharing services
is not costless – valuable resources are consumed and there is a cost to the time expended
in collaborating with partners to get the information. Do fusion center customers perceive there is added value to the products and services they receive from the fusion center? This implicit question was revealed during the research and establishes this theme. All nine fusion center Directors interviewed discussed the importance of providing value-added services and products to their customers. The interviewees indicated not only was it important to have a perception of value to fusion center activities, but just as important, such performance must be measureable. They also indicated creating value-added services and products requires diverse collaborative relationships to include customers from different disciplines and agencies. As the director of fusion center A2 commented:

Very rarely will someone say, “We’re going to cut this fusion center process.” If we get away from that and start doing things that are not germane to helping our state and local partners, and by the way, to the federal government, we lose ground. So because of that, I spend a lot of time in that area. Very robust.

He continued:

And I think it’s because of what we produce and I think they see these other [partner]agencies and see the benefit of continuing that relationship. Because I think they get value out of it. If they get no value out of it, then they start to lose interest. Everybody is strapped for the most precious resource, and that is manpower. So it’s like any relationship, you have to work at it every single day, and if you don’t, little things start to slip away. So if our customers and our contributing agencies and our partners don’t see that benefit from having their people here, or at least having a relationship with the fusion center, I think we would cease to exist.

The Director of fusion center F made a point to say his fusion center product dissemination is not a haphazard process and that care is taken to ensure value. He stated, “When I tell people, ‘If you get something from us, it’s going to have value and relevance. Otherwise, you’re not going to get it’…And we have a debate every time we
get ready to send out a product.” Reinforcing this thought, the Director of fusion center B2 provided insight to the importance of creating value to information and intelligence products and providing practical services:

And we have to ensure that they get value from what we’re pushing out, the information we’re pushing out, the programs we support, the outreach that we do, the training that we conduct, especially in the private sector; the Building Communities of Trust [program], behavioral detection observation training that we give to the hotels, to the fire department, to that private sector so that they can be a force multiplier for all of us.

Establishing and tracking fusion center performance is increasingly important to the federal government. Performance metrics are used in the annual national fusion center assessment and these numbers are used to support the DHS budget requests for continued grant funding of fusion centers. As noted by several directors interviewed for this project, there is a very real likelihood the homeland security grant funds used to support fusion centers will diminish substantially in the coming years. Consequently, the majority of fusion center funding must eventually rely upon state and local government revenue sources. Fusion centers will need to show how value added services are provided to their customers and that services do not duplicate services provided by other agencies. The Director of fusion center A2 explained:

[We need] to make sure that each center is based on performance metrics. What is the added value to your customer, one? And two, what are the performance measures that you are meeting each and every year? And I think we’re going to have to move in that direction because the [grant] funds are going away…[and] every report that I’ve seen from Congress, the Peter King report in particular, says you better have some connectivity with your state and local partners and provide an added value to them. In our case, the TLO network. And then also, through the Suspicious Activity Report that comes from the TLO network, how is that assisting the overarching issues of counterterrorism or in this case, the FBI?

He further stated:
I look at the National SAR Initiative report that comes out every other month. And I see the numbers and we’re ranked either No. 1 or No. 2. So we’re doing great on the federal counterterrorism nexus. At the same time, I want to see what we’re doing to enhance current local and state investigations. Again, in a metric that we can red flag, if need be, on how this center is an added value to any state or local police department, as well as the FBI.

As fusion centers continually improve on product development and expand the types of services provided to partner agencies. Several participants in this research noted that success and positive feedback helps to promote fusion center respectability and reputation. The Director of fusion center B2 provided commentary on how focusing on the value added aspect of intelligence fusion can build new relationships:

Most definitely. You know, it definitely helps us because what it does, it allows those decision makers, the high-level decision makers, it allows them to see the value in the fusion center. And I’ll tell you this little story, that during the Boston bombing we had a particular agency that was constantly trying to get information. They were not a partner agency, but they were constantly trying to get information out of the fusion center. It’s not that we wouldn’t release the information, it’s just that we were busy. Our partner agencies were getting that information, and obviously it’s on them to push that out as well. But we’re pushing out the information, and this particular agency wasn’t getting all the information that they could have been getting from the fusion center…The information was going out to the participating agencies and then it was eventually making it to this particular agency. After that, they came to us and said, “You know, we realize now the benefit of being a partner with the fusion center,” and they have committed a fulltime employee to the fusion center.

An interesting finding was how the inclusion of partner agencies embedded in the fusion center are perceived by the interviewees as important to building the fusion center network and providing value-added services. As discussed earlier in this dissertation, most recognized fusion centers in the United States have an assigned DHS intelligence officer, which is the case for all nine fusion centers participating in this study. Several directors indicated they have multiple federal agencies represented in their center along with embedded personnel from state and local agencies. A common perspective among
interviewees was the personnel from partner agencies operating directly within the fusion center provided efficiencies and access to specialized databases that would otherwise be unavailable. The Director of fusion center D described how his center uses interagency personnel:

Well, the primary way we do it is by having people housed together under one roof where you see every day, you converse every day with the people from the different agencies...It’s just so much easier to walk down the hall and, you know if you need information from ICE or Department of Homeland Security or TSA...they’re right here.

And he continued by providing an example:

We get a threat on a public official that came in...it came from south of the border in Mexico. Well, we don’t have resources south of the border, but some of our federal partners who work within the [fusion center], do. So I was able to walk down the hall and check with them, and within a short time they were able to track down those alleged threats and then provide us information back.

The Director of fusion center A1 pointed out the value of having personnel from the state Department of Motor Vehicles operating within his fusion center:

DMV, absolutely. It’s the folks that they’ve brought in here and that they’re allowed to come join the team. I mean, forget the knowledge, the institution of knowledge, they bring about their own organization. The connectivity they have with their systems, and their ability to do analysis in a different way of thinking than us wading through files and understanding how to locate and track and dislodge false identities and stuff like that. It’s been phenomenal.

Summary

Several factors were identified through findings of this research as contributing to or influencing fusion center collaboration. Without exception, fusion center Directors interviewed for this research credited their outreach programs, such as their TLO program and other partnership building efforts, as important organizational elements which support and foster interagency and multidiscipline collaboration. Based on the
interviews, the Directors indicated a strong sense of purpose and duty to building and nurturing relationships supporting an information sharing environment. The findings suggest fusion centers recognize the value of having a broad base of partners and stakeholders as a way to gather information about suspicious activity from individuals within their local communities. Also revealed through this research was the importance of interpersonal relationships and trusted relationships as behavioral traits contributing to collaboration. The interviewees, who mostly come from a law enforcement background, acknowledged a reliance, at least in part, on interpersonal relationships, and expressed how fusion center partnerships are heavily dependent on personal interaction. However, based on the interviews it does appear fusion center leadership recognized that trust and interpersonal relationships can only go so far and expressed a need to have well-defined policies and procedures to provide structure and accountability as a foundation to collaborative partnerships.

The findings revealed, in general, the Directors who were interviewed expressed not just a philosophical belief in the concept of a network, but they also adopted the concept and used it as a way to facilitate multiagency and multidiscipline collaborative relationships. It appears a network perspective can also be viewed as a shared community incorporating public safety goals and used to bring partners into the information sharing environment.

Fusion centers were revealed in this research as “learning organizations,” which seek to understand their customers’ needs and find ways to accommodate those needs. An important point that emerged from the interviews is fusion centers are constantly challenged, and to be successful fusion center leadership and personnel need to address
these challenges – hence motivating the learning that occurs. One form of learning was revealed from fusion center personnel observing the demographics in a particular region and understanding the cultural diversity of their partners. Interviewees discussed fusion centers in terms of a business model and where partners are considered customers. Understanding the customer and their needs along with working to satisfy those needs is a learning process. As revealed in this research, collaboration as an effort to build a network environment for information sharing is a learning process.

Findings indicate the fusion center Directors uniformly believe they must continually prove their organization and service delivery provides value to all participants within the fusion center enterprise. Such proof of concept is also important to the fusion center’s home agency. In order to provide value-added services the Directors commented that they need to collaborate with their partners, implying a mutual two-way relationship, which also supports the fusion center information gathering efforts.

Research Question 3: What factors constrain or challenge fusion centers from effective collaboration and information sharing with federal, state, and local agencies and the private sector?

This study has argued that fusion centers are complex organizations operating in a highly interdependent environment where often the lines of authority and accountability are blurred. Fusion centers are new institutions which are expected to efficiently and effectively collect criminal and threat related information, analyze the information, and distribute value added, usable and actionable intelligence products to customers and partners. This is done through an organizational structure designed to break down barriers and facilitate improved information sharing both horizontally with the federal
government and vertically with state, local, and tribal governments, and the private sector. Based on this complex organization structure and on prior research it seems logical that fusion centers would face challenges to effective information sharing and with building interorganizational collaborative relationships.

This research question was designed to explore potential challenges to the way fusion centers engage with collaborative partners. Fusion center directors interviewed for this research were asked several questions with the intention of facilitating responses that might indicate any weaknesses or challenges they may perceive to the effective operation of their respective fusion center. One question in particular asked what challenges the directors faced with establishing collaborative relationships. Based on interviewee responses, four primary themes were identified indicating substantive challenges to how fusion centers engage in interagency collaboration and to the effectiveness of collaborative relationships supporting the information sharing network. The first theme discusses how limited resources constrain fusion centers from expanding services to meet customer needs and create certain challenges to building effective partnerships. These constraints extend beyond limited financial resources and include staffing and organizational issues. Second, there was a shared perception among the interviewees that the nature of information sharing, and specifically data collection, is often inconsistent or unreliable. This is because some partnerships involve individuals who view information sharing as collateral duty and often they do not share the same prioritization of effort as does the fusion center. Evidence shows the relationship between state and local fusion centers and the Department of Homeland Security appears to be somewhat strained due to differences in the priorities and missions each side expects and envision regarding the
role of fusion centers. Lastly, several challenges to establishing a collaborative network were revealed involving regional issues, politics, and the known conflicts that have traditionally existed between law enforcement and other public safety and first responder disciplines.

Resource Constraints: Financial, Personnel, Technological

Research findings indicated that the Directors who were interviewed for this dissertation share concerns about the impact resource limitations have on their fusion center operations. These concerns extend from a recognition that financial resources for fusion centers are diminishing, especially with the recent reductions in the Homeland Security Grant Program funds. Additionally, some interviewees expressed concern that they cannot hire experienced intelligence analysts and other personnel to adequately meet the growing demand for services. Technical constraints were also mentioned during the interviews as posing challenges to fusion centers’ ability to communicate and share data over various databases. Also revealed during the course of this research was concern about the impact of geographic separation between fusion centers and their partners and customers, including other fusion centers, and how this separation posed challenges to outreach efforts and establishing interorganizational collaborative partnerships to support effective information sharing. Resource constraints present numerous challenges as the Director of fusion center A1 explained:

Resources. Resource limitations. That’s always the issue. And I think you’re going to hear that from everybody across the board. I mean, people don’t have bodies to give up to put towards projects. It may be the greatest project in the world, but if you don’t have the people to put on it, you can’t get it done. If you don’t have the funding to support it, you can’t get it done. This is usually not an issue of trust or even agreement on sound concepts. It’s an issue of resourcing.
Resource constraints impact how much time senior leadership can devote to outreach and building the network through relationships. This is especially true for the smaller agencies with limited supervisory and administrative personnel. The Director of fusion center B1 explained his situation:

[I]t’s just basically myself and one other supervisor so it forces the people at the top to be responsible for a lot of operational issues which takes away from their ability to handle all the administrative issues, which are a lot…I have to be so involved in the day-to-day issues and I don’t just mean operationally because that’s a huge part of it, whether you say operationally in the analyst world or the CIKR world or the TLO world or the privacy and security world, and also budget. Every purchase that has to be made, I’m the one that has to view it…and make sure it’s done. Progress reports are all on me. I have to constantly monitor that stuff, I don’t have anybody to do that. Policies and procedures, I don’t have anybody that can write policies and procedures. I mean there’re two of us, but we don’t have time to do that with all the other stuff. We’re reviewing products, we’re reviewing SARs, making sure they’re being processed, making sure that they’re doing what they’re supposed to be doing, just in the analytical world, not all the other worlds as well. Meetings, I have responsibilities to my home agency, which are outside the fusion world, personnel issues, I mean so it all plays a role.

Several Directors discussed how their respective fusion centers were increasing capability to share information through programs such as their TLO and ILO programs and other outreach initiatives. However, it was apparent for several of the interviewees that funding issues tempered the success stories, as mentioned by the Director of fusion center A2, “but it is a challenge that as we increase our success rate, as we see in our center, we also know that we are on a thin string here with grant-funding processes.” Similarly, the Director of fusion center E1 reinforced this perspective, stating, “I think it’s harder and harder when the list of expectations is getting longer, but the buy-in, in terms of federal dollars, are decreasing. It’s hard to balance [those] competing interests and issues.” He continued this thought, commenting on the challenges to interagency collaboration:
I think for that one is really keeping that commitment in light of decreasing budgets. Everyone is feeling the crunch statewide, and it’s making sure we have not only that continued buy in from that agency, making sure that they see benefit in being involved in the process. And also making sure that the liaison that they’ve assigned is the right fit for the agency, it’s not just who’s available, but it’s making sure it’s someone who is active and engaged and wants to be involved in that process. And that’s an ongoing struggle.

The Director of fusion center D provided the following comment about building collaborative capacity:

Well, I’ll tell you, in the recent years it’s been the funding issue. Even though all of our people are donated by their agency, so we have a huge commitment of personnel at no cost, each agency absorbs the cost of their own people that are assigned here. But the recent last couple of years’ cutback in federal funding has really kind of hampered our ability to collaborate more with other agencies.

Based on the perspectives provided by the interviewees a sub-theme emerged where there was a very noticeable connection between the concerns of financial continuity and having the right personnel and enough personnel assigned to ensure that fusion center goals and objectives can be achieved without diminishing capability. This perspective is directly related to fusion center outreach and collaborative capabilities necessary to establish a network of information sharing among trusted partners to counter terrorism and criminal threats. The Director of fusion center A2 explained how budget reductions might affect his fusion center mission:

[How are we going to move forward? And if that collapses, then you will see it. If you start cutting personnel, which we may have to cut, if you start doing that, then you start cutting your outreach efforts; you start cutting your TLO efforts. Then you start losing that connectivity. So it’s all tied into that funding mechanism. I’ve dealt with this, you know, you’re in for a penny, you’re in for a pound. But when you’re in it for the pound, you’re in it for the long haul. You don’t cut corners. If you’re just in for the penny, you kind of dabble. And it’s a federal government formula by the way. And I’ve seen it disaster. When people say; “Well, just kind of do it part-time. You don’t need to do it all the time.” And what happens is, you miss things. And to be quite frank with you, that’s how the JTTF’s missed the 9/11 hijackers.]
The discussions involving “resourcing” inevitably turned to the issue of fusion centers and hiring qualified staff. Several concerns were expressed during the interviews with some directors expressing frustration about their state processes for hiring and the limitations due to reduced funding levels or other budget constraints. The inability to hire competent and qualified personnel, such as intelligence analysts, is a challenge as the Director of fusion center F pointed out, “I just don’t have the talent right now, so it’s to me, it’s resources. It’s primarily personnel resources.” He continued and commented on the pay structure imposed by his state process:

From where I sit, the biggest challenge right now is qualified staffing. The state is under pretty significant budgetary limitations, so I have Masters degree analysts, that are making 21 bucks an hour with no hope of getting a raise; a whole career board get a hundred applicants. We’ll pick two or three. We’ll offer jobs and they’ll turn them down. [Hiring] qualified staffing is really the biggest challenge.

Technical issues were identified and attributed by the interviewees as challenging to effective partnership building and collaboration. Several directors mentioned having problems accessing databases that are proprietary to jurisdictions and agencies. Without access to a wide array of databases the intelligence analysts are limited in their ability to comprehensively analyze, identify, and produce threat profiles and other information for fusion center customers. The Director of fusion center A2 stated that connectivity issues have become a problem for his state and added, “it is a challenge and I think it will continue to be so, with so many different, divergent database systems and connectivity systems that are out there.” Connectivity and access to databases was also described by the Director of fusion center G:

[The State] is a home-rule state and does not have statewide databases as a result. It is difficult to gather information from various agencies unless they have a
trained TLO. While most agencies are willing and eager to share and solve crimes, some are reluctant to collaborate, or harbor very old resentment against the [fusion center] or the state.

For some fusion centers in this study, technical legal processes and other regulations present challenges to information sharing, as described by the Director of fusion center C2:

Really, the challenge is more technical normally. For example, it took us a lot of time to get memorandums of agreement to share law enforcement data because our commissioner’s court, as well as their governing body, whether it’s a council or commissioner’s court, to sign off on sharing that data. And then just the technical piece of working with other agencies’ IT departments, seems to be the most challenging for all of us in sharing information.

Research revealed that geographic distance is viewed by several directors as constraining their ability to establish and sustain collaborative relationships. This was indicated for relationships between fusion centers in multi-fusion center states and particularly for those relationships with fusion center partners and stakeholders who are a considerable distance from their designated fusion center. The director of fusion center B1 who has an AOR covering a majority of counties in his state said the following, “It’s challenging to be across the state and try to provide the same level of service that we might be able to perform for somebody that’s in [our city area] because they can come over and talk to us and have face-to-face contact as opposed to somebody who is a four or five hour drive [away].” Having face-to-face contact with partners and stakeholders was mentioned by the directors as being very important to fostering good collaborative relationships. A key factor is having adequate travel funds, as the B1 Director continued:

Face-to-face is always better than telephone. And granted IT advances and electronic advances have given us the ability to communicate through a lot of different methods, but there’s nothing that can take the place of a face-to-face meeting. So, geographically, there are some challenges at least in our situation
because it’s so vast. Certainly funding is an issue because you can’t travel without funding so you need to have travel funding, which primarily in our case comes from grant funds and so that can be a challenge because if you don’t get funded [it restricts travel].

Reliance on grant funds to support travel for leadership of regional fusion centers in multi-fusion center states to meet in person was also stated by the director of fusion center E1:

One thing that…has helped is we do have grant funds that allows for regional directors to travel for regional fusion center meetings and join our executive advisory board, [and] we are able to do that four times a year. [Its] face-to-face, at a minimum. I think as funding decreases, we may not be able to continue that. That is one area of concern that I do have.

As resource constraints, geography and distance can impose both financial costs and a time cost to outreach efforts and subsequently impact the quality and sustainment of relationships. Geographic proximity and distance were described in the previous section regarding interpersonal relationships and trust and how these factors are important to the fusion process and effective information sharing. Distance is an intervening factor, as the Director of fusion center D commented on having embedded partners in his center, “[B]ecause the ones that are here in the center we have a great relationship with. The farther you move away from the center, not so much.” He further stated:

Well, being the state fusion center…a lot of our issues are geographic. The distances between some of our state and local partners, it’s hard to do some face-to-face meetings with them and build that trust and that relationship.

Regarding relationships between fusion centers, the Director of fusion center B1 observed that distance can be a challenge, “Certainly geographics play a part in that because a lot of it comes down to outreach and trust and it’s hard to do outreach and
develop that trust when there’s a distance between us.” And the realities of the several hundred miles distance between the regional fusion center and the fusion center located near the State Capitol was described in metaphor by the Director of the regional fusion center B2:

[T]hink about personal relationships, you know? If you’ve got a friend who lives the next block over versus a friend who lives on the East Coast, you see them more. You interact with them more. You have those relationships. You get they’re there physically. [They become part of your] everyday activities… So geography has a place, to me, a tremendous impact. You know, we just don’t get that face time with [the state fusion center people and state agencies]. We’re all so busy.

**Interagency Partnerships Can Be Inconsistent and Uncertain**

The fusion center model for information sharing relies upon collaborative relationships with partner agencies which are based on trust and reciprocity, a theme that has been discussed throughout this dissertation. However, sometimes these partnerships are assigned to individuals as collateral duties by their home agency with the fusion center not being a high priority. Based on the interviews with the nine fusion center Directors, each presented concerns about challenges they perceive from relying upon a large network of individuals from other agencies and disciplines to provide timely, accurate and necessary information to the fusion centers. Fusion centers establish these partnerships and relationships as a way to create a public safety network to prevent, detect, and deter terrorism and other criminal activity. There are basically two sides to this information flow: 1) Information from the fusion centers is shared with customers and participating agencies, and, 2) there is an expectation that customers and partners will provide information to the fusion centers usually through suspicious activity reporting.
Other types of data and information might be requested by the fusion centers from their partners and customers possibly relating to suspicious criminal activity or as a follow-up to an analysis product being developed by the fusion center intelligence analysts.

The interviewees in this research did not say the perceived lack of participation by some partnerships prevented them from collaborating with any agency or discipline; to the contrary, the directors indicated their full support to interagency collaboration and they recognized its importance to the fusion process. From a research point of view this concern about information flow from some partner agencies directly impacts the notion of collaboration, which is based on reciprocity. As such, the researcher saw this as an important element to discuss as part of this research question. “Right, but it’s a collateral duty and so we run into that and…we’re working with people that all feel overworked and have a primary duty and the last thing they want is another collateral duty,” was a comment by the Director of fusion center B1. He continued with a comment on information gathering, “gather is very hard because I have zero control over the gather and the best I can do is try to engage people to try to provide it, but at the end of the day, if they don’t provide it, there’s not a thing I can do about it.” The Director of fusion center A1 highlighted this situation when asked about the process of gathering information:

Gathering. That’s always going to be the trickiest because I’ll even speak for the local level. They have a TLO network, which they rely upon to push up SARs and develop SARs, as well as the public see something/say something campaign. But your TLOs, they’re one day motivated, one day not. Training gets old. They have a rotation of folks coming in and coming out. Whatever department they’re with prioritizes the TLOs workload. So how much are they going to glean from that? You may have private sector partners willing to participate one day and if they have a change of management, won’t participate the next day. For us at the state level, we count on much of the information coming up from these regional
centers. And having just listed the host of issues that they have in gathering information, you can only imagine how that translates to us getting information.

The Director of fusion center B2 also discussed the challenge to gathering information and offered the following perspective:

I think the gathering of information is always challenging. You have all of these obstacles...So, getting the information – you have the people who just don’t think to give you the information, you have people who intentionally withhold information, we call them silos, information silos. So really gathering that information, I think that’s the most important part of the whole process...because that’s what you need. You need that information in order to analyze it, turn it into intelligence, produce a product, distribute that information via a product.

The interviewees revealed frustration with some of the information gathering expectations that are part of the national assessment of fusion centers. Standing Information Needs (SINs) were mentioned as an expectation that is difficult to meet, especially as part of COC “gather.” This frustration is primarily due to the difficulties of working with partner agencies where the fusion center director cannot require, but can only request, feedback and information from partner agencies. As the Director of fusion center F explained:

Yes, but to be frank, the reason we have Standing Intelligence Needs...is because it’s a check-off box for the annual assessment. I found SINs to be rather ineffective in a fusion center environment simply because again, we can’t task people to collect and our intelligence needs are so broad, I can’t expect law enforcement to constantly report things. And quite frankly, I had the same challenge in the FBI. FBI agents were working cases. They weren’t interested in being “collectors” or sending intelligence to the Field Intelligence Group. But we have them, but they’re effectively meaningless, I think.

The fusion center model of intelligence and information analysis has elements requiring different ways of thinking when it comes to understanding the “action to result” of sharing information. This is especially true for individuals who partner with an agency and do not work directly within the fusion center. The law enforcement culture, and
people in general, like to see results from their actions. This can be difficult, however, to fusion center operations because the process of “gathering the dots” and “connecting the dots” can take considerable time before results are noticed, if at all. This temporal component can sometimes contribute to holding back information, which could be shared with a fusion center, as stated by the Director of fusion center E1:

I think one of the things that I came up with; it kind of goes back to one of the initial questions about keeping that agency buy-in and having the right person in place. A lot of times we have so many different tasks, we’re looking for those day-to-day tactical investigative requests where “you could help me with this now, great.” It’s hard to take that step back and get partner agencies to focus on the strategic, or it’s going to take months or years to show dividends. I think that’s a challenge in recruiting because people want to see what’s the bang for my buck today. Sometimes that sale isn’t so quick.

Mixed Messages from DHS and Top-Down Implementation Challenges

While not a direct line of questioning, this research revealed that most directors who were interviewed are frustrated with some of the guidance and expectations passed down to their respective fusion centers from federal agencies, primarily the Department of Homeland Security. This frustration is primarily aimed at the inconsistency and lack of definition about what the National Network of Fusion Centers should look like and will look like. The interviewees expressed an understanding that the federal government and the state and local fusion centers are working to find a common ground for the next phase forward in building out the National Network. However, aspects of the top-down implementation approach from DHS is meeting some resistance from the fusion centers in support of a more bottom-up approach as they coordinate efforts and provide feedback to DHS on their perspectives for a national network. Fusion centers, according to some directors who were interviewed, are well positioned to meet the expectations and
demands for information sharing and counterterrorism through an all-crimes approach at
the state and local level. The federal perspective for how fusion centers ought to operate
impacts the way fusion centers establish partnerships and collaborate to achieve their
particular missions. This includes concerns about federal grant funding and the
restrictions and requirements fusion centers must abide by. As some directors indicated,
however, their missions and the direction fusion centers take to gather information must
also satisfy the needs of their customers and other stakeholders. This is where some
differences emerge between the federal government and the state and local fusion center
directors. As the Director of fusion center A2 argued:

There are two issues when you look at that. I think one of the issues, at least that
I see, is going to be how do we balance this all crimes, all hazards versus the
edicts from not so much DHS, but to a certain extent that we have to be connected
to the counterterrorism, domestic terrorism issues of the day. We have that
federal CT nexus because that kind of generates a lot of the funding. The centers
are grappling with this.

He continued:

The challenges that we see in [our state] are extremely unique because of the
topography, the demographics, and the geographies of this state when it comes to
all crimes/all hazards and also meeting our counterterrorism mission with the FBI.
We have to do both. We can’t say, “Okay, the CT/DT [counterterrorism/domestic
terrorism] mission is okay, that’s going to be 10 percent and now I’m going to
focus on street gangs.” That’s not our job. Our job is to have a balance of all
.crimes/all hazards as it relates to our threat process and to make sure that we still
have a robust counterterrorism and domestic terrorism nexus.

The director of fusion center B2 detailed his thoughts about a national strategy for
fusion centers and the impact on state local fusion centers:

I agree that we need to have a national strategy. You know, if we’re this national
network of 78 fusion centers, just like I talked about within our fusion center, I
mean we have a strategic plan that outlines our goals and our path forward. So as
a national fusion center network, shouldn’t we have the same thing? Where are
we going as a network?...I think we all have some kind of ideas, but there’s
nothing in black and white. There’s nothing to really guide us. You can get all of
us in a room, and we start to agree on that. We did it at the Fusion Center
Leadership Conference. Everybody agrees that we need to have one, but you
know, what does it look like? Everybody has a concept of it, and I think we’d all
like to think we’re going in the same direction, but who knows without that?

He continued:

If we had some kind of national fusion center strategy, at least we would all know
a direction. And if that’s what the Feds want, I don’t know that our strategy
would be what the Feds want, they just want a strategy. I don’t know that our
strategy’s going to match what they think it should be. But at least we would
have a strategy, we’d have as direction. And they could weigh in as to if they feel
that’s the right direction for national fusion centers.

While DHS is working to develop a national strategy for fusion centers there is
also the National Fusion Center Association representing the state and local fusion
centers, which is developing a version of the national fusion center strategy. A common
perspective among the directors interviewed was there should not be federal regulation of
fusion centers, although appropriate guidance would be acceptable to establishing the
National Network. The Director of fusion center E1 suggested, “The guidance in order to
put fusion centers within a box that they can still have their independence and ability to
be different, I think it’s very much needed, but I don’t think we need anybody regulating
us beyond the statutes and Constitution.” Along these lines, the Director of fusion center
A1 stated:

No, I don’t think regulation is necessary. You look at the National Network, and I
know that you have two things happening. You have DHS, who wants to create a
national fusion center with guidelines or a national fusion center strategy. And
then you have the National Fusion Center Association who wants to create
something parallel to that from their perspective about the network. So you have
these two parallel tracks going. I think it’s good as long as it’s sort of just
guidance, and it’s not regulatory.
As a state level view of the DHS bureaucracy and how the top-down approach may get muddied, the Director of fusion center A1 further stated:

So I remember when Napolitano first came in…And what was everyone’s comment? There was a short phrase that they always used to assert about her. Here it is: “She gets it. She gets it. She gets it.” You’d hear that left and right. Oh, it’s great to have her on board because she gets it. Yeah. Maybe she did get it, but that doesn’t mean that it gets translated all the way through the agency and all the way down to everybody else.

As stated earlier, several interviewees provided perspectives regarding some disconnect between the annual federal Assessment of Fusion Centers, its expectations and the realities of how fusion centers operate and need to operate in order to meet their customer needs. An example of this perceived inconsistency was provided by the Director fusion center B1, “If we can’t utilize [the fusion center] for all criminal activity and addressing all criminal activity then I think we’re missing the boat. Now, the federal government would argue, well then, why are we funding it and why aren’t the states funding it. That’s a difficult position.” He provided more detail on his perspective about some of the DHS Assessment measurements:

…it’s more about do you have the processes in place and the documents that articulate those processes rather than how well do you do it, because I could have all the policies and procedures and methods in the world, but I might do a horrible job and then it’s ineffective. And so when I look at the COCs in the assessment, I don’t think it does a very good job of asking all the right questions. Now it’s getting more that way because it’s starting to become more performance…I could have a 100 percent, I could have all the policies and procedures in the world, have zero staff and get a 100 percent or almost a 100 percent on the assessment, right, because what they grade you on are do you have a policy, do you have a procedure, do you have a method mostly, not entirely, but mostly. So, I could get a really good score or you know a decent score so to speak but have zero staff to support it and I’d be like yeah, I got a method. However, I can’t perform that method.
Regional Issues/Discipline and Agency Differences

Several subthemes were revealed through this research that tie into issues and concerns expressed by the interviewees relating to the fusion center area of responsibility, regional issues, and structural issues. The Directors interviewed for this research provided perspectives on how certain regional issues and information sharing with various disciplines and the private sector can challenge efforts to fully engage collaboratively with some partners and customers. The first part of this section discusses classification issues and the challenges to dissemination and partnership building. The second section reveals a variation in perspectives about regional issues and multi-fusion center collaboration.

Traditional information sharing concerns have involved the inability or lack of desire by law enforcement to share information with non-law enforcement agencies and disciplines, such as fire services and other first responders. There was a general consensus from the interviewees that the historical divide between law enforcement and other public safety disciplines has improved greatly since the 9/11 terrorist attacks and this is attributable, in part, to the existence of fusion centers and their overarching mission to share terrorism related information and criminal information. However, several directors indicated that classification of information is still a problem and needs to be better handled. Over-classification of material was cited as the primary problem, where there is difficulty downgrading information listed as “Law Enforcement Sensitive” (LES) and in some cases information that is federally classified as SECRET. The Director of fusion center B2 said of this challenge, “You have all of these obstacles, one
being clearances and what I feel is, many times, the over-classification of information.”

He continued:

It’s getting that good information. And so the collection of information, bringing information in, getting people to release that information, not overclassifying it, having the clearances for our people to get the information if it is there and available, getting people to share it. So that would be, in my mind, the most challenging.

The separation of LES information that is provided only to law enforcement is part of the struggle for fusion centers to openly share information which may have a criminal nexus or be related to an ongoing investigation. However, there was a shared perspective among the interviewees that fusion centers are working to find ways to downgrade classifications so relevant information can be shared with a wider audience of disciplines, customers, and stakeholders. The Director of fusion center D described his center’s TLO dissemination process:

Well, our information’s kind of divided into two groups of information when we send it out. Because we have fire several of our TLOs are firemen. So if the information is FOUO, then we send it to everybody. If it’s law enforcement sensitive we only send it to our law enforcement TLOs.

The traditional relationship and respect among the law enforcement community is still important to information sharing. The Director of fusion center F suggested having additional sworn law enforcement officers might help with his fusion center’s outreach efforts:

We’re mostly non-sworn. We have one sworn sergeant, who is really kind of an operations administrative sergeant. But that’s one of our things we’re lacking. We don’t have a cadre of well, for example, the [name of another fusion center] has a pretty strong contingent of sworn, but we don’t…I have a non-sworn analyst managing [the Intelligence Liaison Officer program], and I think having more sworn personnel kind of increases the capability and the communication with our law enforcement customers.
The importance of incorporating the private sector into the fusion centers’ collaborative partnership process has been discussed in this dissertation. Information from the interviewees suggests fusion centers have seen considerable progress and success with their private sector outreach initiatives. However, building private sector partnerships poses unique challenges to information sharing and the classification issues. There are concerns related to proprietary business secrets and practices that can inhibit some private sector entities from entering into collaborative partnerships with a fusion center. Private business concerns face potential liability issues should critical infrastructure or cyber related vulnerabilities be exposed, which can suppress private sector willingness to participate in reporting suspicious activity and providing sensitive information to fusion centers. The importance of trust was cited as a factor influencing participation, as stated by the Director of fusion center G, “The lack of understanding, or the perceived threat of the [fusion center] not holding their information in confidence, is the most common challenge.” And the Director of fusion center C2 provided his perspective to this challenge:

Well, of course the obvious one is the private sector. And I equate this to my crime prevention days. When you have a group of FLOs that are engaged and have people committed as liaison, I just think the private sector is always going to be somewhat of a challenge. Although we’ve had some examples of some great successes with the private sector in the last year. They’ve provided information that’s very beneficial to the law enforcement agencies. So I would say the private sector. But I would say it’s related to what we can and can’t share between each other that creates a challenge. Because they have to feel like they’re getting something out of it, or why else would they participate?

Regional issues

The regional issues revealed in this research concern primarily two fusion centers, B1, a state fusion center, and B2, a regional fusion center, both in the same state. The
perspectives provided by the directors for these two fusion centers stood out from the responses of the other directors when the interview questions turned to discussions about information sharing among fusion centers and, in particular, the type of collaborative relationships between fusion centers in multi-fusion center states. This research interviewed nine fusion centers, of which six fusion centers are located in states with multiple centers (see Table 4 in Chapter 4). Two states, A and B, each had two fusion centers represented as part of this research project, which included their state fusion center and a regional fusion center. For the other two multi-fusion center states, the directors representing the regional fusion center C2, and the state center E1, were interviewed. The other three Directors interviewed in this study are from states that have only a single fusion center.

The following discussion is intended to show variation in the perspectives about regional relationships among multi-state fusion centers as provided by the fusion center directors interviewed for this study, in particular the perspectives provided by the Directors of fusion centers B1 and B2. The researcher considered these perspectives revealing and important to note for the purpose of analysis and discussion in Chapter 6. The findings also support other research findings in this chapter, particularly the research question investigating how governance or advisory boards contribute to the collaborative capacity of fusion centers.

Perspective provided by the A1 Director is reflective of a multi-fusion center state utilizing a governance structure that unifies the state and the regional fusion centers. One aspect described by the Director of fusion center A1 is an understanding of the jurisdiction and area of responsibility for each fusion center in that state. Additionally
under this governance structure (discussed in Chapter 4) the fusion centers agree among each other what duties and responsibilities each will have for their particular AOR. Without this coordination there would be, as the director of fusion center A1 stated, **“deconfliction problems:”**

The other, I would say challenge, you sometimes face is from the state perspective is that we have to be mindful of the regions. The regions, they are sovereign to some degree, and we respect that. That is their AOR. So we try to refrain from going past them to their partners to initiate projects or concepts or initiatives. Everything we try to do, we try to do with consideration to the regional center, go through them, at least give them the first bite of the apple, first right of refusal, or at least let them know what we’re doing…We’re not trying to operate within their region. See, this is the thing. If we were a tactical or strategic center like the regions, then definitely that would be the issue because then we’d be all over their lane. We’d have deconfliction problems from here to Neptune, and that just wouldn’t work. It would be a problem.

Reinforcing the previous statement, the Director of regional fusion center A2 provided his perspective on the importance of a statewide coordination process and having a positive collaborative approach with all fusion centers in the state:

I’m a firm believer that we’re all in it. We all have our own individual priorities and governance boards and that’s fine. But at the end of the day you have to have a process that gives you the roadmap and guardrails to follow, to bring us in together, as a team. We’re stronger as a team than we are as individual centers. And that team effort, I believe, not only today but in the future, will kind of mark the success of where the Governor [wants us].

The above perspectives are presented as a way to juxtapose with the following statements by the Director of fusion centers B1 and B2 in which they express perceived challenges to their information sharing capabilities. Unlike fusion centers A1 and A2, and also fusion centers C2 and E1, fusion centers B1 and B2 do not have a combined statewide advisory body to support their state’s fusion centers. As the Director of fusion center B2 stated about coordinating with the state fusion center:
Not only a geography issue, but also personal understanding of what that person or those persons deal with on a daily basis as opposed to what we deal with. Just the amount of information coming in, the amount of work that we produce here and that’s put on us here. You know, I need to, I probably need to be best served by spending some time in their shoes, to see what their pace is and what their concerns are. But I just don’t believe that they’re the same. So my concern would be that if we had that kind of governance, they may not fully understand what goes on in the populated area of the state. They may just, and it’s nothing against anybody in particular, it’s just they’re not here…They don’t deal with the things that we deal with on a daily basis, and some of the decisions that they would be able to make would have a tremendous impact. And because of that geographical difference and that political difference and that perspective.

The Director of fusion center B1 described his view of how the fusion centers in the state try to coordinate information sharing and the impact of politics on the process:

It’s interesting because I don’t find in all my years of law enforcement, I’ve never experienced such a political stage as the fusion center…Those politics play huge roles when you talk about the fusion center and the intelligence center, the other one in the state, because there’s a lot of control issues that go on there. And it’s interesting, I guess, or ironic that the biggest issue that I see is from fusion center to fusion center as opposed from all the…county local relationships to the fusion center, at least in our area of responsibility.

He continued:

Politics play a role, not only just locally, because you’re dealing with individual counties that have their own governments and in this state, you know, I guess I look at it from a law enforcement perspective because that’s where I come from, there is not a state police in this state and so we don’t have overriding authority over all of the counties.

Politics and geographic distance is also a perception that the Director of fusion center B2 suggests as contributing to his perspective and concerns about having a statewide governance process with the other fusion center and the impact it might have on his fusion center:

We have a unique situation here in [our state]…that the government is up north and the population is down south. So my concern with that respect would be that there wouldn’t be a full understanding of the issues in the populated area by those who may be governing it.
The Director of fusion center B2 provided this additional observation about working with a nearby fusion center in a bordering state which has similar demographic responsibilities:

But we have a lot of connectivity with them because the people who are in [the bordering state] come here, and vice versa. You know, we worked in conjunction with them, whereas you have that vast amount of [geography] between us and [the state fusion center], and not a lot of that connectivity. We deal with them on a more regular basis. You have major metropolitan areas that are going to have similar issues, and we’re going to have things come up more often. You know, we’re going to have the shootings, the stolen medical nuclear devices, if you will.

This perspective offered by the Director of fusion center B1 suggests some concern with the state’s fusion center communications:

We have one fusion center and then a regional intelligence center, politics in my opinion play a huge role in that and I think that particular situation is more about control and politics, I mean I feel that the information sharing is severely inhibited from…that county where that other fusion center is, to the state…

Summary

The findings from this research suggest that the directors interviewed perceive several challenges facing fusion centers, which restrict or prevent them from engaging in effective collaboration and information sharing with state and local agencies and the private sector. Resource limitations, primarily financial in nature, was seen as the main problem facing fusion center leadership, which place severe constraints on their ability to provide and maintain quality services they believe are necessary to support their fusion centers. Interviewees pointed out how in some instances inadequate funding impacted their ability to hire qualified staff, including intelligence analysts. Their concerns involved not having enough staff and not being able to hire qualified people would adversely affect their fusion center’s quality of service and subsequently make it difficult
to establish and maintain collaborative partnerships. Also revealed in this research was a concern by several interviewees that geographic distance posed challenges to building relationships because of the infrequency for face-to-face meetings.

The directors interviewed for this research revealed concern that the fusion center process, which relies upon gathering information from partners who are the “eyes and ears” of the fusion center in the field and in their respective communities, can be uncertain and unreliable. This concern, and at times frustration, was explained by the interviewees as resulting from a lack of hierarchy and control over the flow of information from partners. Research findings also revealed the interviewees perceive mixed messages coming from the federal government regarding fusion center goals and the expectations about participating in the National Network.

It appears even though tremendous advances have been made to integrate the various disciplines into the information sharing environment as part of a fully collaborative enterprise with fusion centers, there are still some challenges with the way information products are classified and disseminated among the various partners. Finally, this study found that the multi-fusion center states with a statewide advisory board or governance process indicated having better and improved collaboration among fusion centers in their state than evidenced in the state described in this section without a statewide governance process or advisory body. Geography and distance along with jurisdictional conflict and politics seem to be primary problems.
Research Question 4: How does having a formal governance structure or advisory body help facilitate and maintain collaborative relationships that are beneficial to the information sharing network?

An important component of this research project was to understand how the nine fusion center Directors who were interviewed perceive the impact of governance and advisory committees to their fusion centers’ ability to collaborate and support an information sharing mission. Governance is a foundational element outlined in the Fusion Center Guidelines (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006) and incorporated into the Baseline Capabilities for State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008). The goal of the fusion center governance body, according to the Fusion Center Guidelines, is to ensure participating agencies and stakeholders have a representative voice on the operation of the fusion center. Governance serves several purposes; it provides centralized accountability for review of issues affecting fusion center operations, it establishes a forum where concerns and critical issues can be discussed, and governance instills cohesiveness and builds relationships and effective leadership among members. The governance body can function in several ways as evidenced by the several fusion centers under review for this study and described in Chapter 4, with most fusion centers using nonbinding advisory committees as their governance structure.

Interview participants were asked specific questions about the structure of their advisory bodies and the type of governance overseeing their fusion center. They were also asked about their perspectives on the impact and effect governance has on their ability to engage in collaborative efforts and how these efforts support information sharing and gathering activities. Three themes emerged from the interviews and are used
to answer this research question. The first theme evaluates the Directors’ responses to how governance supports their ability to collaborate with stakeholders and the usefulness of their governance or advisory body to support the fusion center mission. This theme evaluates interviewee perspectives regarding governance representing for both individual fusion center internal advisory bodies and statewide governance in those states with more than one fusion center. A second theme considers the value of critical feedback that participating members of these governance boards provide to fusion center directors and how this process helps to identify obstacles and issues. The third important theme that emerged was the element of accountability and how it influences the way fusion centers build relationships and make strategic decisions. The study’s findings indicate the interviewees without exception view working with their advisory body as adding value to the fusion center organization. They also indicated that having a formal governance or advisory body fosters collaborative behavior among stakeholders and that this behavior is adopted into fusion center operations supporting the information sharing network.

This research shows there is considerable variation in how interviewees from multi-fusion center states currently conduct statewide fusion center governance. Of the four states with multiple fusion centers included in this study (A1, A2, B1, B2, C2, and E1) the state represented by B does not have a statewide governance structure. The Directors from fusion centers B1 and B2 each expressed concerns about how geographic distance and jurisdictional differences pose challenges to establishing a statewide governance or advisory board. The responses by the state and regional fusion center Directors representing fusion centers A1, A2, C2 and E1, support multi-fusion center governance within their respective states. Even the perceptions from the fusion center
Directors for B1 and B2 indicated a desire to eventually establish an overarching advisory committee to support their statewide intelligence and information sharing process, though ongoing challenges to forming a statewide advisory body must be addressed.

**Governance Helps to Coordinate Operational Process, Information Sharing, and Funding Issues in Multi-Fusion Center States**

This research project included four states with multiple fusion centers (A1, A2, B1, B2, C2, and E1) to investigate how having an overarching governance structure influences collaborative capacity for those fusion centers and if the participant’s perspectives are different from their individual fusion center governance structures (presented in the following section). With the exception of the two fusion centers in state B, all the directors interviewed for this project who operate fusion centers in multi-fusion center states agreed that having a governance structure providing guidance and support was beneficial to their statewide information sharing process. It is worth noting that the Directors for fusion centers B1 and B2 indicated their strong desire to find a path forward to develop a governance structure for their state. The primary form of governance structure is through an advisory body model that makes recommendations supporting the information sharing and gathering network, which includes areas of operations, personnel management, product development, outreach, and protection of civil liberties and civil rights.

The Director of state fusion center A1 provided a view on the importance of the advisory body for his state and how it allows openness and dialogue with other fusion
center directors and stakeholder members. His insight to the advisory body supporting statewide information sharing and operations was summed up in this comment:

The harmony with which we’ve been able to achieve [success] I think has been critical. I mean, our ability to move information around, share information, provide support for one another, to share analytical trade craft, to share information. It’s invaluable to the state. Messaging, situational awareness. I think that as a body, it is leaps and bounds ahead of where we could have ever been otherwise.

For fusion center E1, the director confirmed a similar perspective about the statewide governance structure, indicating that face-to-face meetings with the other directors in the state helps with establishing a strategic direction for the centers. His comments also suggest the statewide multi-fusion center advisory board provides a way to mitigate jurisdictional differences:

[The statewide advisory board is] an expanded version of our [internal fusion center] board. We do have the opportunity to meet as the fusion center director’s group and that’s more of the technical administrative, a little more detail oriented, and then we come together in the largest group [the statewide advisory board], we’ve added that regional perspective on everything we’re doing in [the regional] and state centers. I think it’s very positive…The reason is in our state there’s a lot of overlap.

Findings indicate the statewide governance structure overseeing multiple fusion centers can be very successful in breaking down boundaries and enabling intra-jurisdictional information sharing. For example, the Director from fusion center E1 observed,

If you’re the executive advisory board member and you’re with the [State] Highway Patrol, you also have regional responsibilities and connections with those fusion centers because your troops that are in those regions will be communicating. So they’ll hear the feedback from the regional fusion center directors on issues, it means that we’re all communicating more clearly and have an understanding so we don’t have that problem of having silos of each region. It brings everybody together.
Increasingly, fusion centers are using strategic plans and concept of operations (CONOPS) documents as a way to define operational goals, priorities, practices, organizational structure, and outcome based performance. Several interviewees indicated the importance to have defining documents outlining roles and responsibilities of the statewide fusion process. These planning documents help fusion centers function in a collaborative environment, which is a departure from standard policing practices, as discussed in prior chapters of this dissertation. Established and agreed to CONOPS can provide a show of unity among state and local fusion centers as a way to garner state and local government sustainment funding in a political environment. This sentiment was explained by the fusion center A2 Director:

It’s vitally important. Again, if you take a look at what we were talking about, you’re only as strong as your weakest link. Well, in [our state], because of diversification issues [with jurisdictions], we are only as strong as our centers here in [the state]. [T]he state threat assessment process is being codified with a CONOPS. Hopefully, the Assembly and the state Senate [will see we are] making sure that we have common operating processes and how we look at threats. Which we’re working on and so extremely important because if one [fusion center] starts to slip the other ones can fall very quickly. And we all know that; we all do great work. But also, there are vulnerabilities that we have, that exist out there, related to privacy issues, relating to dissemination issues, retention issues; just the word intelligence scares everybody now. And so we have to have our game face on and we have to do it collectively.

And as the Director for fusion center C2 stated:

[The state fusion governance structure is] somewhat of an oversight body that facilitates policies and procedures. For example, for privacy policies, and we have a common concept of operations, one concept of operations statewide.

There are, however, continuing concerns expressed by some fusion center directors that there can be a loss of independence and strategic direction for their individual fusion center if a statewide governance body were not structured appropriately.
to reduce this concern. For the participants in the study who operate fusion centers in states with multiple centers, their responses indicated much of the anxiety and concerns about loss of independence is reduced and made manageable once the statewide governance structure was established and doing its job. The Director of fusion center C2, in comparing his fusion center’s internal advisory board to the statewide governance structure, stated the following about how it helps with building partnerships:

Yes, [it does]. But I would qualify it by saying that our stakeholders are our own executive advisory board. It is more critical to the success and direction of the center. And then the state [advisory body] is guidance direction for [information sharing] so we can stay on the same page in what we’re doing across the state. So we’re complementing our efforts across all … these fusion centers, and not being in competition with the other centers. And we’re still all independent.

In contrast, however, fusion centers B1 and B2 do not have a governance structure or advisory body representing all fusion centers in the state. This has been an ongoing issue in State B for several years, though the fusion center directors interviewed did express a need for some type of institution that can provide advisory support for a statewide information sharing and gathering process. Differences in opinion about the influence and membership of an advisory or governance body are issues of concern expressed by the two directors who were interviewed. As noted by the Director of fusion center B1:

…but there does have to be, in my opinion, statewide oversight of the fusion process as a whole to say what is this fusion center’s responsibility…and even the regional intelligence center’s responsibility in terms of the overall sharing of information and who’s going to do what and how and when… I think it would solve a lot of problems. I mean I think the information sharing would improve. I think the trust issue would improve. I think potentially it could free us up, too.
The Director for fusion center B2 expressed his concerns about the uncertainty of an oversight or advisory body and how it might adversely affect his fusion center’s operation and strategic direction:

We have a unique situation here in [this state], that the government is up north and the population is down south. So my concern with that respect would be that there wouldn’t be a full understanding of the issues in the populated area by those who may be governing it. [The board] may end up as being in a position to really impact how it is you do your business, and it can have negative effects. [The benefits would need to outweigh the costs] They’d have to. And at this point, in this state in particular, I just don’t know that they would. We’re all good people. It’s just difference of opinion.

Internal Advisory Committees Help to Break Down Information Silos and Provide Critical Feedback

All nine fusion center directors interviewed for this project indicated they have an internal advisory committee or similar body to oversee fusion center operations and activities. The Director of fusion center B1 stated that he is currently working to reformulate his advisory body to meet certain legal requirements to accommodate the state’s open meeting law. Most of these internal committees are advisory only to the fusion centers and do not get directly involved in day-to-day operations, such as dealing with personnel issues or tactical and operational assignments. Many of the interviewees indicated that the strength and usefulness of having an advisory board is through the direction and feedback members provide to fusion center leadership. The diversity of the board’s membership, which includes multidisciplinary and multiagency stakeholder representatives, was also mentioned as important to establishing lines of communication and facilitating a collaborative network. A very succinct statement offered by the Director of fusion center D represents a perspective shared by the other Directors:
For us to represent as the State Fusion Center we’ve got to have people there that represent a whole bunch of different disciplines. I mean if we’re saying we’re all-crimes, all-hazards, well how do we do that if we don’t have a representation on that board from most of those disciplines?

Regular and consistent forms of communication with the membership of the advisory committees is an important contribution to facilitating interorganizational collaboration that supports an information sharing environment. As the Director of fusion center E1 explained, the advisory body for his fusion center fosters collegiality and important feedback to the fusion center:

It’s an advisory body. It does include our key stakeholders from all of the different agencies or disciplines. I think it creates a formal conversation, a regular conversation and it gives a mechanism for them, and this sounds kind of clichéd because we’re in the title, but they provide advice to us or more informally feedback of what’s working and not working.

Interviewees also indicated having an advisory board is important to create an atmosphere of information sharing among partner agencies, as stated by the Director of fusion center E1:

I think so. I will say that the most important conversations aren’t discussed in the formal setting, but [it] opens the door and creates that ability so that the more important conversations and timely conversations can be had.

Based on the interviews, participants reveled that advisory boards provided support to fusion centers by identifying communities of interest for those partners and stakeholders who could benefit from the information sharing services fusion centers provide. This is possible through the interaction among members who represent various disciplines and agencies, as the Director of fusion center F explained:

I’ll give you one concrete example of that. I was presenting to the governance board a few months ago and [after the presentation] their take [was] that all the police needed to hear what they were hearing, so they set aside some time at their annual conference, which is really hard to get on their agenda, but we had a block
in their main meeting to describe the fusion center, what it means to local law enforcement and the value we provide.

Fusion center internal advisory boards provide important feedback to fusion center managers. Many of the directors interviewed for this project expressed the value that comes from interacting with the stakeholders who comprise the advisory groups.

This type of interaction, where members from various disciplines and agencies, oftentimes not law enforcement, are in a position to receive tactical, operational, and strategic threat assessments as an advisory body, is a relatively new outgrowth of the fusion center enterprise. This reflects the complex interdependencies that exist among law enforcement, the first responder community, and others who are engaged in counterterrorism efforts, public safety protection, and combating criminal activity.

Interviewees expressed their view of the complex challenges they face managing a fusion center organization with a mission involving an all crimes and all hazards approach to their information sharing efforts. For example, the Director of fusion center B2 explained how his center shares information with his advisory board:

The board of governors meets quarterly. The sheriff chairs that committee. We present to them basically what we’re doing, the products, the programs that we have, whether it be our… team or our FLO. We present to them threat assessments this most recent one that’s coming up is going to be threat assessments for [an upcoming major event]. And then we get feedback from them. [We ask], is this helpful to you? Are you getting what you need from [the fusion center]?

He continued,

[W]e’re currently developing our threat assessment for our AOR, through the CIE, criminal intelligence enterprise. And that’s part of the major city chiefs, major county sheriffs [initiative]. So we will take that threat assessment, and we will allow that to kind of focus or drive our efforts from the fusion center intelligence information perspective. And we bring that to the board of governors, and we explain to them, here’s what we have determined are the
greatest threats within our AOR. And they… give us the go-ahead and the approval of [the information sharing process]. Here’s the resources. How can we help? What else do we need to contribute [from the fusion center]?

The importance of the advisory board and the feedback the board provides to fusion center managers was a sentiment expressed by the Director of fusion center A2:

When there is an issue of importance, I relay that to the chair, the sheriff here and the other board members and they will provide help where needed and have a tremendous amount of input to, but it kind of works both ways. It’s a great process for us and very robust.

Fusion centers are continually working to meet federal government expectations, such as through the elements evaluated in the annual National Fusion Center Assessment (the COCs and ECs), along with ensuring the protection of privacy and civil rights and civil liberties. These federal criteria are often presented to and used by the advisory boards to measure progress and support the fusion centers. However, fusion center directors expressed concerns that the federal government might expand its presence at the expense of state and local control through their local advisory bodies. This concern was expressed by the Director of fusion center C2:

Yes. And I can paraphrase it and say that at a high level we need those process measures in place [COC and ECs], and a certain number of performance metrics. But these centers are state and locally owned, and the decisions about daily operations and those strategies and measurements should come from the executive advisory board or governance. And that way, if you read the [House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security] report, and he thought fusion centers… sole purpose in existing was for terrorism. And I guess he visited one center. I don’t know if it was one or two. But that’s not the world. And you know, the federal government can have expectations, and tie that to funding. I understand that. But the bottom line is [this], that we don’t need another federal center at the local level. There’s enough of them. And we’re trying to provide on the ground, grassroots information up, and we know how to do that. They don’t.
Provides Accountability

Several fusion center Directors interviewed for this study indicated having a governance structure instilled a real sense of accountability to the fusion center process, to stakeholders and fusion center customers. Accountability was also a perspective shared by the Directors of multi-fusion center states regarding their statewide governance structure. Interorganizational and interdisciplinary collaborative relationships, which are important to fusion center success, complicate and challenge organizational hierarchy and chain of command processes and impose pressures on fusion center leadership to manage their organization effectively. Having a diverse multidisciplinary and stakeholder-based membership on the advisory board was credited by several of the interviewees as helpful to making difficult decisions, especially when politics or federal grant funds are involved. As put simply and succinctly by the Director of fusion center D when asked about his advisory body, he said, “Actually that’s primarily who I report to. They’re the ones that actually provide guidance and direction for the center here.”

The information sharing and gathering process in the fusion center business is, as several interviewees described, “big.” Their perspectives indicated that a stakeholder-based governance structure provides structure and accountability to a complex situation. As the Director of fusion center A2 considered:

I’m a firm believer that we’re all in it. We all have our own individual governance boards and that’s fine. But at the end of the day, you have to have a process that gives you the roadmap and guardrails to follow, to bring us in together, as a team. We’re stronger as a team than we are as individual centers. And that team effort, I believe, not only today but in the future

Additionally, information sharing and information gathering often involves new technology, which can have politically sensitive aspects. Advisory committees, by
performing their due diligence, can provide a level of support to fusion centers. For example, the Director of fusion center F stated, “the board can give you some cover and some advice in controversial issues like implementation of a facial recognition system.”

Several fusion center Directors interviewed for this project suggested their governance structure or advisory body provides an image of unity and cohesion among stakeholders and participants within their fusion center organization. This was explained as important for getting buy-in and acceptance among the existing partners and also with establishing new customer and partner collaborative relationships. The unity and cohesion must be real and not window-dressing, however. This point was made by the Director of fusion center B1, who is working with a regional fusion center in his state to establish a statewide governance structure, and provided the following comment on the current situation:

I mean I don’t think it does us any favors to show that we’re not in unity. I mean I think it hurts us. We go into these meetings and we fight each other because of politics, because of limited amount of funding, you know. I think if there was oversight from the state level and it’s just here’s what everybody’s going to get and here’s what is expected, I think it takes all those issues out of the play and if people see unity [and] stakeholders see unity, I think there’s more likelihood of sharing information and we wouldn’t have to expend so much resources and time trying to, so to speak, defend ourselves

Similarly, a governance structure can provide a means for fusion centers to coordinate among stakeholders and other fusion centers in those states with multiple fusion centers. By breaking down barriers and holding fusion centers accountable, advisory boards can influence fusion centers to collaborate. The Director of fusion center A2 stated that senior administrators and the governor in his state need to see cohesion among fusion center stakeholders and among the fusion centers in the state:
[The Governor] is a big supporter of the centers but he wants to see connectivity; he wants to see uniformity. And that uniformity means that we, [through our statewide advisory body], have to come up with common operating procedures or we will not [receive legislative recognition and funding].

Similarly, a sense of organizational cohesion is an important image to project and is one of the strengths a multidisciplinary advisory body can provide to support fusion centers. In one example, the Director of fusion center F described how his state’s legislature was on a “If I don’t know what it is, cut it,” campaign, and the legislature moved forward to cut his budget. In response, his fusion center’s advisory board testified before the legislature, defended the fusion center and requested the budget not be cut. By the end of legislative session his fusion center’s budget was reinstated.

Summary

The findings suggest fusion centers with an internal advisory body or governance structure which provides oversight and guidance to fusion center leadership are better positioned to build partnerships and maintain collaborative relationships. Based on the Directors’ interviews, this research revealed that advisory committees comprised of fusion center stakeholders representing a multidiscipline and multiagency membership provide critical feedback to fusion center leadership and help build a collaborative foundation. Moreover, advisory bodies through their diverse membership were shown to help break-down traditional barriers that prevented information sharing between law enforcement and other disciplines prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. These findings also extend to the advisory committees and governance structures that oversee and support fusion centers in multi-fusion center states. In addition to the benefits of a diverse membership as described above, statewide multi-fusion center advisory bodies provide a
mechanism for fusion centers to engage, interact and coordinate efforts within their respective areas of responsibility to support a statewide fusion process. Based on perspectives of the directors interviewed for this research, regional and jurisdictional boundaries within states with multiple fusion centers pose challenges to collaboration, especially when dialogue among fusion center leadership is weak. Finally, the findings suggest having an advisory or other governance structure, whether it is internal to a single fusion center or representing support to multiple fusion centers, instills accountability in the fusion process. By breaking down barriers through diverse membership and holding fusion centers accountable, these governance structures were shown to both influence and support fusion center collaboration.

**Interviewee Perceptions of Collaboration with Sector Partners: Table 4**

Table 4 (located at the end of this section) shows the responses from each of the nine interviewees to a multipart question about their perception of how they would rank their information sharing and gathering relationship with several federal, state, local agencies including tribal government and the private sector. Interviewees were asked to rank their relationships on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing “not involved” and 7 being “excellent.” This section discusses some of the important and interesting findings from this set of questions.

One interesting feature in the data is seen in the multi-fusion center states where the state and regional fusion centers have different relationships based on their area of responsibility (AOR) or region. (Note: Multi-fusion center states are indicated by a letter and number; e.g., A2). This is likely due in part to geographic reasons. The data seem to
indicate there is a division and specialization of relationships based on AOR. State fusion centers have stronger relationships with state agencies than do regional fusion centers. On a similar note, the responses from regional fusion center Directors indicate their relationships with local law enforcement agencies, schools, and local emergency management are ranked higher than those for the state fusion centers. For example, the responses for state fusion center A1 indicate a strong association with federal and state agencies as perceived by the interviewee. However, A1 has no relationship with local area law enforcement, Tribal government, and local fire services. This is because the fusion center governing structure for state “A” designates regional fusion centers with the responsibility for established relationships with local agencies in their respective AOR. This way the suspicious activity reporting, TLO programs, and counterterrorism training and outreach is kept at the local level and managed through the regional fusion center in that local jurisdiction. By definition, state fusion center A1 has no local agency relationship within its AOR, hence the N/A designation in Table 4.

How the fusion center Directors reported their relationships with the FBI is revealing, especially when compared to the reported relationships with DHS. The average information-sharing score reported for the FBI is 5.2 and 6.4 for the DHS. The difference in the Directors’ perceptions of their relationship with the FBI and DHS is explained in two ways. First, the DHS mission with fusion centers is to actively and aggressively support information-sharing with the State, Local, Tribal and territorial governments (SLTT). This is supported in large part by having a DHS Intelligence Officer assigned to each fusion center. The DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) serves as the information conduit and intelligence advocate for SLTT fusion
centers. The Directors interviewed for this study all indicated the DHS Intelligence Officers along with other deployed personnel to fusion centers and the direct federal support of DHS I&A provide substantial intelligence and information-sharing services. The FBI is also tasked with supporting fusion centers with information sharing. However, the FBI role with fusion centers is not as well defined as with DHS and only a few FBI personnel are deployed full time to work directly in fusion centers.

Additionally, the FBI culture was pointed out by some interviewees as not being fully on board with the fusion center mission and that the FBI information sharing was described as “one-sided” and a “black hole” (referring to how the FBI would take tips and leads on suspicious activity provided by fusion centers and not reciprocate the results of the investigation or outcomes to the fusion center). Cultural differences between state and local law enforcement and the FBI along with federal funding issues appear to contribute to the lack of FBI integration into the fusion center environment. But there is diversity of opinions on this, and based on the interviews for this research some Directors revealed having a very good relationship with the FBI and JTTF in their area and that this support was crucial to building collaborative relationships.

Another interesting finding is found with the responses to the State Health Department and the local public health and health care questions. Most of the responses rated low among all fusion centers regardless of whether the fusion center was a state or regional center, multi-state or single state organization. The average ranking for the local public health and health care question was 4.0, third lowest next to the Tribal Government question with a 3.3 ranking. This low score can be attributed to the relatively new involvement of state and local health agencies as an information vector in
the war on terror. Fusion centers are slowly integrating public health agencies into the information sharing environment, as the Director from fusion center D commented:

When I took over the center here a couple years ago one of the things that I looked at that we were missing was three critical areas. Tribal was an area we were really lax on, emergency management and public health were areas that we really should have been involved in and were not. So we’re starting to transition. So two years ago I would have said we were probably a one. So I think in my opinion we’ve come a long way to get to a[ranking of] five.

As discussed in the previous quote, the individual fusion center rankings reported for the Tribal information gathering and sharing relationship are low. The average ranking score of 3.3 (median 3) for the Tribal question was the lowest out of all 16 measures. The interviewees cited several reasons for their low ranking, with most suggesting that the tribal relationships are difficult to establish because of the tribal sovereignty issues and high turnover of personnel in several of the tribal government organizations. A common theme that emerged from the interviews was tribal outreach is necessary and that the fusion centers are working to improve tribal government relationships and improve information gathering and sharing. As the Director of fusion center A2 pointed out, improving the tribal relationship is important:

[It] has been a little challenging, but I think that’s a good challenge. We want to get a breakdown [of the issues], but the problem we’re having is with our TLO program and the sensitivity of information that we share, we’re working on that, actually, with U.S. Attorney and with the HSA on how we go about working with tribal entities... we’re not avoiding it, but it’s just been a challenge.

The variation seen in the ranking results for the private sector question indicates an interesting division between state and regional fusion centers. The regional fusion centers A2 and B2 show higher rankings for their collaborative relationships with the private sector than do their state counterparts. Because state A organizes their regional
fusion centers as the base for local partnership building, the state has more responsibility
to state agencies and their relationship with the private sector is more education oriented
and directed toward working with industry sectors in support of statewide critical
infrastructure (CI) protection. The regional fusion center, A2, is tasked with the private
sector relationships involving suspicious activity reporting, critical infrastructure
protection and direct outreach establishing reliable and consistent information sharing
relationships. The TLO program, which state center A1 does not have, is, however, the
primary method of outreach for regional fusion center A2:

And what we did was we brought in our InfraGard president into our building
here, who’s here part-time, working for us. And also, we are now in three
iterations of a very robust TLO training process, training our state and private
partners in the energy sector, agriculture sector, the wine sector and the chemical
sectors.

A similar sentiment was presented by fusion center E1, where the state center
operates in an AOR covered by a regional fusion center:

Our local partners, we really collaborate with them through our regional fusion
centers because they’re the touch point to the locals. […] with the] private sector,
we do this in three ways: Through our regional fusion centers, through our
partnerships with the private sector and then through critical infrastructure in the
prevention side, they’re constantly doing assessments for the private sector,
especially in areas that we have deemed them as critical infrastructure.

State B is a different situation. The state center, B1, operates both a TLO and CI
outreach program as does the regional fusion center, B2. However, demographics and
geography have an impact on these results. Fusion center B1, with 10 employees, is
responsible for a large AOR that covers several counties, whereas the regional fusion
center B2 operates in a single county AOR and has 64 employees (see Table 3). For this
state, an overwhelming percentage of the population resides in the county AOR for fusion
center B2. Based on the comments by the two directors, fusion center B2 prioritizes private sector outreach by allocating more resources to their TLO program than does the state center B1. This is a logical outcome given the dense population of the regional fusion center AOR and the larger number of employees B2 has as compared to B1.

There is also the issue of sharing sensitive information with the private sector. Though there are increasing avenues to include private sector partners into the information sharing environment, issues of information classification on the government side and the trepidation and reluctance from the private sector to participate fully with fusion centers have hindered information sharing and collaboration. As the regional fusion center C2 indicated, the private sector has concerns based on their need to protect certain business practices and the sharing of information that could be made public:

Well, it really involves law enforcement sensitive and classified information in the area of what we can share with them. And of course, they’re always going to have issues related to [proprietary areas] for profit that they don’t want to share with us.

Table 4 shows there is variation in how each fusion center Director perceives their relative collaborative information sharing and gathering relationship with a number of agencies and sector partners. As discussed, some of this variation is explained by geographical and regional differences, most notably among fusion centers in multi-fusion center states. Based on the interview data, Directors from state fusion centers indicated stronger collaborative relationships with state agencies than with local agencies. In states A, C, and E, with multiple fusion centers, the local relationships are assigned to the regional fusion centers, while the state fusion center has an area of responsibility specific
to state agencies. State B, which is a multi-fusion center state is different. The state fusion center, B1, has responsibility for several counties along with supporting state agencies. As discussed by the Director of fusion center B1, this enhanced AOR poses challenges to fusion center B1 to have adequate contact with local fire and law enforcement agencies. This can be seen in the B1 ranking of 3 for local fire services, compared to a 6 ranking in this category for regional fusion center B2. The challenge is primarily due to the large geographic area of the state fusion center’s AOR along with limited financial resources and few employees to actively engage with the many local agency stakeholders.
Table 4: Interviewee Response to Collaboration Perception by Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity Discipline or Agency</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>std dev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal Bureau of Investigation (Including JTTF and FIG)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Department of Homeland Security</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>6.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Emergency Management</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Homeland Security Advisor</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Emergency Management</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Guard</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State agencies:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Police</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Department</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrections</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry or Land Management</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local area law enforcement (sheriff and police)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal Government</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local fire services</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local public health and health care (including hospitals and ambulance services)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>5.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4: Interviewee Response to Collaboration Perception by Sector

Response to the following question: How would you rate your information gathering and sharing relationship with the following federal, state, and local partners within your Area of Responsibility (AOR)? Please rate your fusion center's level of interaction with each agency on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being "excellent."*
CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

This research dissertation examined how state and major urban area fusion centers collaborate with their partners and stakeholders, including other fusion centers, in a multidiscipline and interorganizational network environment. A qualitative exploratory research methodology using a multiple case study approach was used to investigate collaboration in nine fusion centers. Data was collected from nine semi-structured elite interviews with the directors of each fusion center under consideration. The objective of this study was to identify processes, functions, and behaviors supporting collaboration in the fusion center network. Additionally, this research identified several elements which were found to inhibit collaboration. Organization theory and network theory were used to inform this analysis by modeling the counterterrorism and all crimes/all hazards missions of fusion centers as institutions dealing with complex and interdependent policy areas known as “wicked problems.” The concept of boundary organizations was also introduced to understand the role of fusion centers as trusted agents in creating and facilitating an information sharing environment which includes federal, state, local government, tribal, and public sector partners with the goal of preventing, detecting, and deterring acts of terror in the United States.

Findings from this research provide several insights to the manner and intention of how collaboration is conducted in fusion centers, as expressed by the interviewees. Based on the perspectives provided by the nine fusion center Directors, this research reveals several important elements influencing a collaborative network environment for
information sharing and gathering, including: interpersonal relationships and trust, providing value-added services, organizational adaptation and learning, and having a strong sense of building partnerships. Governance and accountability were identified as important contributing factors supporting collaboration. This was shown as especially true for multi-fusion center states that have an advisory body of diverse membership to oversee and support a statewide fusion process. Many commonalities in the factors contributing to collaboration were identified and discussed in Chapter 5, but there were also unique variations and differences in the way the interviewees identified factors contributing to their particular fusion centers’ information sharing and gathering process.

This chapter discusses the important outcomes from the findings, how the themes relate to theory and literature presented in Chapter 3, the implications to established theory, and provides recommendations for future research in this area. The next section presents major findings for each of the four research questions and provides insight, interpretation, and context to the supporting themes based on the literature review. Following this section are implications for theory and practice based on the results of the study. As with any study there are limitations and these will be discussed. Finally, the study presents recommendations for future research and concluding comments.

**Discussion and Interpretation of Findings**

The goal of this dissertation was to answer the primary research question:

**How do fusion centers collaborate in a multidiscipline and interorganizational network environment?**

As discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4, this question was approached and investigated through a series of four sub-primary questions. This section provides discussion and
interpretation of each of these four research questions and their supporting themes from Chapter 5 and how this information relates to the theory presented in Chapter 3. It should be noted that this discussion is relevant to the results acquired from the interviews of the nine fusion center Directors who participated in this research and that the conclusions are not statistically generalizable to all fusion centers in the United States. However, careful consideration of these findings can provide useful information supporting broad qualitative and interpretive generalizations to other fusion centers outside of the study sample.

**Question 1:** Are fusion centers collaborating in ways that support an information sharing network and the ability to accomplish their organizational missions?

The purpose of this question was to ascertain how the fusion center Directors interviewed for this project perceive their agency’s collaborative capabilities and how collaboration supports their fusion center mission. Based on the information gathered from the interviews the findings seem to indicate that, in general, the fusion centers under review are actively and purposefully engaged in activities that both use collaboration as a tool to build partnerships and also seek to improve operations to build collaborative capacity. This perspective fits with Agranoff and McGuire’s (2003, 4) conceptualization that “Collaboration is a purposive relationship designed to solve a problem by creating or discovering a solution within a given set of constraints.” A driving factor often cited by the interviewees was their understanding of the complex interdependencies necessary to operate a fusion center and have a functioning information sharing environment. The literature indicates collaborative arrangements arise usually in response to agencies
facing complex problems (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003, 177; Agranoff and McGuire, 2001; Gray, 2000, 243-244).

The fusion center model for information sharing is specifically intended to break down barriers to information sharing and information gathering that existed prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Though the 9/11 Commission Report did not specifically spell out how fusion centers must operate, the literature does suggest that when organizations face complex social and public policy problems, which are often referred to as “wicked problems,” collaborative interactions become necessary to address these problems. As pointed out by O’Toole (1997), “matrix organizations, flexible work groups, and interagency coordinating committees are all structural responses to certain forms of ‘wickedness.’ But there is no comprehensive theory to suggest how to manage such organized effort.” The findings indicate that fusion centers are finding ways to overcome many challenges to information sharing with partners from federal, state, and local governments, including tribes, and the private sector.

The shift in focus by fusion centers from being primarily a counterterrorism intelligence center to incorporating an all-crimes and all-hazards approach was expressed by the interviewees as a common sense and practical move which satisfies the needs of their collaborative partners and also better aligned with the expectations of the fusion center’s home agencies. Shifting focus to include all-crimes and all-hazards into their fusion center mission was also seen by some Directors as complementary to and not detracting from the counterterrorism mission. However, the federal government, primarily through the DHS, has expressed concerns about mixing in what they consider to be local law enforcement issues with the national information sharing role for fusion
centers. From a theory perspective, this move away from a pure counterterrorism fusion center model can be seen as a reaction to the complex problem environment (wicked problems) facing the state and local fusion centers. As Rittel and Webber (1973) stated about wicked problems, “each attempt at creating a solution changes the understanding of the problem.” Additionally, Weber and Khademian (2008) suggest these complex problems cut across government jurisdictions and other boundaries, often creating interorganizational issues ripe with tension and conflict. Dealing with both vertical and horizontal intergovernmental relationships, in this case the federal government and the state and local fusion center partnerships, the shift to include all-crimes and all-hazards as part of the fusion center mission imposes value changes. Fusion center leadership made a decision that imposed changes in perceptions of the various parties involved while trying to find the best solution to the state and local information sharing environment. Using the more expansive mission areas, fusion centers were viewed as more relevant to partners and stakeholders such as local sheriffs and police officers, thus enabling their buy-in and acceptance of the fusion center concept. By becoming more relevant and working through this policy change to accommodate stakeholders, fusion centers have increased the legitimacy of their network (Provan and Milward, 2001).

The participants’ responses to how they perceived collaboration within their fusion center network showed an inclination toward adaptive behavior. Thompson (2004) discussed how open organizations are exposed to their external environment and this exposure is often seen as a threat to the “technical core” of the organization. Fusion centers, as argued in this dissertation, are open organizations which must deal with their external environment. Thompson’s solution is that open system organizations can be
flexible and adaptive to exogenous effects and thereby make decisions about interactions which can benefit the organization (2004, 160). For example, several Directors discussed the uniqueness of their AOR and how cultural diversity of their local population presents challenges to building collaborative partnerships. Likewise, building partnerships with private business poses challenges for both information sharing and gathering. For each of these two examples, the fusion center Directors of these agencies purposefully looked for creative solutions to break down barriers and incorporate these interests into their fusion center partnerships.

Building on this idea of adaptability, Weber and Khademian (2008) discussed how establishing a collaborative environment requires understanding “the variance in value” of various forms of information that could be available to the network. They go on to say that “failure to recognize and make allowances for the socially constructed sources of knowledge can necessarily hamper the problem-solving effectiveness of networks.” The goal is to create a “mind set” in the organization that embraces a problem-solving outlook and builds a skill set to successfully advance collaborative partnerships within the network. Based on the findings, it does appear fusion centers are building this collaborative capacity both in the organization and through the network.

**Question 2:** What factors, organizational structures, or management perspectives facilitate fusion center interagency collaboration?

The findings for this research question provided some insight to several elements the participants identified as important to or influencing their fusion center’s ability to engage in interagency and multidiscipline collaboration. The complexity imposed by wicked problems on government and public organizations to find ways to address these
issues has brought about a growth in collaborative networks (Agranoff, 2007, 177; Kickert et al., 1997; O’Toole, 1997). As pointed out by Agranoff and McGuire (2001), having many stakeholders and other participants from diverse backgrounds is important to a network, “Multiple parties means multiple alternatives to suggest and consider, more information available for all to use, and a decision system that is less bound by the frailties of individual thinking.” Each of the six functions and traits identified in the findings for this research question were strongly supported by expressions and perceptions from nearly all fusion center Directors interviewed for this research.

Outreach efforts and building partnerships was by far the theme related to several topics that seemed to permeate the interview responses. This is not surprising because fusion centers early on in their development instituted programs such as the Terrorism Liaison Officer (TLO) which provide various levels of counterterrorism education and introductions to the fusion center concept and information sharing. The TLO programs and outreach programs generally proved very successful in establishing a base of relationships with law enforcement and others in the first responder community and provided a method of enculturation to the concept of multidiscipline and interorganizational information sharing.

The responses provided by the Directors interviewed for this research regarding their perceptions toward interorganizational collaboration can be compared to the “collaborative capacity builder” (CCB) described by Weber and Khademian (2008). The specific attributes that define a CCB are outlined and discussed in some detail in chapter 3 and will not be mentioned here. However, what is important to note is the participant responses indicate a shared “mind-set” revealing a personal level of understanding and
conceptualization of the fusion process that goes beyond merely functional attributes and strategies involved with collaborative networks. Though these functional attributes are vitally important to network success, it is the mind-set of the CCB that ultimately drives choices within the collaborative network structure. As Weber and Khademian (2008) suggest, without a commitment by all stakeholders to be “constructively engaged, it is unlikely that the capacity to solve wicked problems can be maintained for the long term.”

A commitment to building and maintaining the fusion center network, both for a local fusion center network and the larger National Network of Fusion Centers, was revealed through the interviews during the course of this research. In a way, this theme of network building is similar to the previous discussion about the mindset of the CCB. Several fusion center Directors expressed an understanding that the network concept is complex and involves many relationships which often can be difficult, costly, or threatening to the organization (Robinson, 2006). This is the trade-off (Dawes et al., 2009) managers are willing to accept in order to establish collaborative relationships which break down interagency barriers and eliminate the information sharing silos to successfully achieve their counterterrorism and all crimes missions.

The research findings indicated that interpersonal relationships are an important factor to effective information sharing and interagency collaboration within the fusion center network. Additionally, the element of trust surfaced as a critical personality trait attributable to successful personal and interagency collaborations. This was not a surprising finding given that fusion centers are based on human relationships, organizational and agency dependencies and interdependencies, and reliance on effective communication. Similarly, Joyal (2012) in her study of interagency collaboration of four
fusion centers and the effect on the law enforcement community, discovered interpersonal relationships, trust, and reciprocity along with genuineness were important personality characteristics to implementing fusion center initiatives. Both trust and reciprocity are discussed extensively in the academic literature (LaPorte and Metlay, 1996; March and Olsen 1989,126; Ostrom, 1998; Vangen and Huxham, 2003).

Regarding interpersonal relationships, the participants in this research provided considerable insight to the view of their position as a leader in the organization and also into the behavior of fusion center employees. One Director discussed how the information sharing and fusion process is a philosophy which needs to be taught and nurtured. Another Director emphasized the importance of personalities and stated quite clearly, “one bad personality can ruin everything.” The same sentiment is evident in the literature, as La Porte and Metley (1996) stated, “Trust is fragile. It is typically created rather slowly but it can be destroyed in an instant – by single mishap or mistake.”

Ostrom (1998) discussed the importance of trust and trustworthiness as part of a structural loop that builds on reciprocity and reputation, which together influences levels of cooperation and the resulting net benefits of action. This means that if trust is weakened it could affect cooperation and the perception of the net benefits of collaboration “leading to a downward spiral” (Ostrom, 1998). Trust is important to the long term integrity of a network (Agranoff, 2003), especially in the absence of a direct bureaucratic line of authority or hierarchy.

However, within an organization and certainly within a network structure the literature indicates there are institutional factors that are important to better ensure information sharing and effective collaboration can be maintained over time with reliable
and trusted relationships along with quality information (Mischen, 2013; Weber and Khademian, 2008). For example, Fountain (2013) determined interagency collaboration is only sustainable over time if organizations and their managers develop two types of collaboration: “collaboration through people” and “collaboration through processes.” The first type represents relationship skills such as those discussed above and other informal attributes such as persuasion and creativity. The second considers formal plans and agreements used to establish expectations, set roles and responsibilities, and goals. Both forms of collaboration are necessary for long term interagency collaboration.

Participants in this research expressed the importance of formal policies, procedures, and agreements to how fusion centers establish, measure, and maintain interorganizational collaborative relationships. Several fusion center Directors indicated they support and use MOUs and MOAs to formalize relationships with agencies and individuals outside of the fusion center. CONOPS and strategic planning tools are also viewed favorably and utilized by most fusion centers in this study.

Mischen (2013) argues that networks need to address not just the “softer skills of collaboration” (the interpersonal relationships) but also the “technical aspects for knowledge management.” Trust and other interpersonal relationship qualities are mentioned as critical to network success, along with governance and technical capabilities.

Kalu (2012) noted a process of organizational learning occurs during the course of building collaborative networks. This “learning to learn” is attributed to the complex issues and wicked problems facing organizations within networks and the process of working through this complex environment to acquire new knowledge (Weber and
Khademian, 2008) and to achieve network goals. As discussed above, the collaborative process in a network requires a new way of thinking by managers and organizations to deal with uncertainties and other risks. Innes and Booher (1999) suggested a new mindset be adopted by managers to deal with this complex environment to engage with collaborative partners in empathetic and non-confrontational ways to establish a shared learning process. In this study, several fusion center Directors provided accounts of situations where a fusion center employee or a team from their respective fusion center had encountered a potential problem or challenge to their ability to share information or establish a new partnership. Many of these situations were described in terms of learning, which often involved understanding a situation including the nuances of the social and political environments involved. From this learning, mutually acceptable and practical solutions were found.

The participants indicated in their responses that providing value added services to their customers and stakeholders was critical to how their fusion centers build collaborative relationships and garner a positive reputation regarding their performance. There are very strong incentives, explained both in theory and practice, for understanding the importance placed on value added services. In practice, the National Network of Fusion Centers assessment (DHS, 2013, vii, 3, 26) reports on fusion center performance and expectations to create value for their customers and stakeholders. In theory, Agranoff (2007, 156-157) suggests that “public managers seek to discover, define, and produce public value” and they often do this as “important innovators.” Attention to these aspects of providing value through collaboration has been shown in the academic literature to be influenced by performance, (Agranoff, 2007, 156), process and outcome,
and focus on “personal, organization, and network perspectives” (158). As evidence, the fusion center Directors participating in this research provided several examples of how their fusion centers created value added services for their customers, such as: enhanced local and state investigations support; using their TLO program to gather information for the National SAR; leveraging expertise by having embedded federal partners working directly in the fusion center; and, producing information products that are specific to customer’s needs based on agency, discipline, and affiliation.

Another factor that emerged was participants expressed concern about how their home agency perceived fusion center performance and success based on value added services, thus influencing their decisions about value added performance. As reported in this study, fusion centers face resource limitations especially the continuing reduction in the Homeland Security Grant Program funding. As grant funding for fusion centers diminishes, fiscal responsibility falls increasingly on state and local funding. To this point, participants expressed the importance of “marketing” the fusion center as providing unique services not provided elsewhere, thereby producing a public benefit. Agranoff (2007, 158) described similar behaviors and perceptions about value benefits being driven by the “home organization” and centering, in part, on the self-interest of the agency administrator resulting from his grounded-study of several public agencies he calls Public Management Networks.

The themes discussed in this question also have implications in terms of the boundary organization framework. In general, boundary organizations are characterized by three key elements: (1) stakeholders and participants are incentivized to share information and help with the production of boundary objects; (2) meaningful
participation by participants and stakeholders representing the organizations spanning the boundaries; and, (3) lines of accountability to the relevant stakeholders (Guston, 2001).

The responses provided by the participants in this research question and to research question 1 have provided considerable evidence that fusion centers are engaged in meaningful and purposeful collaboration. Of course this research focused only on the perspectives of fusion center directors and did not include interviews with partners and stakeholders. What can be stated, however, is the participants in this research explained how several important elements of interorganizational collaboration, such as trust, interpersonal relationships, and having a management perspective fostering outreach and partnerships, are present within their organizations and show a long-term commitment to the fusion process (Crona and Parker, 2012; Kettl, 2006; Kickert, et al., 1997; Vangen and Huxham, 2003). This also includes the decision-making “mind-set” of the interviewees (Weber and Khademian, 2008; Williams, 2002) supporting the concept of networks, as discussed earlier.

Fusion centers were established specifically to provide an information sharing collaborative bridge between and among various disciplines and organizations and between holders of information and the users. As such, the fusion center model represents a purposeful institution specifically designed to build collaborative relationships with the ultimate goal of preventing terrorism. This intentional collaborative directive supports the argument that fusion centers are boundary organizations. The literature often suggests interorganizational collaboration occurs through a process referred to as “failing into” collaboration (Ansell and Gash, 2006, Roberts, 2011), whereby organizations are forced into collaboration through their own
failure. However, as fusion centers were born out of a tragedy, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, they are unique organizations that stand on their own. The fusion center model was specifically designed for information sharing and represents “a fundamental shift in the philosophy toward homeland defense and law enforcement” (Masse, et al., 2007). As the findings suggest, the Directors’ perceptions strongly support interagency collaboration and their responses indicated a commitment to the information sharing environment.

The findings of this research revealed the participants use incentives, both directly and indirectly, to facilitate collaboration among participants and stakeholders in the form of “boundary objects.” These boundary objects are usually physical instruments, such as maps and reports, that are used to bind the relationships between boundary organization and its collaborative partners, and mediate the relationships between suppliers and users of information (Clark, et al. 2011; Guston, 2001; Schneider, 2009). Decisions and management practices that enable collaboration may also be considered boundary objects (Batie, 2008). As indicated by the participants, fusion centers produce various products that can be considered boundary objects such as: intelligence reports, situational awareness briefings, criminal activity maps, and informational reports specifically requested by partner agencies. Because fusion centers aim to provide value-added services to their customers through products, this provides an incentive to partners and stakeholders to provide information and participate in a collaborative network.

The boundary organization concept is also discussed in the section covering research question 4, which considers the usefulness and impact of governance and advisory bodies as presented by the fusion center Directors participating in this research. At this point, two of the three elements identified by Guston (2001) defining boundary
organizations have been shown to exist for the fusion centers participating in this research. The third point regarding the lines of accountability for fusion centers will be discussed in question 4.

**Question 3:** What factors constrain or challenge fusion centers from effective collaboration and information sharing with federal, state, and local agencies and the private sector?

The findings presented for this research question indicate that several factors appear to adversely affect or influence how fusion centers engage in interorganizational collaboration with partners and stakeholders based on participant responses. This is not entirely surprising due to the complex policy environment in which fusion centers operate. Much has already been said about counterterrorism being a wicked problem (Rittel and Weber, 1973) and the challenges and tensions organizations face when dealing with the considerable interdependencies involved with collaborative networks (O’Toole, 1997). Several participants in this study indicated they had considerable concern about their fusion center having adequate resources to successfully meet the demands of their customers and partners in providing fusion center services. Their perceptions focused primarily on concerns regarding budgetary issues, sustainment grant funding, especially as this impacts the ability to hire qualified personnel, such as intelligence analysts and outreach officers. Thomson and Perry (2006) studied the collaboration process and suggested that five dimensions are necessary in order to effectively collaborate. One of these dimensions is referred to as “collaborative administration,” representing an “administrative capacity” providing coordination and “social capacity,” which is used to build relationships. It is social capacity (often referred
to the literature as social capital) that requires having the right employees with the right skills who have the “ability to build and sustain effective interpersonal relationships among partners.” In another study, Mullin and Daley (2010) explain that because collaboration generally has high transaction costs in time, and financial and human capital resources, organizations and agencies without adequate resources may restrict or impede their ability and willingness to collaborate.

Several fusion center Directors noted geographic distance can constrain their ability to establish and sustain collaborative relationships. The common concern involved not having adequate travel funding so fusion center personnel could meet in person with customers and partners who reside long distances from the fusion center. As revealed in the findings, the participants found that meeting face-to-face with partners and stakeholders was critical to their collaborative outreach and maintaining those relationships at a high level. This perspective is supported by the literature. For example, Agranoff (2007) noted that network interaction is personal and “electronic means are not substitutes for face-to-face communications.” Similarly, Dawes, et al (2009) suggested that “face-to-face contact is often important, even indispensable,” for network collaboration. Because wicked policy problems impose uncertainties and risks on the participants and decision-makers in the network (McGuire, 2006; van Bueren, Klijn, and Koppenjan, 2003), it is, therefore, important for stakeholders and partners in the network to stay “constructively engaged” for the long run to maintain collaborative capacity (Weber and Khademian, 2008).

Though the Directors who were interviewed for this research project indicated a steadfast commitment to building collaborative partnerships to support the fusion center
network, they did express frustration about the challenges they face in relying upon individuals from other agencies and organizations to provide timely and accurate information to the fusion center. Because the participants do not have direct authority over individuals outside of their fusion center organization they feel they have very little control to influence members in the network to consistently and reliably provide information to the fusion center. Collaboration is being defined in this dissertation as a reciprocal relationship and in the situation when a member of the network fails to support the process then there is a breakdown in the collaborative partnership. Huxham and Vangen (2003) observed through several case studies that “managers faced disinterested or contrarian participants who had to be convinced to collaborate” (in Robinson, 2006). In complex policy environments where collaboration is normally voluntary, members in the network search for ways to justify participation and information sharing to the leadership of their home agency. This creates uncertainty in the network and sometimes leads to inefficient communication or non-communication, which has been labeled “collaborative inertia” (Huxham, 2003; Kalu, 2012). Ill feelings and other discord can create problems where members do not participate fully. These can be conflicts over agency turf, resources, staff time and the contributions to the network, and includes struggles over power and influence within the network due to intergovernmental interdependencies and weak lines of authority (Agranoff, 2006).

During the course of this research participants revealed having concerns with some of the DHS recommendations for fusion center operations and activity including the possible new “path forward” designed to increase the capabilities of the National Network of Fusion Centers. The results show some Directors see inconsistencies with
the metrics used for the National Assessment of Fusion Centers and that some elements being measured do not work well with the local operation of fusion centers. For example, some directors expressed disagreement with developing and using standing information needs (SINs) of the type measured in the DHS annual assessment of fusion centers, primarily because these SINs do not fit with their fusion center operational framework for gathering information. Additionally, some participants expressed concern that incorporating “all-crimes” into their fusion center mission was viewed by DHS as competing with the counterterrorism role of fusion centers. Such state and local tensions with the federal government have been discussed in the academic literature. One study by Moynahan, et al. (2011) found that as institutions move away from standard bureaucratic processes and embrace collaborative networks to solve complex policy issues that the use of standard performance measures are increasingly incompatible with such complex organizations. Further, this study suggested that tensions occur when the organization in a network environment has to meet the normative expectations of performance measures imposed by Democratic governance.

Another study found that coordination among federal, state, and local governmental units are challenged due to the fragmented nature of American governance and federalism, where the intention is to “promote virtues of economic and political liberalism rather than collective security” (Roberts, 2011). And finally, based on information from a statewide survey of local officials regarding emergency management in Florida, Caruson and MacManus (2011) were able to show that several vertical and horizontal roadblocks to interlocal cooperation exist, primarily due to incompatibilities
and inconsistencies with information sharing which detracted from effective coordination in collaboration between the federal government and state and local jurisdictions.

Though information sharing among various disciplines within the fusion center network has improved substantially over the years, the findings from this research indicate some issues, primarily historical in nature, constrain sharing of certain types of information. Overclassification of information has been discussed in the academic and also the government literature as a problem resulting in overbearing restrictions on dissemination of information (Busch and Weissman, 2005; Chermak, et al., 2013; Rollins, 2008, 31). Naturally, much of the information passing through fusion centers is classified at some level, sometimes law enforcement sensitive or possibly a federal national security classification. Several participants indicated their fusion center works hard to downgrade classified material as best as possible, but this can be a major challenge depending on the level classification and the other interdependencies that exist, such as an ongoing criminal investigation. Fusion centers are working to break away from holding information as if it were a proprietary property right (Posner, 2006, 17) or using classification is a power position that can prevent information sharing (Agranoff, 2007, 182).

Regional issues adversely impacting collaboration and information sharing among some fusion centers in multi-fusion center states emerged from the findings. As indicated in the findings, two fusion centers, B1 and B2, are located in a large state and separated by a distance of several hundred miles. The state does not have a governance or advisory body to oversee the state fusion process, unlike the other four multi-state fusion centers represented in this study (A1, A2, C2, E1). Based on the perspectives provided by the
Directors interviewed for this research, notably the comments and responses to the questions from the Directors of fusion centers B1 and B2, it appears geographic distance along with not having a statewide advisory process presents challenges to collaborative efforts among fusion centers. As a constraint on collaboration, geographic distance was discussed earlier in this section and also applies here (Agranoff, 2007; Dawes, et al, 2009). Whereas fusion centers A1 and A2, C2, and E1 provided positive comments regarding the level information sharing and collaboration among fusion centers in their respective states, fusion centers B1 and B2 were not so positive. During the interviews with the participants three themes emerged that appear to affect collaboration and information sharing between fusion centers B1 and B2: geographic distance, politics, and trust.

As a constraint on collaboration, geographic distance was discussed earlier in this section and applies here (Agranoff, 2007; Dawes, et al, 2009). The Directors of both fusion centers, B1 and B2, expressed the difficulty in time, effort, and cost to travel between fusion centers and have regular face-to-face discussions. Based on the findings geographic distance and lack of face-to-face communications along with not having the experience of being in each other’s fusion center and understanding the dynamics of each center from a personal perspective, appears to also affect trust. As Agranoff (2007) reminds us, trust is important to the long term integrity of a network, especially in the absence of a direct bureaucratic line of authority or hierarchy that is typical of collaborative network structures.

Dawes et al. (2009), discuss difficulties of collaboration and networking within an information intensive environment. They note that collaboration and network problems
are sociotechnical and human caused, which involve a number of organizational, social, ideological and political contexts. There is a “Realpolitik” to sharing knowledge and information in networks, and this requires managers and leadership in these networks to have the skills and understanding to navigate this complex environment (Dawes, et al., 2009). The politics of network performance is an issue several participants in this research mentioned as impacting the ability to manage their respective fusion centers. Certainly, as indicated in the findings, politics was a major contributing theme to the challenges of collaboration and information sharing among fusion centers B1 and B2. O’Toole and Meier (2004) looked at network performance and noted that politics is often neglected in this research area. The managers in networks need to understand that politics and power relationships have the potential of producing a “dark side” to public management in networks:

[T]he likelihood that, rather than being neutral producers of collective goods while enmeshed in a broader environment, network managers respond to the stronger and more politically powerful elements of their surroundings, thus magnifying the tendency toward inequality already present in the social setting (O’Toole and Meier, 2004).

**Question 4:** How does having a formal governance structure or advisory body help facilitate and maintain collaborative relationships that are beneficial to the information sharing network?

The purpose of this question was to gather information about the importance, usefulness, and general perception of the role of governance to the information sharing capabilities of fusion centers. Based on responses provided by the fusion center Directors interviewed for this research, there does appear to be strong support for a governance structure or advisory body to provide guidance and recommendations, and to a lesser
extent, oversight, to fusion centers and their activities. This was not an unexpected finding given the federal government, through DHS, has provided recommendations to state and major urban area fusion centers to have a governance structure which includes a committee or body the provides accountability of fusion center operations. Further, the National Network of Fusion Centers annual assessment includes questions regarding governance and governing bodies which become part of the overall capabilities metric used for each fusion center. However, the goal of this research question is to ascertain insights from the study participants about their governing structure or advisory body and how these institutions benefit and support their ability to engage in interorganizational collaboration and carry out their fusion center mission. As Mischen (2013) reminds us, “What distinguishes networks from markets and hierarchies is governance.”

Research findings for this question indicate that the fusion center Directors interviewed for this project have a very positive perception of the governance and advisory structure representing their fusion centers. This was uniformly true among all Directors regarding their individual fusion centers advisory body. However, when the discussion focused on fusion centers within multi-fusion center states, there were some differences in opinion regarding the usefulness and expected support that could be provided by a governance structure or advisory body representing several fusion centers within a single state.

When discussing the governance structure for their fusion centers, participants described having an advisory group or board that primarily provides recommendations, guidance, and feedback to fusion center leadership and does not explicitly direct fusion center operations. This advisory model was described by the interviewees as the primary
model used by both individual fusion centers for their internal governing structure and as the statewide advisory body used in multiple fusion center states. For both types, the participants expressed the importance of having diverse membership representing multiagency stakeholders and disciplines on their advisory boards. The Directors attributed this diverse stakeholder membership to helping break down the legacy “barriers of communication” among law enforcement and the first responder community and also for facilitating a collaborative environment to establish a network. Similarly, the advisory boards were credited with establishing a sense of collegiality among not only the members, but also throughout the fusion center organization with spillover effects to the larger partnership and stakeholder network. In general, it was the “feedback” the Directors mentioned as being the most helpful contribution of the advisory body.

Several studies have argued, both in theory and empirically, how various types of governance structures can complement the function and performance of collaborative networks, along with revealing the challenges to public network governance (Agranoff, 2007, 190-196; Ansell and Gash, 2008; Dawes, et al., 2009; Kalu, 2012; Kettl, 2006; Mischen, 2013; Weber and Khademian, 2008). Keeping in mind the interdependencies and uncertainties present when dealing with wicked problems, the importance of trust and accountability are also key elements to understanding the role of fusion center advisory bodies to establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships (Fountain, 2013; McGuire, 2006; Vangen and Huxham, 2003). When looking at building collaborative capacity, Weber and Khademian (2008) proposed there needs to be an understanding that “vertical government responsibilities” must be included as part of the process of building collaborative capacity in horizontal relationships, and including the links between
horizontal and vertical collaborative relationships. This is not a “government” process, but rather a “commitment” to a process by public managers who “share” the responsibilities of understanding the wicked problem.

Accountability to the collaborative process is also reinforced through governance (Weber and Khademian, 2008). The Directors’ perceptions revealed they believe the advisory bodies and governance structure establish a degree of accountability in what is a highly interdependent and nonhierarchical, non-chain-of-command information sharing fusion process. In some cases it was described that advisory bodies provided needed direction to the fusion centers – the “roadmap and guardrails to follow” – as one Director stated. As such, the advisory bodies are used to establish expectations between fusion centers and their partners and stakeholders. This perspective fits with the description of accountability and the need for governance provided by Dawes, et al. (2009) addressing the several layers of government and the interdependencies that exist in collaborative, multi-organizational institutions. According to Dawes, et al. (2009) accountability in a network is established in part through some degree of government support (what they referred to as “legitimizing”) to the network based on collaborative management approaches and partnership building.

An interesting aspect revealed from the results of this research were the perspectives provided by the Directors representing fusion centers B1 and B2 regarding a statewide fusion center governance process. This multi-fusion center state does not yet have an advisory body or governance structure to support the state’s multiple fusion centers, unlike the other multi-fusion center state fusion centers participating in this research, which do have a statewide governing process. This matter was discussed earlier
in the chapter in relation to issues involving geographic distance and resource constraints and how these factors constrained communication, specifically face-to-face communications, among fusion center leadership. Analyzing this situation from a governance and accountability perspective, some observations can be made relative to the literature.

First, as has been stated several times in this dissertation, fusion centers have unique qualities which are based on several factors such as geographic location, state or local designation, number personnel, funding, and the fusion centers home agency, to name a few. Not having a statewide governance or advisory body when compared to other multi-fusion center states in the study is an example of this variation. Secondly, collaborative network structures used to address complex social and policy problems, such as counterterrorism and law enforcement, have inherent risks and impose uncertainty on members of the network (Roberts, 2006; Van Bueren, et al., 2003). There are vast interdependencies in network collaboration and this can threaten an organization’s sense of independence (McGuire, 2006; Provan and Milward, 1995). The unstructured nature of wicked problems makes addressing these problems through a network costly to members and organizations in the network (Rittel and Webber, 1973; O’Toole, 1997). Third, the incentives and disincentives of choosing to collaborate with various partners and stakeholders involves a collaboration calculus where the perceived outcome, over time, must show a net benefit for collaboration to occur.

The challenges to collaboration listed above impose difficulties to agencies looking to collaborate; however, these are not insurmountable. There is certainly evidence from the multi-fusion center states participating in this research that such
challenges can be dealt with and overcome. Academic literature suggests that managers and organizations searching for collaborative solutions to wicked problems need to be mindful of power positions (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003, 184-185) including political power (O’Toole and Meier, 2004) that can produce asymmetries among potential partners thereby hindering collaboration. This again takes us to the idea of the mind-set of the collaborative capacity builder and the commitments to the collaborative process (Weber and Khademian, 2008). Direct lines of communication, dialogue, and face-to-face meetings, have been discussed as important to building trust, and that trust is important to establishing collaborative relationships. In their study on collaborative governance, Ansell and Gash (2008) made an interesting point that “both trust and interdependence are partly endogenous – they are shaped in positive or negative ways by the collaborative process itself.” Their research showed stakeholders often did not fully understand the level of interdependence, and it was only through dialogue with other stakeholders and through several successes from participating in a collaborative network that they began to understand the value of the collaborative process.

As presented in this research, fusion centers are a collaborative network involving vertical integration with the federal government and horizontal integration with state, local government, tribal governments, and the private sector. Fusion centers can be viewed as an information sharing hub serving various levels of law enforcement and public safety needs along with being the “Nexus of the homeland security intelligence enterprise at the state and local level” (DHS, 2013, v). This places fusion centers at the center of many collaborative relationships established within their local network and in the larger national network. This poses somewhat of a challenge in the literature
regarding collaborative networks, where collaborative networks are often discussed as having accountability problems stemming from diffuse intergovernmental and interorganizational relationships and the lack of a single agency bureaucratic control (O’Toole, 1997a, McGuire, 2006). However, recent research using the boundary organization framework have shown a tendency to relax the degree to which boundary organizations are held accountable to their networked associations (Schneider, 2009; Quick and Feldman, 2011). For example, Schneider (2009) in her research stated that “Boundary organizations are a form of network, but a particular form that typically is created by a government agency not only to bridge agency boundaries but also bring scientific information into the policy arena.” She then argues for application of the boundary organization to “social services” given the similarities in the literature discussing “collaboration, inclusive management, network management, and governance” (Schneider, 2009). The literature is also critical of the “vagueness” from the several descriptions of boundary organizations and how the interactions and processes among boundary organizations and their partners and stakeholders “remains poorly articulated” (Crona and Parker, 2012).

As pointed out in the research findings, the participants indicated their advisory committees or governance structure provide some level of accountability to partners and stakeholders comprising the fusion center network. Several administrative and network attributes contributing to fusion center accountability and responsiveness were discussed in the above section. This would tend to support the boundary organization attribute of having a line of accountability to stakeholders (Guston, 2001). However, this original definition of accountability is considered narrow and several researchers have suggested
the framework of “boundary organizations needs to be expanded…” (Miller, 2001). The remainder of this section discusses in more detail how fusion centers established accountability to stakeholders and partners, based on the findings.

Membership of the advisory committees for each of the fusion centers under consideration in this study comprise stakeholders and participants representing various disciplines, government agencies and the private sector. Not all, however, have the same representation. For all fusion centers in this study, the Directors identified the importance of including state and local representatives who are directly involved with the fusion center. Some indicated they include federal representation and a few also include private sector partners. What can be said is not all agencies and disciplines participating in the fusion center partnerships are represented on the advisory boards. This also extends to advisory committees representing multiple fusion centers in those states with more than one center. Hence, direct lines of accountability between each discipline, group, or agency are not established. This lack of direct accountability with all participating partnerships and stakeholders, however, was not a critical deficit to a successful boundary organization as described by Schneider (2009) in her study comparing two national boundary organizations representing federal justice grant recipients. Likewise, Quick and Feldman (2011) point to the importance of creating boundary management processes using collaborative governance, which allow for creative information linking that can produce benefits unattainable by organizations operating separately. Adding that “collaborative governance networks are sometimes characterized as boundary organizations that brought together different bases of expertise in order to coproduce actions…” (Quick and Feldman, 2011).
Several elements were identified as a result of this research as contributing to the way fusion centers engage in collaborative behavior and work toward creating an information sharing network. Among these are trust and reciprocity with partner agencies, interpersonal relationships, and building long-term partnerships. The participants in this research provided information showing that fusion centers have the capability to be learning organizations and also adapt to the needs and demands of their agency partners and also to their social environment. Adding to this, fusion centers utilize formal documents, plans, and agreements to codify certain relationships and in some instances establish expectations with agency partners. Fusion centers are formal institutions that manage multiple boundaries (jurisdictional, discipline, cultural, and geographic) to be successful at meeting their agency missions. Adding to this is the temporal context, which adds complexity and uncertainty, and often conflict to boundary management.

There is no perfect solution to dealing with the uncertainty and complexity of the policy decision-making environment of wicked problems. A key, and the literature argues necessary, component to boundary management within collaborative networks is having some structure to establish the boundary organization’s accountability with their partners and stakeholders (Crona and Parker, 2012; Guston, 2001; Miller, 2001). For fusion centers, this is the advisory committee. The structure of the fusion center advisory boards provide diverse representation that closely resembles the attribute suggested for boundary organizations (Guston 2001). This is especially true if the more recent literature on boundary organizations focused on establishing accountability between the boundary organization and their collaborative partners is considered (Clark, et al., 2011;
Feldman, et al., 2006; Schneider, 2009; Williams, 2002). With limited resources and the size of the fusion center network at the state and regional levels, it would be difficult to have an advisory committee comprising all groups and agents. Fusion center Directors participating in this research expressed concern that various resource limitations are a threat to their success. They also indicated the importance of feedback from their advisory committees. Choices must be made as to the membership of the advisory committees, while at the same time maintaining legitimacy (Dawes, et al., 2009) and ensuring that representation provides appropriate feedback to fusion center leadership.

“It is through accountability and established trust that boundary organizations are stable institutions because they are held accountable by and also responsive to the participants in the network” (Guston, 2001).

**Contributions to Theory**

Examining state and major urban area fusion centers through the perspectives of the Directors from several fusion centers provides considerable information about how fusion centers engage in collaborative relationships, which facilitate and maintain supporting an information sharing environment. As an exploratory multiple case study, the findings from this research provide several contributions to the literature on collaborative networks (Agranoff, 2006; Agranoff and McGuire, 1999; Innes and Booher, 1999; Kickert, et al, 1997; McGuire and Silvia, 2010; O’Toole, 1997; Provan and Milward, 2001; Provan and Milward, 1995), wicked problems as policy issues (Dawes, et al, 2009; Rittel and Webber, 1973; Weber and Khademian, 2008), and public sector governance in the context of boundary organizations (Batie, 2008; Guston, 2001; Miller,
In particular, fusion centers have not been studied substantively in the academic literature and this dearth of research presents an interesting challenge to investigate a relatively new policy arena and organizational structure. This research helps to explain the role of fusion center collaboration in the highly networked state and local intelligence and information sharing environment.

This research extends the understanding of law enforcement and public safety organizations in terms of the emerging interdependencies that have occurred since 9/11 (Chenoweth and Clarke, 2010; Chermark et al, 2013; Schaible and Sheffield, 2011). This follows the literature’s shifting focus on law enforcement organizations as open organization models resulting from the growing interdependencies and demands on performance to prevent, detect, and deter acts of terrorism in their communities and also as part of a national network of fusion centers. As indicated by the participants in this research, the open nature of the fusion center organization recognized the uncertainty fusion center management must deal with on a daily basis. These findings support Thompson’s (2004, 6, 13) claim that the open organization model creates situations where the external environment is perceived as threatening, or at least challenging, to the goals and mission of the fusion center organization. Additionally, findings showed fusion centers to be adaptive to their environment and flexible in how they engage in collaboration, which supports Thompson’s contingency model suggesting that open organizations make decisions about their boundary interaction through resource allocation in the pursuit of effective performance (Thompson, 2004, 159-161).

The research findings indicate the vast interdependencies fusion centers must grapple with and the complex nature of the network environment in which they operate in
order to form an information sharing environment. These conditions present challenges to law enforcement agencies, which primarily operate fusion centers, and must incorporate multidiscipline (non-law enforcement) and multiagency collaborative partnerships as key players in their network to effectively achieve their counterterrorism mission. The literature tends to identify traditional law enforcement agencies and even task force associations as insular, skeptical, and protective of law enforcement sensitive activities and information (Carter, 2009; Joyal, 2012; Ratcliffe, 2008, 24-25). Though the intelligence led policing model has in recent years broken down many of these traditional barriers to sharing information, cultural barriers still exist in the perspectives and mindset of law enforcement (Joyal 2012; Ratcliffe, 2008). The analysis presented in this research extends that literature by analyzing how their multidiscipline and multijurisdictional partnerships work, learn, and possibly develop a culture of information sharing which satisfies multiple missions and objectives.

Analyzing fusion centers’ all crimes, all hazards, and counterterrorism mission in the context of “wicked problems” provides an important contribution to the collaboration and network literature. Much of the literature on fusion centers has been conducted by government agencies and think tanks, while the academic literature has been narrowly focused mainly in the criminal justice discipline and subdisciplines, such as security studies. However, these studies generally have not analyzed the organizational complexities and challenges to fusion centers based on the high degree of uncertainty, risk, and continually shifting interdependencies that are hallmarks of wicked problems.

This study contributes to the literature on network theory by showing how the stresses at the state and local level in dealing with counterterrorism issues, national
security information, and general law enforcement support functions require flexibility and adaptive behavior by fusion centers in order to achieve their missions. The literature on collaborative networks has shown these elements to be important (Innes and Booher, 1999; Powell, 1998, Weber and Khademian, 2008), including the potential to create value in providing new and effective mechanisms for developing knowledge, along with understanding and sharing information (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003; Weber and Khademian, 2008).

The findings from this research suggest that the Directors of fusion centers participating in this research generally embody and exemplify the collaborative capacity builder (CCB) as described by Weber and Khademian (2008). As an exploratory multiple case study, the several in-depth interviews provide insight to the “mind-set” of the Directors as they work through the complexities of operating their fusion center. Effective knowledge sharing within a network, and the development and transformation of knowledge into practical and useful information among stakeholders, are key elements for the CCB addressing complex wicked problems. Whereas, much of the literature on fusion centers and government agencies emphasize structural and technical components to managing complex organizations, a qualitative analysis, as presented here, provides perspective to the level of commitment of the individuals interviewed for this research to collaboration and operating within a dynamic network environment.

The study also demonstrates the importance of social and technical factors influencing interagency collaboration. Social elements, such as trust, interpersonal relationships, reciprocity, and a desire to adopt an entrepreneurial attitude open to learning and understanding collaborative relationships were identified as critical to
establishing and maintaining a robust information sharing environment at the local level and also as part of the National Network of Fusion Centers. Similarly, technical factors involving the use of formal policies and agreements as a way to codify administrative relationships and expectations among partners in the fusion center network were also cited by interviewees as necessary to the long-term viability and sustainability of fusion centers. These findings confirm and extend research by Fountain (2013) in her analysis of interagency collaboration requiring both “collaboration through people” and “collaboration through process.” Additionally, the identification in this study of the fragile and critical nature of trust with the uncertainty and risk involved in a network environment is an important contribution; a factor often overlooked or diminished in the literature.

Fusion centers provide a unique opportunity to study the role of governance and accountability in a highly diversified collaborative network (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Dawes et al, 2009; Kettl, 2006; Mischen, 2013). Findings from this research show variation exists in the different ways fusion centers structure their governance and accountability committees. Whereas all fusion centers participating in this research agreed on the necessity to have their own agency governing body, there was some separation in the way multiple fusion center states viewed the usefulness, necessity, and desirability of having an accountability body representing all fusion centers in a particular state. Because networks tie together organizations diffusely, where direct lines of accountability are difficult to establish due to the multi-organizational and multijurisdictional partnerships, it is important to understand management and leadership perspectives toward governance. The research presented here helps to explain factors in
multiple fusion center states that might impede fusion centers from moving in a direction of collaborative governance, including influences of politics and realpolitik conditions facing fusion center managers.

Finally, this work attempts to show how fusion centers can be viewed as boundary organizations through the way information is gathered, processed, and shared among stakeholders. The boundary organization framework presented here applies a more expansive view suggested by Schneider (2009), Quick and Feldman (2011), and Miller (2001) regarding definition of the framework and accountability of the boundary organization to its stakeholders. Because the federal government along with partner agencies and individuals view fusion centers as information sharing hubs and the “Nexus of the homeland security intelligence enterprise at the state local level” (DHS, 2013, v), this perception strengthens the understanding that fusion centers function in a capacity akin to the boundary organizations. The importance of suggesting this model opens a new line of inquiry to fusion center research and also ties in the importance of accountability which is critical to the long-term sustainability of fusion center networks.

**Contributions to Policy and Practice**

The findings from this qualitative multiple case study provide several insights useful to understanding the role of collaboration in fusion center networks. The perspectives provided by the Directors interviewed for this research help us understand what organizational structures and management characteristics are important to facilitate and sustain collaborative relationships in a fusion center network environment. This research is especially timely and important to both researchers and practitioners as
collaboration is increasingly used as a policy implementation tool to address wicked problems.

Research findings suggest fusion centers are considered post-9/11 multidisciplinary and multiagency law enforcement organizations representing a departure from historical state and local law enforcement activities including traditional task forces. This was noted throughout the interviews. Interviewees recognized the importance of having a positive and purposeful perspective that fusion centers are part of a network and that collaborative relationships are critical to the information sharing environment supporting the state and local counterterrorism role of fusion centers. Directors indicated being highly motivated and goal oriented toward building collaborative networks. These attributes appear to be important foundations influencing fusion centers as learning organizations and adaptable to challenges in effort to create opportunities to establish collaborative relationships.

Findings reveal fusion centers need to stay constructively engaged with stakeholders and partners in order to maintain collaborative relationships within the network. Face-to-face communication among network participants along with strong interpersonal relationships is discussed in detail in the literature as being critical to successful collaboration (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Thomson and Perry, 2006; Van Buuren, 2009) and building collaborative capacity (Mischen, 2013). However, geography and distance were specifically mentioned during the interviews as hindering fusion center managers from effectively engaging in outreach with partners, such as with the TLO programs. Likewise, the directors in multi-fusion center states indicated that large geographic distances present challenges coordinating with other fusion centers. Lack of
travel funds and the need to allocate valuable time away from the office were cited as primary contributing factors restricting managers from engaging fully with some collaborative partners in their AOR.

Similar to the “paradox” in the management of interorganizational networks identified by Ospina and Saz-Carranza (2010), this research reveals that fusion center management face a myriad of ambiguities, challenges, and uncertainty when establishing and sustaining collaborative relationships supporting the fusion center organization. These complexities are especially true for fusion centers as they function in a coordinated effort supporting both vertical integration with DHS and other federal government agencies and through multidiscipline horizontal collaboration with state, local, and tribal government, and the private sector. Some frustration was indicated by the participants regarding declining grant funding, difficulty establishing accountability with stakeholders, and in some instances political challenges. These pressures could seduce fusion centers into “collaborative inertia” as described by Huxham (2003) and Kalu (2012), thereby threatening existing and potential collaborations. Fusion center management need to be aware of this fallback attitude and find ways to counter its effects. For example, fusion centers could look to their governance or advisory body as providing a check on the organization’s continuing efforts to engage in positive and effective interorganizational collaboration and partnership building. Additionally, as supported in literature (Weber and Khademian, 2008; Van Bueren, et al, 2003), it is important for management to possess perspective and a mindset amenable to manage both the social and institutional complexities of operating and supporting a collaborative information sharing environment.
This study provides insight to the way fusion centers operate to find a balance between the administrative and social aspects of collaboration; what Fountain (2013) refers to as “collaboration through processes” and “collaboration through people.” Interviewees, who primarily have a law enforcement background, emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationships, trust, and reciprocity to establishing collaborative partnerships. In particular, trust was described as a necessary social trait to maintaining reliable partnerships for information gathering. However, the trust bond is viewed as fragile and difficult to regain especially when expectations on either side of the relationship are not met.

Reliance on social relationships is considered a weakness to the collaborative process and imposes uncertainty to the network. This results primarily from a lack of, or often nonexistent, accountability or bureaucratic chain of command where fusion centers could otherwise enforce expectations of their interorganizational partners. As a result, the Directors participating in this study expressed views that formal agreements, such as MOUs, and well defined policies and procedures are necessary tools for establishing mutual expectations with fusion center partners. Additionally, these agreements were described by the directors as helping to manage the uncertainty with certain relationships along with providing a foundation maintaining functional long-term collaborative partnerships.

Collaborative Pluralism

An important point that emerged from this research is fusion centers are limited by resources and constrained by formal institutional factors (state and local laws, federal
law, internal administrative rules), and informal institutional factors (e.g., culture, norms of behavior, biases). Obviously, these factors create challenges for fusion centers to expand the scope of partnerships and effectively manage information sharing services.

The network literature does cover the importance of agency independence, which is often discussed in terms of “trade-offs” (Mischen, 2013). However, there is no set of explicit rules one can point to which guarantee success for networked organizations confronting wicked problems. As O’Toole (1997) reminds us, “matrix organizations, flexible work groups, and interagency coordinating committees are all structural responses to certain forms of ‘wickedness.’ But there is no comprehensive theory to suggest how to manage such organized effort.”

To address how more specific rules and guidelines might be developed to preserve local agency independence and address resource trade-offs, I introduce a new concept referred to as “collaborative pluralism.” Collaborative pluralism represents a process whereby fusion center leadership make independent strategic and practical decisions at the local level regarding collaboration based on available resources, in conjunction with oversight by a governing or advisory body with a diverse membership representing stakeholders. As fusion centers face increasing demands to show performance results to both their home agencies and DHS through assessment rubrics, strategic choices must be made regarding resource allocations supporting each fusion center’s mission. Such decisions are increasingly difficult for managers and leadership at the local level due to the way fusion centers have become integrated into various state and local government agency activities. Collaborative pluralism represents a decision process at the local level for fusion centers and leadership to determine how best to
manage resources and collaborative relationships based on the needs of customers and partners within their respective AOR. Based on resource and other constraints, it is not likely fusion centers can provide all the services required to meet a growing demand or to establish and maintain functional collaborative relationships with all potential partners. Over time this may happen, but not in the short run. Thus, collaboration supporting priority goals is essential for preserving some degree of individualism and independence among fusion centers as was discussed in the research findings.

Collaborative pluralism, however, must also be part of the fusion center’s governance process where the decisions made by fusion center leadership are held accountable to local stakeholders. Governance becomes important as a way to ensure that the organization’s choices about collaboration reflect the needs of the potential customer base and also the needs of the national network of fusion centers to combat terrorism. A stakeholder governance body becomes crucial to keeping fusion centers in check so as not to intentionally or unintentionally ignore important partnerships that should be part of a local or statewide fusion process. Likewise, as pointed out in the literature, collaborative inertia and other pathologies can adversely affect a network and represent a constant struggle for leaders and managers within these organizations. In conjunction with a well structured advisory body representing stakeholders, collaborative pluralism provides latitude to fusion center leadership to make strategic choices to the size and scope of their network based on the constraints they face every day.

Lastly, Governance and accountability committees are not a magic bullet to perfecting collaboration in a network environment. A governing body, however, is necessary to establish some level of accountability in network settings where direct
authority to compel action among members is diffuse or lacking. Fusion centers, it is argued in this research, resemble boundary organizations in the way they facilitate information sharing across interorganizational boundaries and produce knowledge through collaborative partnerships in a complex network. It is through accountability and trust that boundary organizations are stable networks over time (Guston, 2001). This is especially true given the wicked problems of counterterrorism and complex interdependent public safety issues fusion centers are established to address.

In the absence of a stakeholder-based representative body providing some level of accountability to individual fusion centers, and this includes coordinating advisory bodies in multi-fusion center states, it is likely complacency and risk avoidance behavior may compromise the network. In other words, collaboration can become a catchword to creating a new silo for limiting information sharing, where the phrase, “we’re collaborating… enough,” is used to avoid making partnerships because of historical disagreements, perceived uncertainty, or organizational stasis.

Limitations of the Study

The goal of this research was to conduct an exploratory study on how fusion centers engage in collaboration. The qualitative research methodology used to study this aspect of fusion center activity presents both strengths and weaknesses as a research design. Several methodological limitations are noted in chapter 4 and will not be repeated here. There are, however, some limitations which emerged during the course of this project. The first major weakness in this study was the relatively small sample size of the individuals participating in this research. Though this study is unique compared to
prior case studies, given the large number of fusion center directors participating in this project, it was apparent during analysis phase that having a larger representation of fusion center directors would likely provide greater depth of understanding and perspective to the research questions.

Another limitation was not including more regional fusion centers from the nine multi-fusion center states to participate in this project. As this research progressed the findings revealed interesting and discernible variation in the way regional fusion centers engage in collaboration when compared to state-sponsored fusion centers. Additionally, evidence from this study indicated that the relationships among regional fusion centers and the state fusion center within a particular state interact in different ways, and this would have been valuable information to help better understand this level of multijurisdictional collaboration. Including more regional fusion centers could potentially provide better information about the interaction and influence of advisory bodies have on collaborative behavior, both at the individual fusion center level and particularly as a statewide fusion process.

While this study intentionally focused on the perspectives of fusion center directors as a way to ascertain collaborative behavior of their specific fusion center with various partners and stakeholders, further research in this area should look to incorporate the perspectives of these stakeholders and partners. This should extend to federal, state agency, local government, tribal, and private sector partners.

Given that programmatic areas such as the TLO program and other outreach efforts were indicated by the directors interviewed for this study as highly important to the way their fusion centers engage in interagency collaboration, incorporating the
perspectives of the officers and other staff who operate and facilitate these programs would have provided some clarity and robustness to the results of the study. Including individuals who provide the direct services to the fusion center partners, such as the intelligence analysts, would also provide valuable information about how well collaboration, in both understanding and practice, is carried out through all service areas of the fusion center. It would be interesting to see if important elements such as trust, is viewed uniformly among members of the fusion center organization, especially taking into account sworn officers versus civilians in the organization.

Lastly, governance structures and advisory bodies were found in this research to be important elements supporting fusion center collaboration and for helping to integrate various disciplines and governmental entities into the fusion center decision-making process. Because fusion centers exist in a middle ground where the organization is a blend of law enforcement and civilian decision-makers and where the goal is more prevention and detection of criminal activity and terrorism (as opposed to the response role of normal policing) future research should include these governance structures. Whether it is the particular institutional structure of an advisory body, its particular membership, or simply its presence as a forum for interaction between the fusion center and an independent body, these are lingering questions that should be addressed in future research.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Research findings presented in this study suggest several potential areas for continuing research on fusion centers and interorganizational collaboration in network
environments. The qualitative multiple case study methodology used in this study identified several factors contributing to the way fusion centers use collaboration to support information sharing networks. Likewise, several factors were identified as hindering collaboration. An important next step is for researchers to conduct quantitative empirical studies on both management and organization aspects of fusion centers by analyzing collaborative behaviors and institutional structures as identified in the literature. While challenges persist in designing statistical models to evaluate networks, it is hoped findings from this research will assist with operationalizing new variables and formulating testable research questions.

An area of suggested future research involves searching for better understanding of what influences interorganizational collaborative behavior and how various incentives (and disincentives) impact long-term sustainability of networks. For example, Agranoff and McGuire (2003, 191-196) pose several questions regarding the role of management in making choices about collaboration as a way to achieve policy goals. Are managers influenced by laws and regulations and possibly political alignment favoring collaborative networks? Or do managers truly desire and believe that collaboration is the best way to achieve goals and objectives? These questions are yet to be answered. Findings and analysis presented in this study suggest the role of fiscal federalism through the use of the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) should be studied as possibly influencing decisions made by fusion centers affecting the breadth and scope of network collaboration. As discussed in the findings, issues of grant funds was often mentioned as important to the sustainability of several fusion centers. As the HSGP program appears to be winding down, how the reduction in federal grant funds possibly influences
decisions made by fusion center directors and the subsequent impact on the fusion center organization is worthy of future academic study.

This research focused primarily on the perspectives provided by high level leadership, the Directors of several fusion centers, as a way to observe interorganizational collaborative behavior operating in a network environment. Future research should look to understand collaboration from the perspective of other members of the network in the fusion center organization. Within the organization this would include fusion center intelligence analysts, outreach program managers and staff (e.g., TLO and critical infrastructure programs), and representatives of partner agencies embedded in the fusion center, including members of the fusion center advisory or governance body. Research might consider if members view collaboration positively in the context of management practices in their respective fusion centers. Are fusion centers learning and collaborative environments that allow internal expressions by staff that sometimes might challenge supervisors? For example, do fusion center analysts see themselves being able to express doubts and concerns about a particular process or methodology a fusion center uses to gather and analyze data in developing threat analysis? Does “groupthink” exist in the organization, which might benignly lead to developing new “silos” constraining information flow in the network?

An important segment of research not covered in this study are the perspectives and mindset of stakeholders and partners working with the fusion centers who are also customers and providers of information. It would be valuable from a practitioner standpoint and also as a contribution to theory for future research on fusion centers to study how trust, reciprocity, and value added services influence these external
partnerships comprising law enforcement, fire services, the first responder community, state and local government including tribal, and the private sector. These perspectives are important to understand as fusion centers must remain relevant, useful, and practical to their customers for the network to survive.

Finally, a comparison of management techniques among fusion center organizations would be useful to understanding collaborative network effectiveness. There is variation in management styles as revealed in the research findings presented here. However, continued empirical research in this area is advised, especially focusing on leadership roles, perspectives, and impacts in network organizations. For example, are more horizontal and wide span of control management styles better suited to fusion centers and information sharing activities, or are there limits requiring a strong hierachal management style so that mission focus is not lost? The collaborative network literature does not have strong body of research focusing on the role of leadership skills in networked public organizations, though this is changing (McGuire, 2006). Academic research on leadership in fusion center organizations could be compared to other complex public organizations such as state or local emergency management agencies which use collaborative partnerships to deal with wicked problems (McGuire and Silvia, 2010; Silvia, 2010). Also, a comparison of managers who are active or retired law enforcement or non-sworn civilians would provide insight to particular management styles and the type of philosophies each may bring to the fusion center and information sharing process.
APPENDIX 1 – DEFINITIONS OF SELECTED TERMS

A few select terms are used throughout this dissertation, which are defined here for the reader. The following definitions pertain to the concepts presented and discussed in this study.

- **Counterterrorism**: Activities that are intended to prevent, detect, deter, and disrupt terrorist attacks.

- **Discipline**: Refers to a profession, organization, or sector identified with special expertise, education, or recognition. Examples include: Law Enforcement, Fire Services, Emergency Services, Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, Public Works.

- **Fusion Center**: “A fusion center is a collaborative effort of two or more agencies that provide resources, expertise and information to the center with the goal of maximizing their ability to detect, prevent, investigate, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity,” Baseline Capabilities for State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers (October 2008).

- **Jurisdiction**: Represents the geographic, legal, or constitutional boundaries in which a particular government or administrative body is recognized and has authority.

- **Partner**: Any person, organization, group, or governmental entity who engages in some action or project with another where the risks and rewards are jointly shared. Partners can provide resources, expertise, financial support, and
knowledge, which directly affect the success or outcome of a project or other
initiative.

- **Stakeholder**: Any person, organization, group, or governmental entity with an
  interest or contribution in an agency process. Stakeholders may share to some
degree the risk and rewards of an action or project. However, their contribution
or responsibilities, if any, to a project may not be directly related to their gains.
APPENDIX 2 – RESOURCE ALLOCATION CRITERIA (RAC)

INFORMATION SHARING ENVIRONMENT GUIDANCE (ISE-G)

FEDERAL RESOURCE ALLOCATION CRITERIA (RAC)

Purpose

This document defines objective criteria to be used by federal agencies that provide direct support to state and major urban area fusion centers ("fusion centers") (herein referred to as federal fusion center support entities or FFCEs) when making federal resource allocation decisions to fusion centers.

Background

The Federal Government does not dictate where fusion centers should be built and maintained, nor does it designate fusion centers. However, the Federal Government has a shared responsibility with state and local governments to promote the establishment of a national network of fusion centers to facilitate effective information sharing. Since 2001, the Federal Government has provided significant grant funding, training, technical assistance, exercise support, federal personnel, and access to federal information and networks to support fusion centers. The Federal Government recognizes the importance and ability of state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments to own operate, and/or participate in fusion centers and respects that a fusion center’s mission should be defined according to its jurisdictional needs. To ensure that information sharing efforts are optimized and barriers minimized, SLTT governments should define and document how their jurisdictions intend to carry out intrastate coordination to gather, process, analyze, and disseminate terrorism, homeland security, and law enforcement information (the “fusion process”).

The National Strategy for Information Sharing (2007) ("NSIS") provides a Federal Government-wide approach to interfacing and collaborating with fusion centers. In furtherance of the NSIS goals, the Federal Government must clearly define the parameters for the allocation of federal resources to fusion centers in order to provide support in a manner that:

• Collectively supports the development of a national network of fusion centers; and
• Effectively balances the need for supporting SLTT, as well as federal, imperatives.

The Federal Government can accomplish this task through the implementation of specific, objective criteria for resource allocation by FFCEs to fusion centers. Not only will established criteria help bring transparency into the process of allocating federal resources to fusion centers; it will also enable FFCEs to prioritize support in order to enhance the national network of fusion centers.
Criteria for Resource Allocation to Fusion Centers

FFCSEs will prioritize federal resource allocation across three categories. These categories (in order of primacy) and the corresponding prioritization criteria for resource allocation are detailed below.

Category 1: Criteria for Prioritization of Primary Fusion Centers

In each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the five U.S. territories ¹, there may be one primary fusion center. To be eligible for this category, a fusion center must be designated by the Governor² as the primary fusion center, pursuant to the joint Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Justice (DOJ) November 2007 fusion center designation letter, and this designation must be communicated to the Secretary of Homeland Security and the United States Attorney General.

A primary fusion center shall maintain the following criteria in order for FFCSEs to continue to prioritize it within this category for federal resource allocation:

- Designation as the primary fusion center by the Governor;
- Oversight and management by a state or local government agency;
- Receipt of DHS certification that privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties (P/CRL) protections are in place that are determined to be at least as comprehensive as the Information Sharing Environment (ISE) Privacy Guidelines;
- Implementation of a plan and procedures to fulfill its responsibility as the focal point within the state and local environment for the receipt, analysis, gathering, and sharing of threat-related information³, and for the coordination and execution of the statewide fusion process, including all fusion centers and other SLTT partners in its state or territory; and
- Achievement and maintenance of the Baseline Capabilities for State and Major Urban Area Fusion Center (Baseline Capabilities), as measured by the annual Baseline Capabilities Assessment (BCA).

Category 2: Criteria for Prioritization of Recognized Fusion Centers

The Federal Government respects the authority of state governments to designate fusion centers. Any designated fusion center, including major urban area fusion centers, not designated as a primary fusion center will be referred to as a recognized fusion center and included within this category for resource allocation, as appropriate.

A recognized fusion center shall maintain the following criteria in order for the fusion center to continue to be eligible for federal resource allocation within this category:

- Designation as a fusion center by the Governor;
- Oversight and management by a state or local government agency;

¹ The five territories are American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
² For the District of Columbia, the Mayor may designate the primary fusion center.
³ “State and major urban area fusion centers will be the focus, but not exclusive points, within the State and local environment for the receipt and sharing of terrorism information, homeland security information, and law enforcement information related to terrorism.” National Strategy for Information Sharing, A-1.
• Implementation of a plan and procedures to work in conjunction with the primary fusion center, as part of the statewide fusion process;
• Achievement and maintenance of the Baseline Capabilities; and
• Receipt of DHS certification that P/CRCL protections are in place that are determined to be at least as comprehensive as the ISE Privacy Guidelines.

Category 3: Criteria for Prioritization of Nodes

A state may leverage its criminal intelligence units, real-time crime analysis centers, and other law enforcement or homeland security analytic centers that have not been designated as fusion centers by state governments. These nodes can provide valuable support to the statewide fusion process by coordinating with the primary fusion center and recognized fusion centers in the geographic area, thereby participating in intrastate coordination. Nodes are encouraged to achieve the Baseline Capabilities, as they pertain to their operations. Additionally, nodes are encouraged to maintain all applicable P/CRCL protections.

Implementation of Resource Allocation Criteria

FFCSEs provide support and resources to fusion centers in order to achieve and sustain the Baseline Capabilities. These resources include, but are not limited to, deployed personnel, connectivity with federal data systems, training, technical assistance, exercise support, grant programs, and national and regional workshops and conferences. The goal of these criteria is to enable FFCSEs to prioritize resource allocation to fusion centers. Within the context of this policy, federal mission needs may also inform the allocation of resources provided by FFCSEs.

While prioritization for federal support and resources is dependent upon achieving and maintaining fusion center resource allocation criteria, meeting these criteria does not guarantee the provision of funding. Federal agency support will be contingent upon available resources.

Primary Fusion Centers

Because primary fusion centers are designated by state Governors as the focal points within the state and local environment for the receipt, analysis, gathering, and sharing of threat-related information and have additional responsibilities related to the coordination of critical operational capabilities across the statewide fusion process with recognized fusion centers and nodes, the highest priority for the allocation of federal resources to fusion centers shall be directed to primary fusion centers. FFCSEs are committed to deploying personnel and establishing connectivity with federal data systems to primary fusion centers with the understanding that once resources are obligated by federal partners, they may not be immediately replaceable if the fusion center moves or relocates. In addition, primary fusion centers will be eligible to receive joint DHS/DOJ Fusion Process Technical Assistance Program services, as well as other training and exercise services directly related to the fusion process. Primary fusion centers will also receive invitations to National Fusion Center Conferences and Regional Workshops. Primary fusion centers will remain eligible for state and Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) grant programs, as applicable. When available resources are limited, FFCSEs may prioritize the allocation of resources to those fusion centers within this category based on the fusion centers’
demonstrated ability to achieve and maintain the *Baseline Capabilities* and collocation with existing federal resources at fusion centers.

**Recognized Fusion Centers**

Recognized fusion centers will be eligible to receive deployed personnel and connectivity to federal data systems, as available. They will be eligible to receive joint DHS/DOJ Fusion Process Technical Assistance Program services only when a request is submitted and approved through the primary fusion center or the Homeland Security Advisor. Recognized fusion centers will also be eligible to receive invitations to National Fusion Center Conferences and Regional Workshops only when a request is submitted and approved through the primary fusion center or the Homeland Security Advisor. Recognized fusion centers will remain eligible for state and UASI grant programs, as applicable. When available resources are limited, FFCSEs may prioritize the allocation of resources to those fusion centers within this category based on the fusion centers' demonstrated ability to achieve and maintain the *Baseline Capabilities* and collocation with existing federal resources at fusion centers.

**Nodes**

Nodes will receive access to deployed personnel and federal data systems through the primary and/or recognized fusion centers. They may be eligible to receive specialized fusion center training and technical assistance services, as applicable, and invitations to other conferences and workshops only when a request is submitted and approved through the primary fusion center or the Homeland Security Advisor. Nodes will remain eligible for state and UASI grant programs, as applicable.

**Effective Date and Expiration.** This ISE-G is effective immediately and will remain in effect as the Federal Resource Allocation Criteria (RAC) until updated, superseded, or cancelled.

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Kshemendra N. Paul  
Program Manager for the Information Sharing Environment  
*Date: June 9, 2011*
Date XXXX

Dear Director XXXXX,

Hello. My name is Selby Marks, I am a Ph.D. graduate student at the University of Nevada, Reno.

The reason I am writing to you is that I am conducting dissertation research as part of my Ph.D. in Political Science. The topic of my research involves evaluating collaboration within fusion centers. As part of this research I am interviewing several fusion center Directors to get their perspective on collaboration, intergovernmental participation, and partnership building in their fusion centers.

It would be wonderful if you would be willing to participate in a one hour phone interview sometime this week or next week at a time convenient for you. I have attached the interview questionnaire to this email along with the University consent form for you to review. I am more than happy to answer any questions you may have about these documents.

Additionally, so you are aware, I will not be identifying any fusion centers by name or the names of individuals who participate in the interviews as part of the results of this research.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this request to participate in this important research project. I can be contacted by email (XXX@XXX.XXX) or my cell phone (XXX.XXX.XXXX). I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Selby H. Marks
Phone: XXX.XXX.XXXX
Email: XXX@XXX.XXX
APPENDIX 4 – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS PROTOCOL

Interview questions for fusion center Directors (or designee):

Demographic questions about the center and the person being interviewed. Please tell me a little about yourself:
- What is your official position and title with the fusion center?
- How long have you been in your current position?
- How long have you been working directly with the fusion center?
- What is your background (law enforcement or other).

I would like to know some background information on your fusion center:
- When was your fusion established?
- What is the primary agency your fusion center is under?
- What is the Area of Responsibility for your fusion center?
- Is the fusion center designated as “all crimes,” or “all hazards?” Or some other description?
- Can you tell me (approximately) what percentage of your fusion center’s operation revenue is covered by grant funds (including personnel costs)? How much comes from your agency’s general fund?
- How many people work in your fusion center.

Primary Questions:

- Can you explain how your fusion center builds trusted relationships and collaborates with state, local, tribal, and private sector partners?

- What challenges do you face in establishing collaborative relationships with other state and local agencies?

- Does your fusion center use formal documents such as Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) or Interlocal agreements to formalize relationships with your key stakeholders? Why or why not? Can you tell me what sort of agencies you have written formal agreements with?

- Does your fusion center have a strategic plan or Concept of Operations (CONOPS) that outlines goals and objectives for your fusion center? How does the CONOPS help you establish relationships? (If your center does not have a CONOPS would having one help with establishing relationships?)

- In light of the recent House Committee report on the National Network of Fusion Centers do you see a need for more federal guidance and possible regulation on
how your fusion center will integrate with the National Fusion Center network concept?

• In your opinion, do you view intergovernmental collaboration and stakeholder collaborative relationships as important to your counterterrorism efforts and the national mission to prevent, detect, and deter acts of terror? Can you elaborate on why you agree or disagree?

• The next two questions are about the annual fusion center assessment measuring fusion center capabilities (four Critical Operational Capabilities: COC, four Enabling Capabilities: EC, and the Cross-cutting Capabilities).

  o Of the four COCs, (Receive, Analyze, Disseminate, and Gather) which capability do you view as the most challenging to achieve and maintain at a consistent level of quality and compliance? Please explain your answer.

  o COC 4 – “Gather,” measures a fusion center’s ability to gather locally generated information, aggregate the data, analyze it and share the results with federal and local partners as appropriate.

    ▪ Does your fusion center have a written policy or plan to address Standing Information Needs (SIN) with your customers and partners? Do you think that using Standing Information Needs is a good way to understand and address issues that are important to your customers? Why or why not?

• How would you rate your information gathering and sharing relationship with the following federal, state, and local partners within your Area of Responsibility (AOR)? (please rate your fusion center’s level of interaction with each agency on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing “not involved,” and 7 being excellent.):

  1. Federal Bureau of investigation (Including JTTF and FIG).
  4. State Homeland Security Advisor
  5. Local Emergency Management.
  7. State agencies such as your:
     ▪ State Police,
     ▪ Health Department,
     ▪ Corrections, and
     ▪ Forestry or Land Management.
  8. Local area law enforcement (sheriff and police).
  10. Local fire services.
11. Local public health and health care (including hospitals and ambulance services).
12. Schools.
13. Private sector.

- What areas of concern do you believe create challenges to your fusion center that may restrict or prevent it from collaborating more with other agencies, disciplines, or stakeholders?

- What influences your efforts to collaborate with other agencies and disciplines?

- Does your fusion center operate a Terrorism Liaison Officer (TLO) or similar Program? How do you establish and maintain trust and accountability within your TLO (or similar outreach) program?

- Does your fusion center have a governance or advisory body? Does this governance or advisory body include key stakeholders outside your home agency and discipline? Can you describe how this body helps you to achieve the goals and mission of your fusion center?

- **For multi-fusion center states:** Does your fusion center participate in a statewide governance or advisory group that involves all fusion centers in your state? If yes, what is the membership of this group and who can make appointments? Can you describe how this body helps you to achieve the goals and mission of your fusion center?
APPENDIX 5 – CODE BOOK TO INTERVIEW DATABASE

1. Are FC collaborating to support the missions.
   - Breaking down barriers.
   - Collection methodologies SIN.
   - CONOPS and other formal policies supporting the mission.
   - Focus on information-sharing to support stakeholders.
   - Innovation and entrepreneurism.
   - Interdependencies influence collaboration.
   - Multi-Fusion center Directors collaborate
   - Organizational structure esp. multi fusion center states.
   - Pre-911 world has changed. Focus is on collaborative interorganizational relationships beyond the informal.
   - Recognition of weak areas and taking steps to improve collaboration and relationships.
   - Self-organizing and adaptive network approach.
   - Strategic planning and internal performance measures.
   - The Counterterrorism mission and all-crimes all-hazards direction.
   - The fusion center missions are part of the overall public safety role.
   - The role of the National Network and fusion center operations.
   - Unique efforts of fusion centers. Different from Fed. IC.

2. What factors facilitate collaboration
   - Accountability to partners and stakeholders.
   - Branding and marketing of fusion center services and mission.
   - Collaborative pluralism.
   - Complex problem environment and interdependencies
   - Embedded partnerships working directly in the fusion center. fed and SLTT.
   - Federal guidelines to support the network approach.
   - Federal support with technology and personnel.
   - Feedback loops to understand customer needs and usefulness of services.
   - Fusion center employees and analysts who build trusted relationships with customers and stakeholders.
   - Fusion center to fusion center relationships.
   - Fusion centers as learning organizations.
   - Homeland security as a common goal that binds FC relationships. Post 911 environment awareness. Inclusive Public safety.
   - Innovation in process.
   - Interpersonal relationships are important.
• Network-building.
• Organizational philosophy supporting information sharing and collaboration.
• Outreach and partnership-building.
• Personnel and employees properly assigned to the center.
• Policies and procedures that incorporate interorganizational and multidiscipline outreach.
• Practical useful and effective engagement.
• The use of formal agreements with agencies and partners.
• Training provided by the fusion center or TLO
• Trust and reciprocity.
• Understanding the local cultural communities - public participation.
• Value added services.

3. What factors challenge collaboration

• Classification of information may hinder information sharing.
• Difficulties based on poor or challenging interpersonal relationships.
• Discipline and agency cultural differences.
• Federal view of fusion centers and the counterterrorism emphasis.
• Geographic distance from partners FC and other customers.
• Inability to have constant face-to-face meetings due to distance. lack of personnel or funding.
• Insufficient personnel and staff.
• Jurisdictional issues State and regional fusion center AORs.
• Lack of chain of command with stakeholders and partners.
• Lack of federal strategy to build the network.
• Lack of financial resources.
• Mismatch of priorities to vertical and horizontal information sharing.
• Misunderstanding or confusion of what a fusion center does.
• Mixed messages from DHS leadership. Fed Top-down implementation confusion.
• Need expertise in emergent complex problem areas.
• Need the right type of personnel.
• Partnerships not prioritizing information sharing. Collateral duties.
• Political issues create separation and challenges.
• Problems with trusting partners and other FC.
• Reducing capability due to reductions in funding.
• Regional issues as challenges.
• Reliance on partnerships to share information can be inconsistent.
• Silos exist and non-sharing issues.
• Success breeds more demands for services and increases customer expectations.
• Technical problems- IT and organizational.
• The need for legislative codification to provide recognition of permanence and commitment.

4. **Do state and UASI FC collaborate differently.**

• AOR jurisdictional differences can influence collaborative behavior.
• Competitive differences among centers and other relationships.
• Different customers.
• Different priorities based on several factors.
• Different priorities.
• Funding issues create competition
• Funding issues. Regional fusion centers more dependent on grant funds.
• Organizational differences.
• Structural differences.

5. **Governance and advisory boards.**

• Advisory Committees help to break down information silos and barriers.
• Governance helps to coordinate operational process and funding issues in multi fusion center states.
• Internal fusion center boards and multi-fusion center boards.
• Lack of or ineffective advisory body for multi-FC states.
• Membership provides critical feedback to fusion center managers.
• Provides accountability.
• Stakeholder feedback.
• Unity is an image to stakeholders that fosters willingness to collaborate.

6. **Other.**

• 9/11 Commission.
• Agency/ discipline collaboration.
• Information-sharing: example.
**ENDNOTES**

Endnotes: Chapter 1

1 The Homeland has been attacked five times since 2001: the Little Rock Recruiting Station shooting (2009); the Fort Hood shooting (2009); the attempted bombing of Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on Christmas Day (2009); the attempted car bombing in Times Square (2010), and the Boston Marathon bombings (2013). Source: [http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications](http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications).

2 Fusion centers must have an approved DHS Privacy Policy to be recognized and to receive Homeland Security Grant Program funding. Fusion centers must adhere to federal regulations for use, handling, and storage of classified materials. Fusion centers also participate in the annual DHS assessment and survey. Centers must adhere to 28 CFR Part 23 when operating and maintaining a multijurisdictional criminal intelligence data storage system.


4 The average fusion center has been in existence for six years. When asked to characterize their broad mission focus, 97.4% of fusion centers indicated involvement in counterterrorism, 96.1% reported involvement in “all crimes,” and 70.1% indicated involvement in “all hazards.” Fusion centers were also asked to identify more specific mission focus areas within their center. Source: *2012 National Network of Fusion Centers Final Report*, DHS, June 2013, pp. 3-4.


6 Quick and Feldman (2011) provide examples of several boundary organizations that deal with specific environmental issues. In many boundary organizations the separation is between science and politics (decision-makers).
Endnotes: Chapter 2

7 Information on the IC can be found at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence website: www.odni.gov/index.php/intelligence-community/membris-of-the-ic (accessed 1/22/14).

8 In 2010, DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano stated in the inaugural “State of America’s Homeland Security” address that “All of our efforts are guided by a simple but powerful, idea – homeland security begins with hometown security.” This tenet has been used in several subsequent DHS and FEMA publications. See www.dhs.gov/blog/2010/08/03/homeland-security-begins-hometown-security (accessed 1/15/14).

9 In Sensemaking,” author David Moore points out that just looking at the federal IC with 17 members, the number of possible collaborative combinations is: 2 to the Nth power-1. If N=17 then the number of possible combinations is 131,071.

10 Information on RISS can be found at: http://www.riss.net/ (accessed 10/11/2013).


18 For information on IALEA see http://www.ialeia.org/ Accessed on 12/21/2013.


20 As of 2012 the Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team (JCAT) replaces the ITACG as the joint effort among the NCTC, FBI, and DHS. (ISE 2013 Annual Report to Congress).
The NCISP can be found at: http://ise.gov/national-criminal-intelligence-sharing-plan (accessed 1/02/2014).

From the DOJ-OJP website: The Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative (Global) serves as a Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) and advises the U.S. Attorney General on justice information sharing and integration initiatives. Global was created to support the broad scale exchange of pertinent justice and public safety information. It promotes standards-based electronic information exchange to provide the justice community with timely, accurate, complete, and accessible information in a secure and trusted environment. https://it.ojp.gov/global (accessed 2/2/2014).

Between 1998 and 2002 the HSGP and SHSP was known as the State Domestic Equipment Preparedness Grant Program and the County and Municipal Agency Domestic Equipment Preparedness Program. These programs were administered through the DOJ, Office of Justice Programs. See Kirchner, 2012, Chapter 2) for a concise historical description of Homeland Security Grants. For TEW Grant Guidance FFY 2003, see http://ojp.gov/archives/solicitations/docs/fy02terroreicharlyalert.pdf (Accessed 9/21/2013).

HSDN is the DHS classified computer network system for accessing information up to the SECRET level. HSDN must be located in a DHS approved secure room and access to the system is limited to individuals with a DHS SECRET clearance (or higher) and the “need to know.”

The Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) provides advice and recommendations to the Secretary on matters related to homeland security. The Council comprises leaders from state and local government, first responder communities, the private sector, and academia. The HSAC was created by Presidential Executive Order, March 21, 2002.

The RAC sets DHS policy which defines objective criteria and coordination for prioritizing the allocation of federal resources to fusion centers. For more information, see: http://ise.gov/sites/default/files/RAC_final.pdf, accessed 1/21/2014.


Information provided to this author in conversations and meetings with several state fusion center Directors, State Homeland Security Advisors, and DHS Intelligence Officers.

The 2011 and subsequent assessments also incorporated four Enabling Capabilities (ECs) and a measure of governance (Additional Priority Area – APA).

The ISE Privacy Guidelines provide standards to protect the information privacy rights and personal identifying information of U.S. persons are protected and that personally identifiable data follow federal safekeeping and records management guidelines such as outlined in 28 CFR Part 23.

The State Homeland Security Program supports the implementation of State Homeland Security Strategies to address planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise needs to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism and other catastrophic
events. Each state receives a minimum allocation under this program and additional funds are allocated based on the analysis of risk and anticipated effectiveness. The Urban Area Security Initiative program addresses the planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise needs of high-threat, high-density urban areas, and assists them in building an enhanced and sustainable capacity to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism. These funds are allocated on the basis of risk and anticipated effectiveness to about 64 candidate areas (GAO-10-972).

32 Funding allocations were obtained from the DHS/FEMA HSGP grant guidance for years 2008 to 2013. Information can be found at http://www.fema.gov/preparedness-non-disaster-grants, (accessed 1/15/2014).


Endnotes: Chapter 3

35 Berry, Brower and et al. (2004) present an interesting conceptualization of network theory. They propose three traditions of network research: The sociological tradition, the political science tradition, and the public management tradition.


37 *Homo economicus* is a term used to describe a prototype “economic man” who makes strict rational and self-interested decisions which result in maximum utility. Contrast this with the “administrative man” who makes inefficient decisions based on the concept of bounded rationality and satisficing behavior.

38 The public and policy networks field, The public-private partnerships field, the collaboration management literature, and the business alliance and network literature (Ospina and Saz-Carranza, 2010).

39 The Homeland Security Grant Program and the Urban Area security Initiative program request that equipment and capabilities be shared locally and regionally (See Department of Homeland Security, Federal HSGP Guidance, Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) 2014: [http://www.fema.gov/fy-2014-homeland-security-grant-program-hsgp](http://www.fema.gov/fy-2014-homeland-security-grant-program-hsgp)). From the HSGP Guidance: “To evaluate National progress in building, sustaining, and delivering the core capabilities outlined in the Goal, FEMA annually publishes the National Preparedness Report (NPR). Looking across all 31 core capabilities outlined in the Goal, the NPR provides a National perspective on critical preparedness trends for whole community partners to use to inform program priorities, allocate resources, and communicate with stakeholders about issues of shared concern.” FEMA grant resources (different from HSGP) also require state and local governments to develop capabilities that are shared at the state and regional levels. This “Whole Community” approach is outlined on the FEMA website; [https://www.fema.gov/whole-community](https://www.fema.gov/whole-community).

40 Dawes, et al., (2009) define “tangled problems” as those more common place public issues that are complex, but exist in a “middle ground between routine and wicked problems.”

41 Fountain (2013) and Gray (2000) discuss this separation of technological elements and the interpersonal relationships important to collaboration that take into consideration the various sociological aspects of the interdependent environment. Reliance on technology is not a panacea for weak interpersonal capabilities, especially in interorganizational relationships where “chain of command” or direct lines of authority are blurred (see also Kettl, 2006).

42 Weber and Khademian (2008) discuss the “mind-set” of the collaborative Capacity builder as “the set of commitments that can facilitate his or her efforts to ensure that knowledge can be sent, received, and integrated as part of a broader effort to build and sustain collaborative capacity for addressing a wicked problem.” This is important as it helps to understand the role of management in establishing and maintaining long term collaborative actions that foster knowledge creation and knowledge transfer. As the authors suggest, this is the “softer side” of how managers view their role to build collaborative relations. Dawes, et al. (2009) refer to this as
the “perceptions” managers and employees have as they assess the “risks” and “benefits” to building successful public sector knowledge networks. Additionally, the concept of “shared mental models” and the difficulties of establishing “convergence” among the various groups with different perceptions of risks and benefits has been discussed in the economics literature (see for example, Denzau and North, 1994; Mantzavinos, North and Shariq, 2004; and Richards, 2001).
Endnotes: Chapter 4

43 King, Keohane and Verba (1994), in Designing Social Inquiry suggest that essentially there is no difference between “qualitative” and “quantitative” research, and therefore all scholars “cannot afford to ignore sources of bias and inefficiency created by methodologically unreflective research designs” (229). They state that their “main goal” is to “connect” qualitative and quantitative to scientific research by “applying a unified logic of inference to both” (3).

44 A similar naming technique was used by Graphia (2010) in a qualitative case study in which four fusion centers were analyzed on their level of effectiveness.

45 The Governor’s primary fusion center in state “C” was invited as part of the original 10 fusion centers identified in the research protocol, however the center’s leadership did not reply to the original invitation request or to any of the three follow-up requests.

46 States with multiple fusion centers are not identified by the exact number because this could compromise the confidentiality of the interviewees.

47 In reality, using a qualitative data analysis computer program is not always as straightforward as it appears. Scott Decker and Barrik Van Winkle (1996) describe the difficulty they faced in using a computer program to identify instances of how drug sales occur.

48 The researcher anticipated a potential loss of two fusion centers when establishing the research design protocol. The nine fusion centers selected for this study include a range of attributes that are representative of the larger domain of all fusion centers.

49 The researcher decided to limit the domain of fusion centers for selection to the United States. The territories of Guam /Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have recognized fusion centers, but were not considered for case selection.

50 The Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI) is a collaborative effort led by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Bureau of Justice Assistance, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement partners. This initiative provides law enforcement with another tool to help prevent terrorism and other terrorism-related crime by establishing a national capacity for gathering, documenting, processing, analyzing, and sharing SAR information. The NSI is a standardized process—including stakeholder outreach, privacy protections, training, and facilitation of technology—for identifying and reporting suspicious activity in jurisdictions across the country and also serves as the unified focal point for sharing SAR information. (from the DHS website, http://www.dhs.gov/how-do-i/report-suspicious-activity. Accessed October 8, 2013).

51 The terrorism Liaison Officer (TLO) program in fusion centers is sometimes referred to as a Fusion Liaison Officer (FLO), Intelligence Liaison Officer (ILO), or Interagency Fusion Liaison (IFL). The roles of each program are similar, involving outreach to stakeholders and to provide counterterrorism and related training. The TLO, FLO, and ILO are the “eyes and ears” in the field and provide suspicious activity reports to the fusion center. The use of ILO and FLO are a
reflection of the mission area of a fusion center (if terrorism is a minor role, the FLO might be used). Or local sensitivities to the use of the word “terrorism” might contribute to the use of ILO or FLO. Cultural sensitivities was cited by fusion center B1 as to why they changed the program name from TLO to FLO.


53 Yin (2014, 46) states that internal validity is not for descriptive or exploratory case studies. Internal validity, however should be considered a research design involving explanatory or causal studies.

54 Gabrielian (1999, 193-196) provides an interesting compilation of several academic approaches to establishing validity and reliability in qualitative case study research designs.
Endnotes: Chapter 5


56 The “See something, say something” campaign with an overarching awareness campaign for citizens and business. Fusion centers often use their TLO or similar programs to reach out to business owners and also large industry and owner/operators of critical infrastructure (CI). The FBI InfraGard program is specifically designed to be a local self-organizing effort by the private sector as a way to provide business and industry collaborative information sharing with the federal government with the goal of preventing and protecting the US homeland. The National Infrastructure Protection Plan (2013) provides the foundation for an integrated and collaborative approach to how government and private sector participants in the critical infrastructure community can manage risks and achieve security and resilience outcomes. The DHS Office of Infrastructure Protection (DHS IP) often work closely with fusion centers to support the SLTT partnership initiatives for information sharing with the private sector. Additionally, the DHS Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT) provides private business and government collaborative response and awareness of threats to the national cyber infrastructure. To ensure the protection of private sector sensitive information the DHS uses the Protected Critical Infrastructure Information (PCII) program to prevent the unauthorized release of private sector information.
The following three statements referring to value-added performance are from the 2012 National Network of Fusion Center Final Report: 1) “Fusion centers are communicating their value, mission, and purpose through a documented process for capturing success stories and lessons learned” (viii); 2) “These measures are intended to help the fusion center stakeholder community better understand the value and impact of the National Network in supporting national information sharing and homeland security outcomes” (3); and, 3) In order to ensure the long-term growth and maturation of the National Network, fusion centers and their federal and SLTT stakeholders must develop and execute strategies that demonstrate the value of the National Network to partners at all levels of government, as well as the private sector. Strategic plans enable fusion centers to more efficiently and effectively plan and allocate resources to implement and maintain COCs and ECs and to perform consistently over time. Evaluating operational effectiveness against defined priorities can be done by measuring fusion center performance, which helps identify ways to improve operational execution and overall management of the fusion process (26).
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