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Where Do We Go From Here?
The Role of the Community Advisory Group
in Addressing Asbestos Issues in Libby, Montana

by

Colleen A. Lux

B.A. University of Tulsa, 2001

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Science

The University of Montana

December 2003

Approved by:



Chairperson



Dean, Graduate School

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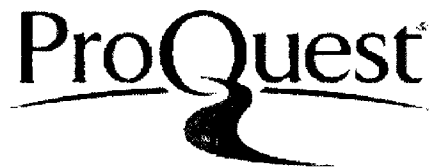


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Where Do We Go From Here? The Role of the Community Advisory Group in Addressing Asbestos Issues in Libby, Montana

Director: Steve Schwarze 

In November of 1999, regional media exposed the extent of tremolite asbestos contamination and resultant disease in Libby, Montana. A century of vermiculite mining operations created a multitude of exposure pathways to asbestos in residential and public spaces around the Libby community that resulted in one of the worst public health and environmental disasters in United States history.

Upon the EPA's arrival in Libby to assess the extent of the contamination, the agency facilitated the development of a Community Advisory Group (CAG). For four years, the CAG has been the main public forum for addressing issues related to asbestos contamination. This study addresses elements of the community's response to this disaster from the perspective of the CAG.

Research methods included participant observation at twelve monthly CAG meetings and twenty-five interviews with CAG members, an EPA representative, the group's facilitator, and a local social worker. My attendance at meetings coupled with insight from the interviewees revealed numerous challenges facing the group in its efforts to solve asbestos-related problems.

Challenges internal to the community resulted from initial differences in perception of the disaster, the presence and complexity of emotional expression at the CAG, and difficulties associated with prioritization of issues. Challenges external to the community include: the unprecedented nature of the EPA's cleanup of contaminated areas in the community, the absence of a federal program or funding source to adequately address health care needs, and Libby's precedent setting status within the national discussion of asbestos exposure, cleanup, and victims' compensation.

My research suggests that the internal challenges faced by the Libby CAG are not unique, but similar to the struggles other communities experience when faced with a slow motion technological disaster. Moreover, the study supports the notion that a community's response to contamination is determined not only by the physical nature of the contaminant, but also by the specific social infrastructure that has developed in the community. In order to better face the challenges of this disaster, the Libby CAG and community must more effectively generate active leadership, widespread public participation, and a collective vision for the future.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Acronyms Used.....	v
CHAPTER 1: Introductions and Clarification of the Study.....	1
CHAPTER 2: History of the Problem and Initial Response.....	25
CHAPTER 3: Purpose, Goals, and Functions of the CAG.....	48
CHAPTER 4: Working with the Agencies to Accomplish Goals.....	72
CHAPTER 5: Perception, Polarization, and Representation.....	98
CHAPTER 6: Challenges, Suggestions, and the Future of the CAG.....	120
CHAPTER 7: Questions Answered and Lessons Learned.....	130
REFERENCES	
Appendices.....	139
Interview Questions	
Letter from EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman to Senator Max Baucus	
Selection from 42 U.S.C. § 9604 CERCLA	
Bibliography.....	142

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Special thanks goes to Wendy Thomi, Tanis Lincoln, and Gerald Mueller for your assistance and participation. My committee chair, Steve Schwarze, thank you for always being there to listen, offer advice, challenge my thinking, and support me throughout this process. I would also like to thank Tom Roy and the faculty of the Environmental Studies Program.

Tremendous thanks to my Libby family, Bob and Bgee Zimmerman, who for over a year provided me with a warm bed, home cooked meals, and their friendship. I could not have completed this project without you. Last but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends for your continued love and support.

List of Acronyms Used

ARD	Asbestos Related Disease
ATSDR	Agency for Toxic Substance Disease Registry
CAC	Citizen Advisory Committee
CAG	Community Advisory Group
CARD	Center for Asbestos Related Diseases
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CHC	Community Health Center
CORA	Center for Asbestos Related Diseases Outreach Recovery Assistance
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
HCI	Healthy Communities Initiative
LAMP	Libby Asbestos Medical Plan
LATAG	Libby Area Technical Assistance Group
NPL	National Priorities List
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
OSWER	Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response
TAG	Technical Assistance Group

Chapter 1: Introduction and Clarification of the Study

Welcome to Libby, Pride of the Kootenai Valley! The gateway sign extends its welcome to visitors and residents alike along Montana Highway 2 as it meanders into the tiny mountain town. The sign portrays a classic Montana scene complete with large pines, mountains, and an elk. Although the sign is slightly aged, its green and blue paint a bit faded from sun, its initial craftsmanship is undeniable. Locals working on economic development in Libby today would be quick to point out that getting new gateway signs for the valley is an exciting new project they have taken on. In many ways, the town of Libby is like its current gateway sign: visibly aged and altered, but still solid in foundation. Libby's future is somewhat like the proposed improved gateway signs, uncertain but hopeful. Libby's future is uncertain because so much of what the town *will be* is being dictated by what the town *has been*. Libby is a town with a story to tell. The people of Libby have a story to tell about the truth of their past, their current struggles, and what will be of their collective future.

In November of 1999, regional media exposed the truth about widespread asbestos contamination in the Libby community. Nearly a century of vermiculite mining operations at nearby Zonolite Mountain had created a multitude of exposure pathways to tremolite asbestos in residential and public spaces. The many historical and on-going pathways of exposure in and around the community resulted in one of the worst public health and environmental disasters the United States has ever seen. Out of a community of approximately 12,000 people, 1,100 have been diagnosed with medical problems related to the asbestos exposure. Thus, four years ago Libby began its struggle to solve the resultant problems from asbestos contamination. The purpose of this study is to tell the story of how the Libby community has responded to this disaster and attempted to solve the problems caused by the asbestos contamination and exposure.

Almost immediately after the newspaper stories revealed the extent of the asbestos contamination, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Emergency Response Team, led by Paul Peronard, arrived in Libby to assess the situation. In accordance with the agency's public participation plan for the town, the EPA sponsored the formation of a Community Advisory Group (CAG) in Libby. Four years after its formation, the Libby CAG remains the longest running collective forum for people in the community to discuss and address asbestos related issues. It is from the perspective of this group that this study evaluates the Libby community's response to the asbestos disaster, through its efforts to discuss and solve the resultant problems.

This chapter provides a rationale for my thesis beginning with a brief introduction to the EPA CAG program, followed by a detailed explanation of my study of the Libby CAG. This description of the study will begin with the grounding of this study in academic literature, a clarification of the research questions, methodology, and concludes with a plan for the presentation of the results and discussion described by chapter.

The EPA's CAG Program

Following the unprecedented national attention to the hazards of toxic exposure in communities like Love Canal, New York, the federal government enacted the nation's first legislation to address the problems resulting from contamination from government and industrial sources. In 1980, Congress passed the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), better known as the Superfund Act. This law gives the Federal government the authority to respond to chemical emergencies and to clean up uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites (US EPA, www.epa.gov).

Community involvement at Superfund sites has long been a requirement and struggle for both the government agencies and the impacted communities involved in the cleanup. The EPA has employed various strategies for providing information on cleanup planning and remediation to affected communities, as well as some degree of inclusion in the decision-making process.

The EPA's use of the CAG forum in an impacted community is a relatively new component of the agency's traditional community involvement plan for a site.

In 1993, the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) Environmental Justice Task Force was established to evaluate and develop recommendations regarding environmental justice issues particular to waste programs (US EPA, 1995). Environmental justice qualities such as, low-income levels and/or racial minority populations, are often identified in Superfund listed communities. The final report by the Environmental Justice Task Force advised the creation of CAGs at ten sites nationwide by the end of 1994. The agency stated that the purpose of the implementation of CAGs, would be to enhance public involvement in the Superfund cleanup process. The Task Force's draft final report also indicated that its two primary goals were to 1) "achieve environmental protection for all" and 2) "educate and empower affected communities" (US EPA, 1994). This purpose and these goals were the foundation of the EPA's CAG program.

EPA CAGs are intended to be as representative of the local population as possible, providing a seat at the table for a variety of interests and citizen constituencies. The forum exists as an opportunity for two-way communication and information exchange between the community and agencies involved in the cleanup. While a CAG does not have decision-making power with regard to EPA's plan for clean up of the community, a CAG should serve an advisory function to the agency, informing decision makers of the opinions of the larger community. Moreover, a group can also determine for itself the level of advocacy it wishes to engage in, with respect to attempting to apply pressure and exert influence on a variety of decision makers and politicians. The Libby CAG is one example of approximately 70 active EPA sponsored CAGs working at cleanup sites nationwide (US EPA, www.epa.gov).

Literature Review

Citizen participation, a hallmark of democracy, allows individuals to take part in institutional decisions that affect their lives (Kauffman, 1995). All levels of government employ methods of citizen participation to ascertain the will of the people (Kauffman, 1995).

Government institutions responsible for environmental policy and management decisions use a variety of citizen participation mediums including public hearings, public comment periods, and citizen advisory committees.

Citizen advisory committees (CAC) are a small group of community members who are selected by an agency or sponsor for an extended period of time to represent the various attitudes, opinions, and groups of the larger community to examine a certain issue or set of issues facing the community (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995). Local, state, and federal levels of government have long used citizen advisory committees in the development of legislation and regulatory standards for a variety of environmental issues including land use decisions, cleanup of industrial waste, and controversial infrastructure projects (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995). The EPA CAG is one example of a citizen advisory committee forum for public participation.¹

Benefits and Criticisms of CACs

Academic literature cites multiple benefits and criticisms of the citizen advisory committee model for public involvement. Many of the benefits mentioned are derived from the opportunity for meaningful communication between community members and agency officials that this model of participation can offer. Benefits include:

- Providing for a diverse group of citizen views to be involved (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995).
- Improving education and overall communication between community members and agency officials (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995).

¹ In this discussion of citizen advisory committees, I will be using the acronym CAC. It is important to recognize that an EPA CAG is one example of a CAC, which is the general term used in the literature for this type of public participation forum.

- Promoting the development of personal relationships, which can foster a deeper understanding of the concerns and interests of others (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995).
- Increasing public acceptance of decisions (Lynn and Kartez, 1995).
- Allowing the agency to deal with a smaller number of citizens as opposed to the entire community at one time, which may prove to be more manageable and efficient (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995).

Criticism of CACs falls into two main themes. The first deals with how the group functions internally and with the sponsoring agency. The second focuses on how well the group reflects the opinions of the larger community. Concerning the first theme, criticisms arise out of differing expectations and roles in decision-making. In other words, when participants view their role differently than the sponsoring agency, conflict can arise. Criticisms of group function include:

- “CACs are rarely formed to fundamentally redistribute power. More often, they are used to rationalize established power through some shared governance” (Lynn and Kartez, 1995).
- Agencies have no real accountability to their suggestions.
- Roles and powers of the CAC are not always clear to the participants or the public.
- Misunderstandings between participants’ and agency expectations of how input will be utilized can cause conflict (Plumlee et. al, 1985).
- The forum solely serves as a place for venting frustrations and anxieties without effectively influencing public policy for the community’s concerns (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995).

With respect to the second theme, CAC representativeness is a function of both member selection and member responsibilities and actions once the group is operational. Lynn and Busenberg (1995) suggest that the representative nature of the group members is an important factor in the success of a group. Criticisms of group representativeness include:

- Selected members may not accurately represent all attributes of the community including policy preferences, income, and education levels (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995).
- A misrepresented public in the membership of the CAC will give a distorted image of the community to policy makers (Pierce and Doerksen, 1976).
- CAC structure lacks mechanisms built into it that hold members accountable to the larger community (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995).

- Advisory groups may become elitist or lose touch with the public they represent, thus increasing the likelihood that the public will not accept their recommendations (Allen, 1998).

Most of the benefits to communities of the CAC process are concerned with the potential for information exchange and education the process offers. While information exchange and education are exceedingly important elements to a successful public participation endeavor, there is no mention of the benefit of a community getting what it needs through this process. Getting what a community needs through the public participation forum of a CAC is of utmost importance for a group dealing with issues associated with toxic contamination and exposure as human and environmental health may be threatened. The value of a group's effectiveness at solving the problems in a contaminated community is amplified as success or achievement of group goals can dramatically affect the lives of residents.

Significant Studies

Previous research on citizen advisory committees in communities around the United States has explored factors that have influenced group effectiveness and success (Hannah and Lewis, 1982; Houghton, 1988; Lynn and Busenberg, 1995; Lynn and Kartez, 1995; Pierce and Doerkson, 1976; Plumlee, Starling, and Kramer, 1985). Lynn and Busenberg state, "while there is a large body of literature consisting of guidelines for establishing and running CACs, the body of literature of empirical evaluations on CACs is markedly smaller" (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995). Lynn and Busenberg's 1995 study acts as a review of previous research that attempts to evaluate the CAC process. The studies highlighted by Lynn and Busenberg employ various definitions, measures, and indicators of success that is useful in evaluating a CAC.

Studies that assess CACs can be placed into two general categories. The first category of studies assesses CACs by procedural indicators. In other words, effectiveness or success of a CAC is based on the mechanics of group procedure. The second category assesses CACs based on goals and outcomes. These studies focus on what the group's goals were and whether or not

they achieved them, or how participants articulate the fulfillment of initial expectations at the end of the process. Both categories of study provide excellent information about CACs and their effectiveness; they simply chose to focus on varied elements of the process or define success differently. I have chosen to examine relevant and significant studies according to these two categories of evaluating CACs, either by procedure or goals and outcomes.

Assessment by Procedure

Many studies of group process attempt to determine or isolate what characteristics or qualities are required for the public participation to be *good, effective, or successful*. Webler, Tuler, and Krueger (2001) sought out these qualities by asking CAC participants about their opinions on what makes good public participation in the CAC forum. Participants indicated that the process should: be legitimate, promote a search for common values, realize democratic principles of fairness and equality, promote equal power among viewpoints, and foster responsible leadership (Webler, Tuler, and Krueger, 2001).

In a second example of a procedural assessment study, Hannah and Lewis (1982) looked at the degree of citizen control in internal decision making of locally initiated CACs. While the theme of citizen control is larger than process alone, this study focused on process elements such as membership characteristics, relationship between sponsors and participants, information availability, and leadership style (Hannah and Lewis, 1982).

A third study by Pierce and Doerkson addresses the effect of member recruitment method on the representativeness of the CACs and the perceived responsiveness of public officials by CAC members (Pierce and Doerkson, 1976). Pierce and Doerkson were able to address an issue that can affect success like representativeness, by looking at the procedural aspect of member recruitment methods.

These studies are examples of research that address larger issues of effectiveness and success by looking at procedural factors of CAC style of participation. Many of these studies

incorporated participants' views into their analysis, which I think is very important. While studies like these are effective ways of assessing CAC function, I feel that they do not adequately address how effective a group is at reaching the goals they have set for themselves. The second category of studies, which evaluate CAC effectiveness through goals and outcomes, begins to provide this.

Assessment by Goals and Outcomes

A few studies in this category look to the outcome of the CAC process to determine the group's effectiveness or success. Plumlee, Starling, and Kramer (1985) studied two CACs in Texas working on water quality issues, and asked participants what their expectations were at the beginning of the process and whether or not those expectations had been fulfilled at the end of the process. In turn, fulfillment of expectations was their indicator for success. The researchers were less concerned with what participants thought of the outcome of the process and more concerned with whether they thought that participation contributed positively to the planning (Plumlee, Starling, and Kramer, 1985). This study allowed the participants, rather than the researchers, to define the meanings of "success". Moreover, this study recognized that simply because the outcome of the process is deemed successful, it does not mean that the participants felt they had a positive experience working within the CAC framework.

Plumlee, Starling, and Kramer's study actively engaged the CAC participants to evaluate their own participation in this forum. This aspect of this study resonated in planning my study of the Libby CAG. There appears to be great utility for the group members to have an opportunity to reflect on their personal role in both the work the group *has* done and the work the group *will* do in the future. The 2001 evaluation of the Libby CAG performed by the EPA focused on procedural aspects of the group and agency/group member relations, but offered little opportunity for this kind of reflection and evaluation (US EPA Contractor, 2001).

In Howell, Olsen, and Olsen's 1987 study, the definition of outcome was taken in a new direction. This study looked at the educational impact of a CAC on the rest of the community (Howell, Olsen, and Olsen, 1987). In other words, they wanted to know if the forum and work of the CAC effectively educated the community on the issues it was working on. This study highlights the reflexive nature of a CAC in relation to the rest of the community.

A CAC does not work or exist in a vacuum within the community. The work of the group is observed by the rest of the community either through the local media, word of mouth, or public attendance at meetings. Moreover, decisions made by the group can have a direct impact on the lives of other community members. Therefore, looking at information exchange with the greater community by the group is one way of measuring the impact the work of the CAC. How the work of a CAC is reaching the greater community is of tremendous relevance, if the goal of most CACs is to represent and solve problems affecting the entire community.

Psychosocial Response to Slow-Motion Technological Disasters

Although the purpose of my study is an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Libby CAG, as I began to conduct my research I realized that the foundation for my assessment of the CAG was far too narrow in scope. The history of the group and its past and current challenges described by the CAG members began to highlight the extremely complex nature of how the Libby community has dealt with the knowledge of the asbestos contamination for the past four years. It seemed to me that the CAG's response to the contamination exists in a historical, economic, political, social, and psychological context, where all components are intertwined and impossible to separate from one another. During my research, I became aware of the complexity of the community's response and how certain aspects of this complexity were apparent, and in some cases, challenging the CAG forum. I approached one of the social workers in Libby with my predicament and asked for her opinion on this complexity and what it may have to do with the

CAG. My interview with her solidified my opinion that there is great value in attempting to explain the complex nature of this situation.

I began to realize that the public participation literature I had based my study on paid little attention to the multifaceted dimensions of a community's response to a disaster like toxic contamination. If my study evaluated the CAG forum without taking into account the many layers of context that surrounds it, I would not be telling the complete story. Therefore, in addition to the literature on public participation and CACs I draw upon literature on slow-motion technological disasters. Taken together, these literatures provide a context for identifying the distinctive public participation challenges in contaminated communities, and understanding the responses of the Libby community and the CAG.

The story of the CAG is not worth telling if I do not attempt to describe the complexities of the psychosocial response and its relationship to the public participation forum of the CAG. Therefore, the results of this study will not only provide answers to my research questions, but will also attempt to illustrate how the complexities of the Libby community's response to asbestos contamination have affected the public participation forum of the CAG. In order to more adequately evaluate the group's effectiveness, it is necessary to address the many forces that can impede the group's best attempts to effectively reach its goals and attain success.

Slow-Motion Technological Disasters and Stressors

The asbestos exposure in the Libby community is categorized as a slow-motion technological disaster. Unlike a natural disaster such as a flood, tornado, or earthquake, a technological disaster is human caused. Some technological disasters occur as a sudden and discrete event, such as the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska or the nuclear power plant meltdown at Chernobyl in the Ukraine. Some technological disasters are slower in developing, with inherently invisible characteristics, such as the organic mercury poisoning of fish and subsequent disease in Minimata, Japan, or the contamination from toxic waste in Love Canal, New York.

With a slow-motion technological disaster, it may be difficult to determine that a disaster is even occurring, the only signs may be increasing illness and death among individuals in the community. The invisible and lengthy duration of a slow motion technological disaster is in direct contrast to a sudden disaster that may be visibly dramatic with little to no question that the disaster has taken place. Slow motion technological disasters are characterized by a unique pattern of psychological, social, and cultural disruption (Kroll-Smith and Couch, 1990).

For the Libby community, the asbestos contamination that occurred for many years was invisible to the greater community in more ways than one. There was, as it is commonly referred to, a 'veil of secrecy' that withheld the reality of the disaster from those who most desperately needed to know. This veil of secrecy was created by not only the W.R. Grace Corporation, but also a variety of local, state, and federal government agencies designed to prevent such disasters from occurring. At the very source of the disaster is a mineral fiber so minute that it is for the most part invisible, and impossible to detect when inhaled. In addition, the exposure and subsequent cover up continued for decades. Moreover, the latency period from exposure to onset of asbestos related disease can be anywhere from ten to fifty years.

In other words, the widespread asbestos contamination in Libby is a classic example of a slow-motion technological disaster. The stressors associated with a slow-motion technological disaster challenge a community's social infrastructure to deal with such an event. More than ever before the community's history and social infrastructure, like leadership, becomes increasingly important.

Perception, Stressors, and Responses

The health effects from technological disasters are both biological and psychological (Cwikel et. al, 2002). In addition to illness and disease in the body that can result from exposure to toxic substances, the mind may also be severely traumatized from a discrete event or the cascading effects of the disaster. When a slow-motion technological disaster is eventually

revealed to a community, the realization that a disaster is occurring or has occurred can be a very distressing experience. Characteristics of both the disaster and the community are important to understanding how people may respond to what has happened in their community.

An individual's perception of the disaster becomes a critical component of how they will respond to it. Slow motion technological disasters are often hard to recognize and define, even for people who are closely involved. Since slow motion technological disasters often lack a clear cause and effect connection, and may seem invisible, it is the individual's perception of the disaster that is the core of defining the situation in the mind (CORA, 2003). People in the same community may have very different perceptions of the disaster. Some people may perceive the severity of the disaster to be extreme, while some may not consider it an issue at all.

Individuals involved in a technological disaster experience a variety of stressors, which are situations or stimuli that cause mental distress. With slow motion technological disasters, people experience primary and secondary stressors. Primary stressors relate directly to the disaster, while secondary stressors result from the impacts of the disaster and/or that result from the primary stressors (CORA, 2003). Primary stressors can include: information, invisible nature of the disaster, unpredictable consequences and impacts, long term nature of consequences, confusion in understanding technical information, feelings of loss of control over the present and future, and anger over loss of security in the community (CORA, 2003). Secondary stressors include: media siege, community conflict, mistrust of officials and media, cultural pressure, political and legal controversies, multiple frustrations, social alienation and social stigmas, economic stresses, family stress, and destruction of cultural traditions (CORA, 2003).

An individual's response to primary and secondary stressors can take many forms including post disaster distress, disillusionment/shock/denial, anxiety/dread, blame/anger/betrayal, depression, belligerence, and somatic concerns (CORA, 2003). Many of these responses have been observed in Libby. While each stressor and response warrants an in-depth discussion, for the purposes of this study I will focus on those stressors that have affected

the community involvement forum of the CAG including information, invisibility, long term nature of the consequences or chronicity, loss of control and safety, economics, and community conflict. The impact of varying perceptions of the disaster will be a continual theme throughout my analysis of the CAG process. Moreover, the history and social infrastructure of a community is increasingly important to effectively respond to such an event.

Information as the Initial Stressor

“The degree to which a person will perceive an event as stressful depends upon how it is being appraised in light of the resources a person has to cope with the event” (Cwikel et al, 2002 citing Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Thus information itself is often the initial stressor for individuals during a technological disaster. The content of this information, the reliability of the source, and how the message is delivered all contribute to an individual’s perception of the disaster (CORA, 2003). With respect to initial information, Edelstein states that, “beliefs formed at this point may persist even in the face of new evidence at a later time” (Edelstein, 1988). In other words, an individual’s perception of the disaster will largely be shaped from the announcement and sharing of information about the disaster.

Invisibility and Chronicity Stressors

The invisible nature of a disaster contributes to a sense of shock and denial that the disaster is even occurring, as it cannot be perceived by any of the senses. Lacking the usual sensory route for detecting dangers, people struggle with fears and consequences of contamination (CORA, 2003). In 1982, the community of Times Beach, Missouri was relocated after extensive dioxin contamination was discovered. Karl Reko, a pastor in the Times Beach area at the time, reflects on the distress caused by the invisible nature of the exposure.

If the victims cannot see it, they begin “seeing it” everywhere. As you lie in your bed at three o’clock in the morning thinking back on all the times your children were exposed to the dirt in your yard where the grass was rubbed clean from the top of the soil underneath their swing set, you begin to wonder if the very pillow on which your head is lying is not also contaminated (Reko, 1984).

In other historic technological disasters like Chernobyl, there is no point where it seems the worst of the disaster is over (Green, et al., 1994). Green states that, “the medical consequences are described as probabilities, not certainties, and society places the burden of uncertainty on the inhabitant” (Green, et al., 1994). For many the worry of impending illness and disease will continue.

Loss of Control and Safety

In describing some of the stressors individuals may experience due to slow motion technological disasters like invisibility and chronicity of threats, it is no wonder that an additional stressor mentioned in the literature is the feeling a loss of control over both the present and the future. Community members most likely feel that they are neither in control of the exposure nor its remedy. Feeling a loss of control is further exacerbated by the many uncertainties associated with the disaster including who is responsible, who will experience negative health impacts, and what those health problems may be (CORA, 2003). Likewise, the result of many of the primary stressors can culminate in a community’s loss of safety and security. These feelings can result in intense anger at institutions or entities that community members feel should have warned them or stopped the disaster from occurring all together (CORA, 2003).

Economic Stressors

Economic stresses are often felt in a community experiencing a slow motion technological disaster on a personal and collective level. Often the consequences of the exposure will negatively affect property values in the community (Green et al, 1994). The community

begins to feel the impending economic downturn and individuals realize that they may not be able to receive fair market value for their property. In turn, individuals may feel trapped in their contaminated community, or even contaminated home (Green et al., 1994). Additional financial constraints like looming medical bills can increase stress (CORA, 2003).

As the results of my investigation of the Libby CAG are presented in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, it is important to recognize the presence and impact that all of these psychosocial stressors have had on the process. Despite the group's best efforts, resulting stressors from a technological disaster continue to challenge the group's effectiveness and ability to reach its goals.

Community Conflict and Stigma

Often a community faced with a natural disaster will pull together as they struggle to recover. This coming together by residents to cope with a disaster is often referred to as the development of a 'therapeutic community' (Kroll-Smith and Couch, 1990). But in a *technological disaster*, it is much more likely that a 'non-therapeutic community' will develop. As the uncertainties around a technological disaster increase, conflict within the community most often follows. Societal divisions can arise between a variety of groups both within and outside the community including those responsible for the accident, its prevention, or cleanup; those who control the information and resources; and those who see themselves as victimized by their exposure to it (Speckhard, 2002 citing Green, 1998). Community conflict increases as people disagree over multiple aspects of the disaster from defining the problem, assigning blame, to deciding which actions to take.

In Michael Edelstein's book, Contaminated Communities, he explains the community conflict that can occur after a disaster in terms of 'consensus' and 'dissensus'. Edelstein states that community development is dependent on an adequate level of agreement about the basic

circumstances of exposure among residents in the contaminated area (Edelstein, 1988). This agreement among community members is labeled consensus. In turn, the absence of consensus is 'dissensus' (Edelstein, 1988). A state of dissensus exists when there are varying definitions of the disaster and opinions on how to respond to it. This state of dissensus is a recipe for conflict to occur in the community.

Edelstein suggests that technological disasters, where industry is the villain, "challenges the economic foundations of society" and produces conditions ripe for dissensus in a community (Edelstein, 1988). Individuals who are directly affected by the disaster often form consensus among themselves with respect to the severity of the disaster and its cause. In the eyes of the community this group becomes the 'victims'. Therefore, in contaminated communities elements of both consensus and dissensus are often observed.

The conflict within a community can also create varying degrees of stigmatization of certain groups within the community, and even the community itself. People outside the community may hear of the contamination and view the community as a horrible place to visit; this can stigmatize the impacted community (CORA, 2003). Individuals within the community who are involved with the disaster may be viewed as 'troublemakers' who are ruining the good name of the town (CORA, 2003). Likewise individuals who do not agree with the characterization of the town may be stigmatized as not caring about the plight of those directly affected by the disaster. Similar to other stressors identified, the resulting community conflict and stigma are shaped by individual perceptions of the disaster.

By looking at others that have endured contamination and the resultant environmental, human health, and social problems we see many examples of communities that have similarities to the Libby response. One such community is Centralia, Pennsylvania. In Centralia, community dissensus challenged the community in its response to contamination. The polarization also reflected the town's history and social infrastructure.

The Centralia Example

J. Stephen Kroll-Smith and Stephen Robert Couch's, The Real Disaster is Above Ground, investigates the response of the small coal-mining town of Centralia, Pennsylvania to a chronic underground mine fire. Kroll-Smith and Couch's description of the dissensus and challenges in Centralia is remarkably similar to the polarization and challenges in Libby.

Centralia was a community dependent on the anthracite coal industry. Absentee coal operators owned many of the area's home and businesses, and also dominated the community's decision making (Kroll-Smith and Couch, 1990). The instability and decline of the coal industry reflected in the instability and flux of the Centralia community. In many ways, the legacy of a dependent and fluctuating community rendered Centralia unable to successfully cope with the insidious and chronic disaster of the fire.

The dependent, fragmented structure of the community, tenuously adapted to a single-industry economy, was poorly prepared to adjust to the decline of coal. The traditional community could not serve residents as a supportive context from which to organize a collective response to the underground fire (Kroll-Smith and Couch, 10).

Kroll-Smith and Couch (1990) assert that a community's response to a chronic disaster is influenced by the social and cultural history of the community. It is the local culture that is the source of the conceptual, emotional, and physical resources by which a threat is defined, meanings are determined, and resources are launched (Kroll-Smith and Couch, 1990). As a community's culture is largely shaped by its history, the past plays an important role in a community's response to a technological disaster.

With respect to the community response in Libby, I agree with Kroll-Smith and Couch's declaration that response to a technological disaster is tied to the social and cultural history of the community. In other words, it is not simply the stressors specific to a slow motion technological disaster that create dissensus. The social and cultural history of the community significantly influences how a community responds to disaster.

As a community that traditionally has been tied to one or two corporations, Libby's history and social infrastructure is similar to Centralia's. As Kroll-Smith and Couch (1990) point out, Centralia's history of economic dependence played an important role in the community's ability to handle the disaster of the mine fire. As we look at the response of the Libby CAG to the asbestos disaster, it is important to remember the context of history and social infrastructure within which the group's discussions and actions take place.

Clarification of the Research Questions

The Libby CAG forum is intended to serve as a place for individuals representing various entities and constituencies to come together to discuss and solve problems related to asbestos contamination. This discussion often includes the current progress and challenges to achieving group goals and solving problems. This research will evaluate how effective the group has been at executing this intention.

Since its formation in early 2000, the Libby CAG has had some remarkable successes. As we will see, the group seems to have reached a point of frustration in its action towards achieving its goals. This study aims to offer an analysis of the CAG and its position within the network of entities working on the problems in Libby that have resulted from the asbestos contamination.

Overarching Research Question

This study was designed and conducted to answer one overarching research question and a series of four sub-questions. The main research question grows out of two main assumptions. First, there is a network of entities both public and private in the Libby community working on asbestos-related issues. Second, there are goals common to all such entities working in the community concerning contamination clean up, health care, and economic revitalization.

Therefore:

To what extent does the Libby Community Advisory Group serve as an effective forum for bringing entities together to discuss and work towards achieving their stated goals?

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Libby CAG to both bring entities together and work on issues, I first need to define my criteria for evaluating effectiveness. As shown above, academic literature about the CAC forum for public participation provides various criteria for determining group effectiveness. In some studies the researchers determine the criteria for effectiveness, while others allow the opinions of the group participants to form the criteria. In some studies effectiveness is determined through procedural indicators, while others look to goals and outcomes. For my evaluation of the effectiveness of the Libby CAG I will utilize a combination of aspects of both perspectives and categories to establish my own criteria.

My Criteria of Effectiveness

I see a distinct difference between the words 'successful' and 'effective'. In my opinion, a group's *effectiveness* contributes to its ability to be *successful*. To me, success for a group is accomplishing its goals. In that way, I support a more goal and outcome oriented criteria for measuring success. In turn, a forum designed and executed to reach the group's goals should lead to success and achievement of the goals set by the group. Therefore, group effectiveness is more of a means to an end, and evaluating it is a much more complicated task.

My criterion for group effectiveness is based on the literature as well as some of my own thoughts. I wish to make it clear that I think group effectiveness is not solely based on the set-up and framework for how the forum will operate, but also how the group participants utilize and work within the decided upon forum. In other words, there is interplay between how the forum is structured, and how the group members choose to operate within the forum. For example, simply because a variety of entities from the community are represented in the group does not mean that all opinions and views are expressed at the meetings. If some individuals choose not to share the

concerns of their constituencies it is not a failing of the process, but a failure of the participants in their choice of how to use the process. In other words, despite the forum's structure, the ultimate effectiveness of the group is in many ways up to the actions and choices of participants.

Therefore, distinct characteristics recognizing this interplay between group design and operation make up my criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of a community advisory group. For a community advisory group to be an effective forum to reach its goals, the group members must:

- Acknowledge the different interests and concerns that exist in the community related to the problem.
- Provide the opportunity for representation of all community viewpoints (i.e. interests and concerns)
- Be able to prioritize the different community interests and concerns to establish the purpose and goals of the group.
- Establish group purpose and goals that are generally agreed upon.
- Decide upon a level of advocacy for the group to operate at.
- Foster the development of honest dialogue between all entities working on problems (including the various agencies involved)
- Find creative methods to access resources and opportunities that the group needs to reach its goals and solve problems.

Four Sub-Questions

To further evaluate the effectiveness of the Libby CAG, I will draw on these main points of my criteria, plus the criteria from the literature in the four sub-questions of the study. With respect to group procedure, it is worth exploring how different CAG members view the process from its foundation. To me, this foundation is the group's purpose and goals. Therefore my first sub-question asks: **how do CAG members articulate the goals of the group, and to what extent do they agree or disagree on these issues?** I plan to assess the congruency between the ideas members have of what the CAG's purpose is and what the group is striving for, and how this view may or may not have shifted over the group's tenure.

A community advisory group's sponsoring government agency is an important entity working within the community. The relationship and dialogue that the group has with the sponsor is extremely important to the effectiveness of the forum. Therefore my second sub-question asks: **to what extent has the CAG been successful at working with the agencies to achieve their goals?** For the Libby CAG, the work of the EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) greatly influences the actions of the group. As an advisory group, the Libby CAG addresses many aspects of the EPA's activities concerning the cleanup of contamination and also many health care issues related to the work of the ATSDR. However the problems facing the community often range outside the two agencies' mandates, thus presenting challenges for the CAG.

My third sub-question focuses on the networking aspect of the overarching research question and evaluates representativeness of the CAG. As a group designed to represent as many of the interests and sections of the greater Libby community as possible, **how well does the CAG represent all relevant entities working on the problems?**

My final sub-question looks to the current struggles of the group and the intent of the group in the future. The problems facing the Libby CAG are extremely long-term in scope. Therefore, I am interested in hearing participants' views on the future of the Libby CAG and its potential to remain actively committed to its goals over time. Therefore, my fourth sub-question asks: **how will the CAG need to change or evolve in order to accomplish their goals and solve problems?** This sub-question focuses less on assessing past effectiveness, but rather attempts to help CAG members envision future possibilities for the group and reflect upon the necessary commitment of the entire community to achieve the goals. In order to fully discuss the effectiveness of the CAG forum for working towards their goals, it is necessary to also look beyond its current state and identify its future potential.

Methodology

In addition to a review of relevant academic literature, CAG related documents, and media accounts, my research strategy employs qualitative methods of participant observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews with CAG members and other key informants. In order to gain a richer understanding of the CAG, I decided to observe it in action. I attended the monthly public CAG meetings in Libby from October 2002 to September 2003. The methods of data collection I utilized during my participant observation at the CAG meetings involved taking detailed and comprehensive field notes. While attending meetings I took notes on the topics of discussion and the interaction between the group members and the audience.

The primary source of data for my analysis comes from the interviews I conducted with CAG members and other key informants. The interview component allowed for participants to articulate, in their own words, their experiences and observations gained by participating in the CAG process. In determining the format of my interviews, I felt that it was necessary to use open-ended interview questions that allowed for a conversational dialogue to occur between the interviewees and myself. I felt that this strategy would result in extremely rich data through the stories, experiences, and candid remarks of the participants.

In total I interviewed twenty-five people. Twenty-two interviewees were former or current Libby CAG members, while the other three interviewees were Wendy Thomi, the EPA Community Involvement Coordinator in Libby, Gerald Mueller, the CAG's facilitator, and Tanis Lincoln, a social worker with the CORA program in Libby. Twenty-four interviewees consented to having the interview tape recorded, while one interviewee denied this request. In setting up the interviews, I allowed the participants to decide where they would like to meet. The majority of the interviews took place at the participant's home, while some took place at other locations such as a café or restaurant or the interviewee's office. Prior to performing the interviews, I prepared a list of approximately thirteen questions to guide the conversations (See Appendix 1). The list of questions remained consistent for all interviews with CAG members. As expected, the

discussions varied as I asked probing and follow-up questions based on their initial responses to the established questions. The three interviews with non-group members were elicited to provide specific information or a unique perspective based on the expertise and/or role of the interviewee. Therefore, these interviews did not necessarily follow a structured set of prepared questions. The length of the interviews ranged from thirty minutes to approximately two and a half hours.

Each tape-recorded interview was transcribed. The first six interviews were initially transcribed by an assistant, and then reviewed and corrected by myself. I transcribed the remaining nineteen interviews myself. I then reviewed the transcribed text and analyzed the data by organizing the comments into general thematic groups. Within the initial thematic groups, the information was further sub-divided to account for differences in content. The combination of my textual research, participant observation, and information gleaned from the interviews forms the foundation for my evaluation of the effectiveness of the Libby CAG.

Plan for Presentation of Results and Discussion

The presentation and discussion of the results of this study will occur in chapters two through six, with chapter seven providing a conclusion. Chapter two presents a history of the asbestos contamination in Libby, describes the media attention to the disaster in 1999, depicts the initial response of the community and the establishment of the CAG, and concludes with a discussion of the initial psychosocial response of the community.

The next four chapters systematically provide evidence to discuss and answer the four sub-questions of the study. Chapter three addresses the group's goals and function. Chapter four details the challenges of the relationship between the CAG and the agencies working in Libby. Chapter five discusses the struggles the group has had in attaining representation from all aspects of the community, while chapter six provides suggestions and opinions on the future of the CAG largely from the perspective of the group members.

The seventh and final chapter summarizes and ties together the main points of my evaluation of the Libby CAG and its effectiveness at bringing entities together to discuss and solve problems resultant from the asbestos contamination. I do not claim to have all the answers for how to overcome the challenges to effectiveness that I will raise in this thesis. I only strive to hold up a mirror to the Libby CAG in an attempt to reveal the intricacies of their struggle, identify their challenges, and hopefully begin to tell their story.

Chapter 2: History of the Problem and Initial Response

To tell the story of the contemporary Libby CAG, it is necessary to begin with the historic rationale for the need for such a group in the first place. The purpose of this chapter is to chronologically present the history of the problem, from the mine's first days of operation to the media disclosure of the contamination and resultant conditions under which the CAG was established. First, this chapter provides a brief history of the local vermiculite mining operation and legacy of the contamination. Second, this chapter describes the media disclosure of the asbestos contamination. Third, this chapter discusses the importance of the community's history and social infrastructure in its efforts to address the disaster. Fourth, the chapter presents the initial public response and polarization of the community. The final section of this chapter discusses aspects of the psychosocial response of the community from the perspective of a local social worker.

History of the Problem

Libby has a history steeped in a frontier and resource-dependent culture familiar to many towns in the Rocky Mountain west. Rich with both timber and minerals, the Kootenai valley has entertained resident logging and mining entrepreneurs and companies for close to 150 years. Today for the most part, the large industries that brought and kept settlers in this area have packed up and left. Libby is the county seat of Lincoln County. Libby and its cousin community Troy, only fifteen miles away, make up the majority of the population in south Lincoln County. Although close to Troy, Libby is isolated from larger population centers in the region, requiring at least a ninety-mile drive to reach Kalispell, Montana, or Spokane, Washington.

The people of south Lincoln County live either within the city limits of Libby or Troy, or scattered throughout the surrounding hills or along the Kootenai River, fringing each town

respectively. The population of Lincoln County has traditionally swayed with the boom and bust cycles of the industries that move through the area. Today, the population of Lincoln County hovers near 12,000 people, after declining since its peak in 1970 of 18,063 during the construction of the Libby Dam (Peacock, 2003).

It is the legacy of Libby's mining that has so drastically impacted the lives of its residents. Due to the severe health consequences of its mining history, Libby sits at the top of a long, long list of communities slated for clean up from hazardous materials under the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund program. The environmental cleanup in the Libby area will cost millions of dollars and take many years to complete. To understand how Libby residents are grappling with their current situation and future prospects, it is necessary to know how Libby arrived at the top of the Superfund list. Again, Libby is a town with a story to tell, and to begin the telling we must turn back the clock to the late 1800's.

From an Amazing Discovery to an Unprecedented Cover up

From all known possible records, it was in 1881 that mining prospectors in search of gold first upturned earth on what would become known as Zonolite Mountain (Schneider, 1999b). The name Zonolite would not be given to the mountain which stands approximately seven miles northeast of present day Libby until many years later when Edward Alley would make a historic discovery. As the yarn goes, Alley was investigating an abandoned shaft from those first prospects when his torch revealed a glittering from a mineral lining the mineshaft. The heat from the flame popped and expanded the shiny material like popcorn; most intriguing was that as he held the flame beneath the puffs they did not burn (Schneider, 1999b). Alley's discovery first introduced the world to 'the magic mineral' of vermiculite, which he later named Zonolite.

Alley had stumbled onto a truly amazing discovery, it was in fact the largest known vermiculite deposit in the world at the time; at least one hundred feet wide, 1,000 feet long, and deeper than could be determined (Peacock, 2003). Scientists knew that the geologic forces that

created Alley's prized vermiculite also created large dikes, some with a width of fourteen feet, of amphibole asbestos (Peacock, 2003). In broad terms, the two materials were intermixed, virtually impossible to have one without the other. What was less known at the time was how harmful amphibole asbestos is to humans if it was inhaled or ingested.

Asbestos is a general term given to the fibrous forms of a family of mineral silicates (Bowker, 2003). There are six officially recognized types of asbestos: chrysotile, crocidolite, amosite, anthophyllite, actinolite, and tremolite (Bowker, 2003). The fibers can essentially be split into two categories, those with properties of the chrysotile or the amphibole variety. Both the amphibole variety (as found at Zonolite Mountain) and the chrysotile variety, have amazing natural waterproofing, fireproofing, and corrosion-proofing properties (Bowker, 2003). Chrysotile fibers are curly or serpent like, while amphiboles are shorter more needle-like fibers; and much more harmful to humans. Unknown to the enterprising Alley, the amphibole fibers of tremolite interspersed with his vermiculite would later cause one of the worst environmental and human health disasters in the United States.

With the potential hazard of his finding completely unknown to him, Alley pursued turning his discovery into profit. Once Alley realized the depth to which the mineral lay, and received confirmation from government scientists that he had found something remarkable; he was in business. By 1924, Alley's enterprise was heating and expanding four tons of Zonolite a day (Schneider, 1999b). In just two short years his business would expand to produce up to 100 tons a day and include railway shipping to haul the mineral from Libby to companies who would use Zonolite to create a litany of fireproofing and building materials (Schneider, 1999b).

Only a decade later in 1935, Alley's company was sold to outside interests as he suffered an untimely death from a brief illness (Peacock, 2003). The company reappeared in 1939 after a business merger as the Universal Zonolite Insulation Company, later to be shortened to the Zonolite Company (Peacock, 2003). The company soon realized that it would be more economical to ship unprocessed, or unexpanded, vermiculite from Libby to buyers elsewhere.

Therefore, the company opened processing plants in cities across the United States and even in countries abroad, where vermiculite ore from Libby could be processed for sale (Peacock, 2003). The processing plant venture paid in huge dividends for the company as over the next few decades Libby vermiculite was sold extensively for use in a variety of products including home insulation, additive for plaster, and many horticultural products including potting soil.

Before the vermiculite could be shipped to the distant processing plants it had to be extracted and sorted in Libby. The Zonolite mine was a strip mine, which meant that men used large equipment to carve “steep stairlike benches, 28 feet tall, into the side of the hill” to extract the ore (Peacock, 2003). The loads of material were dumped onto a conveyor belt and sent to a series of silos to be separated by grade (Peacock, 2003). While the company shipped unprocessed ore to its processing plants around the country, there was also an expanding plant in Libby down by the banks of the Kootenai River near the baseball fields. At the popping plant, employees heated, expanded, and bagged vermiculite for shipping (Peacock, 2003).

While Zonolite’s business in Libby and elsewhere was proving highly successful and very lucrative, the first signs that there may be trouble occurred as early as 1941. On December 9, 1941 the state of Montana conducted an inspection of the Zonolite mine and reported high levels of dust (Bowker, 2003). Subsequently, the State Board of Health requested that those unloading materials wear respirators (Bowker, 2003). The company installed exhaust ventilation fans to help minimize the dust (Bowker, 2003).

In 1955, an industrial hygiene engineer for the Division of Disease Prevention and Control for the state, named Ben Wake, raised concern about the composition of the Libby vermiculite and its potential to cause respiratory illness in workers (Bowker, 2003). Despite his requests for analysis by federal researchers, he was ignored. A year later, the list of ingredients in the mine’s dust officially included asbestos. Wake’s report derived figures on the asbestos content in the air from company documents, and showed that at the time asbestos made up

anywhere from 8 to 21 percent of the dust on a given day (Bowker, 2003). Workers were never told that asbestos was a significant component of the Zonolite dust.

By the mid 1950's, when Wake was investigating the mine in Libby, it was widely known that asbestos was hazardous to human health. Asbestos was first tied to the death of an asbestos worker in London in 1900, 1924 marked the first use of the term "asbestosis" in medical literature in England, and in 1927 the first worker's compensation claim related to asbestos was filed in the United States (Bowker, 2003). Despite this knowledge, the dust at Zonolite was simply referred to as a nuisance by managers and not a concern for workers.

In 1963, the Zonolite Company was sold to the multinational, W.R. Grace and Company. Grace quickly expanded the company's operations and increased production (Schneider, 1999b). During its tenure as mine owner, W.R. Grace and Company extracted and sold more than sixteen million tons of Libby vermiculite to buyers across the nation and world wide, resulting in nearly 80% of the world's vermiculite originating from Zonolite Mountain (Bowker, 2003). Throughout Grace's ownership of the mine, the company maintained the status quo regarding the dust; it was merely a nuisance. The fact that the dust contained hazardous amphibole asbestos was kept from the workers. Moreover, as one former worker explained, the company flatly denied the truth that tremolite was even in the asbestos family.

I remember one of the workers in the control room up there said something about it, said something 'what about this asbestos?' and the mill superintendent said 'this is not asbestos, this is tremolite.' And to the lay worker, you know, you think tremolite, Zonolite, they sound a lot the same so there's no big deal... Yeah, vermiculite, Zonolite, tremolite, they're all the same family. And that's exactly the way most of the people took it. It wasn't a big deal. Yeah, dust is a nuisance and dust is not real healthy for you but they never had any concept that it was to the level of toxicity that it was (#18, 8/16/03).

In addition to the company's failure to tell workers about the hazards in the dust, the company went even further in its deception by keeping from workers, abnormal chest x-ray results, which could develop into asbestosis (Bowker, 2003). A letter written in 1967 from a Grace executive to an official with the mine's insurer revealed the extent to which not only the

mine manager, but also the company's insurance carrier, a radiologist, and the State of Montana knew of the abnormalities in workers and thus the potential for widespread asbestos related disease among mine workers in Libby (Bowker, 2003). Despite this information, the mine continued to function at peak capacity. Some new technology was installed to limit the dust. As some 15,000 tons of ore per day were processed, however, a resultant 5,000 tons of particulate matter including dust and tremolite fibers were pumped out of the smokestacks and into air (Bowker, 2003).

The particulate matter emitted by the smokestacks filled and settled in the valley. A Grace memo from 1965 noted, "you could get a five count in downtown Libby on many dry days" (Peacock, 2003). This 'five count' meant that there were five million particles of dust per cubic foot of air in downtown Libby on a dry day (Peacock, 2003). Since tremolite asbestos made up anywhere from 12 to 23 percent of the dust, as company records show, the air in downtown Libby on such days contained between 600,000 to upwards of 1 million fibers per cubic foot of air (Peacock, 2003).

While unsuspecting residents and visitors were breathing ambient air with high levels of asbestos in downtown Libby, workers at the mine tried unsuccessfully to leverage power against the corporation. A 1973 U.S. Bureau of Mines report explained to Grace that most mine employees wore their work clothes home from work and the company should install showers so workers could change out of their dusty clothes before returning home (Schneider, 1999a). In 1975, a new wet-processing mill was opened, to help with the dust. In addition to the new mill, Grace added two showers (Schneider, 1999a). However, two showers were not nearly enough to accommodate the sixty or so workers for each shift. The workers' union pushed the company to build more showers, but the company never followed through (Schneider, 1999a).

While Grace continued its strategy of deception, the exposure of the innocent in Libby continued. In addition to the unscrupulous business practices of Grace, virtually every government entity responsible for preventing the escalating tragedy failed at every opportunity to turn the course of the impending tide. It was not until 1990 that W.R. Grace, sighting economic concerns, finally ceased operations at the mine.

The Zonolite Legacy

For decades, Libby vermiculite made the Zonolite Company, W.R. Grace, and others exceedingly wealthy. It also made many mine workers, their families, and residents of south Lincoln County deathly ill. In addition to the airborne material released directly from the refining sites, Libby residents were exposed to the fiber through multiple pathways. Miners brought the dust home to their families on their work clothes; children played in the open piles of vermiculite and at the baseball fields under the shadow and dust of the popping plant; local residents and businesses received vermiculite free from the companies for use at a variety of locations around town for fill in backyard gardens, building insulation material, and even the construction of the high school track. As a result, vermiculite and its corresponding tremolite fibers were pervasive in the Libby community and in the lives of its residents for many, many years. Due to the multiple pathways and extent of the exposure to tremolite asbestos, hundreds of former mine workers, their family members, and residents have either died or been stricken with debilitating asbestos-related diseases.

Asbestos fibers are exceedingly harmful to the human body. Once inhaled, the lungs are unable to dissolve or completely expel all of the fibers. Amphibole asbestos fibers, like Libby's tremolite, are short needlelike fibers able to easily penetrate and remain in the delicate linings of the lungs. The area of lung tissue around the imbedded fiber becomes inflamed, and eventually the site becomes scarred (Schneider, 1999a). Over time, individuals exposed to asbestos fibers can develop asbestos-related diseases including asbestosis, lung cancer, and specialized asbestos-

related cancers called mesotheliomas of the pleural (lining in lung) and peritoneal (a membrane in the abdomen) (Bowker, 2003). The issue of time is an important variable in the mystery of asbestos related diseases. There can be a long latency period, anywhere from ten to forty years, from when an individual is exposed to when a disease will actually manifest to produce symptoms.

Asbestosis is a thickening and scarring of the lung. The disease results from extensive pleural plaquing, or the thickening and tightening of the outer tissue of the lungs (Peacock, 2003). Asbestosis slowly and certainly takes the breath and life from its victims. As the lung thickens and loses its elasticity, oxygen can neither reach the lungs nor can carbon dioxide and other impurities be released (Schneider, 1999a). Over time it becomes more difficult for someone suffering from asbestosis to perform activities that used to be done with ease, like mowing the lawn, playing with grandchildren, or even walking to the end of the driveway to collect the mail from the postbox. As the lung capacity diminishes, patients often must rely on portable oxygen devices for their remaining days.

Mesothelioma is the most deadly of asbestos-related diseases, and appears as cancer of either lung pleural tissue or abdominal peritoneal membrane. Most scientists agree that exposure to asbestos fibers is the sole cause of mesotheliomas (Bowker, 2003). Although once considered an extremely rare cancer, mesotheliomas are becoming increasingly more common in the industrialized nations of the world, with thousands of new cases diagnosed each year (Bowker, 2003). This startling increase in mesotheliomas appears congruent with a shrinking latency period of workers who were first exposed in the heyday of the asbestos industry to now, when symptoms and disease are recognizable. From the time first symptoms are identified, mesothelioma can take the life from its victim quickly and with tremendous discomfort and pain (Bowker, 2003).

It was not until the late 1990's after many families suffered in silence or settled out of court with Grace with orders not to discuss their case, when a few families decided that enough

was enough. Their cases did make it to court, and for the first time publicly began to put the pieces of the exposure, deception, and illness together. It was not until November of 1999, however, that the story would finally make headlines.

Breaking the News

In early fall of 1999, the local paper in Libby ran a story stating that W.R. Grace, claiming that the Zonolite mine had been reclaimed, wished to collect the unused portion of the company's posted cleanup bond (Bowker, 2003). One of the residents who had successfully taken Grace to court noticed the article right away and went to the mine to investigate. Upon noticing that extensive contamination was still present, the resident made phone calls to all appropriate government entities, but to no avail. When state officials finally did go to inspect the mine, they agreed with the resident's initial observations. It was not long after that the resident contacted the press and the gravity of the situation that had been silently growing for years would be thrust into the media spotlight.

On November 18, 1999, Libby's story of the contamination, illness, corporate irresponsibility, and governmental neglect broke on a large scale with the first of a series of articles in *The Seattle Post Intelligencer* by investigative journalist Andrew Schneider. Additionally, statewide coverage of the story ran in papers around Montana including the *Great Falls Tribune*, *The Missoulian*, and the *Kalispell Daily Inter Lake*. In two days, the first four articles in Schneider's 'Uncivil Action' series entitled: 'A Town Left to Die', 'Miners' Search for Gold Led to Vermiculite', 'While People are Dying, Government Agencies Pass the Buck', and 'No One Ever Told Us this Stuff Could Kill You' began to lay out before the nation the deceitful business practices of mine owner W.R. Grace, a detailed case against the responsible governmental agencies, and heart wrenching personal accounts of asbestos victims in Libby (Schneider, 1999abc).

For a large portion of the Libby community, the message that their community was experiencing a slow motion technological disaster arrived on their front door step as newspaper headlines from Andrew Schneider's expose. The articles not only thrust the tiny mountain community into the media spotlight, but also into a state of crisis. For Libby, information was indeed the initial stressor.

Within a few days after the first few articles ran, officials from the US Environmental Protection Agency arrived in Libby to assess the extent of the contamination and just how real the picture painted by the regional media actually was. Local leaders, state officials, and federal investigators were essentially scrambling in the wake of the news articles. Meanwhile, the comfortable and quiet lives of many in the communities of south Lincoln County, especially Libby, were essentially turned upside down. The arrival of the EPA and additional flow of information also became stressors as the community was told that exposure pathways remained in their homes, businesses, and public spaces (CORA, 2003). The surge of information from newspapers and initial agency communications helped form initial perceptions of the disaster.

The fact that the asbestos contamination story of Libby was broken by a large media publication had a tremendous impact on what was to become of the town immediately following the exposure, and even now four years later. If it was not for the media attention, the unprecedented EPA clean up of businesses, homes, and property in the Libby area may have never happened. However, strong social implications would result from the media attention, which challenged the community's collective identity and affected their ability to respond to the disaster with a clear and unified voice.

Shortly after the EPA arrived in town it began to implement its community involvement plan. The agency quickly recognized Libby as a site with "volatile emotions and community polarization", and decided to assist the community in forming a Community Advisory Group in early 2000 (US EPA Contractor, 2001). The initial polarization that occurred in Libby following the media attention divided the town and in some ways compromised the CAG's ability to engage

the entire community. Looking back on the initial polarization in Libby, I believe that the community's history and social infrastructure played an important role in this response.

The Importance of History and Social Infrastructure

Libby in itself is a novel. It's personality, it always has been. My mother was born in Troy and she was always extremely aware of the differences of the personalities. And spent a good many years up in the north end of the county, Old Rexford and that sort of thing. Eureka has its own personality too. But Libby's the mill town, or what's left of it.

In 1946, Harold and Lois Kaufman were commissioned by the Montana Study, a project spearheaded by the University of Montana, to better understand rural communities and how best to facilitate their development. The Kaufmans' contribution to the Montana Project addressed the "two adjacent timber-dependent communities in Montana: Libby and Troy" (Lee et al., 1990). The study focuses on ways to 'stabilize' the communities despite the unstable timber industry, and the communities' relationship with the US Forest Service.

The Kaufmans describe the Libby and Troy communities of 1940. The communities were smaller in terms of population, with only around 5,000 people in the county at the time, and the economy was more heavily timber dependent: "possibly two-thirds or more of the basic income of the area comes from the forest" (Kaufman and Kaufman, 1946). They discuss the indications of stability and instability they found in the communities.

Signs of stability are found in the civic organizations, schools, and churches, all with a long history; in the attractive and well-built courthouse and city hall located in Libby; and in some substantial and attractive homes. Indices of instability are the temporary business structures, unkept streets and sidewalks, and the many rather hastily constructed dwellings. This sense of impermanence is expressed by residents when they say, "You can't expect too much from a sawmill town" (Kaufman and Kaufman, 1946).

The Kaufmans' description and critique of the resource dependent economy of south Lincoln County, while poignant in 1946 also has a ghostly and even more powerful relevance today.

While many of the qualities of instability of the 1940's have been addressed, the reference to

residents who claim that little can be expected of the town is echoed today, nearly sixty years later. The Kaufmans also highlighted problems in Libby and Troy that could hinder stabilization.

Although many forces and activities in the area are contributing to a more stable community, many real problems remain to be faced and solved. There is a need for trained leadership with vision, for widespread participation on the part of all groups, and for cooperative action toward common ends (Kaufman and Kaufman, 1946).

More than 50 years later, Libby residents still see these needs in their community.

Several CAG members referred to Libby's history and these aspects of the social infrastructure in the interviews. There is a sentiment among some interviewees that Libby's history has shaped a mentality in Libby. One interviewee calls it a 'smokestack mentality', while others refer to it as a 'company town mentality.' According to these interviewees, a lingering company town mentality among some residents affects their ability to assume leadership, achieve self-empowerment, or even think for themselves due to many years of subordinate roles.

I think it goes back to, maybe the history... The only thing I can fasten this onto and I have been groping with that same realization trying to figure this out, and I think I can attribute it to the fact that this is a company run town... And the companies thought for the people, they provided homes for them, they had a company store, you notice they had to do very little thinking for themselves. The companies leave, but the people remain. And here you've got a whole bunch of folks, core folks that in essence can't think for themselves. They have to have something laid out for them. That is the only thing I can attribute to where this attitude comes from. You owe it to me to take care of me. That is the attitude that pervades the community... (#8, 6/14/03).

A smokestack community is a very dependent scenario and the leadership... in those community scenarios is the mid-level management, management level of the corporation that's present, whether it's the mine, lumber company or whatever. They're gone. Just a few brush bunnies left around and they're content to sit around and fight amongst themselves. It's kind of sad that there's an element missing in the community. Even worse, I don't think that for the most part that they recognize it. Sit around and function more like a dysfunctional family, an abused dysfunctional family (#12, 8/16/03).

As the interviewees' comments allude, the three components of social infrastructure identified by the Kaufmans, leadership vision, widespread participation, and cooperative action continue to challenge the Libby community. Moreover, the history of the community remains

exceedingly important to the community's response to the current disaster. Concerning the CAG, the three components of stability identified by the Kaufmans are also characteristics of an effective community effort or public participation forum. Essentially, these three components assist a community in becoming effective.

As the story of the Libby CAG continues to unfold, it is interesting to put the response of the Libby community to the asbestos disaster and work at the CAG into a larger historical context. As the comments by the interviewees suggest, the Kaufmans observations of instability in the Libby and Troy communities are not solely problems of the past, but issues that continue to challenge the Libby community today.

Initial Polarization and Formation of the CAG

Much of the initial polarization that occurred was largely motivated by economic concerns following what many believed was a negative media portrayal of the quiet mountain town. Economic stresses in Libby, wholly separate from the asbestos disaster, were apparent before the information was released. The compounding pressure of the new information only added to the economic stresses that already plagued the town from a waning timber industry and the closure of the mine in 1990. Moreover, as the local economy had begun to shift towards tourism and real estate development, the news of the exposure and resulting stigmatization of the community exacerbated economic stress and worries.

Large timber and mining corporations have been the lifeblood of Libby for many years. J. Neils, Zonolite, Champion, W.R. Grace, Stimson, to name the most prominent. The employment history of many residents follows the ebb and flow of the movement of large resource extractive industries through the town. The public disclosure of the asbestos contamination in Libby brought the distrust of the federal government, environmentalists, and outsiders into focus. Andrea Peacock writes,

...until the asbestos issue brought the EPA to town, Libby residents pretty much stuck to a moderate distrust of the government and a knee-jerk intolerance for environmentalism-the reaction of a de facto company town to declines in the logging and mining industries (Peacock, 2003)

Libby's mayor, Tony Berget, further illustrates this sentiment in one of Schneider's first articles:

The environmental politics of the nation don't always go over well in small towns. The environmental laws have hurt the logging industry, and that has cost us a lot of jobs. Add that to Grace closing the vermiculite mine and it's been a rough ten years for a lot of our people. Our unemployment is between 14 and 16 percent (Schneider, 1999a).

I have heard people say that if another corporation came to town, all would be well. A section of the population seemed to ignore some of the negative impacts, like asbestos contamination, these companies have had on their community.

Individuals responded to the media attention in a variety of ways, from decrying the horrible reporting to applauding the articles for finally telling the truth. A rift in town became obvious very quickly. Letters written to the editor of Libby's local newspaper, the Western News, in early 2000 give voice to the dichotomy between trust and dependence on industry and the distrust of threatening outsiders like reporters and environmentalists.

Many Libby residents have worked hard to rebuild Libby's economic base since the W.R. Grace mine closed in 1990, only to have their efforts squelched by the media's poison, inaccurate pen (Blastek, 2000).

If the politicians really want to help our community and the people with asbestosis, maybe they should be looking at creating some industry for our area, so the families of those who have asbestosis can afford to stay in Libby and be close to their loved ones (Beagle, 2000).

As usual it boils down to the greed and power of outsiders who wish to put an end to towns like ours where people depend on the natural resources around them for our livelihood (Bellacosa, 2000).

Another letter voices an alternate view of support for the reporting, stating that nothing would have been done had the exposure not occurred.

Do residents actually believe that W.R. Grace would have reported the problems in Libby...No, without the media breaking this story there would have been no reopening of W.R. Grace presence in Lincoln County...It would still be a secret (Wilkins, 2000).

There was a very real fear for many in the community that the disclosure of the disaster would stigmatize Libby as a hazardous and unsafe place to live or even visit. The portrayal of Libby as a 'town left to die' was not good news for a local economy turning more and more to tourism and the migration of out of state retirees. In my recent interviews with members of the CAG, one member's comments reflect this sentiment regarding the stigma that developed due to the publicity.

Economic revitalization and damage to the communities of Libby and Troy from the stigmas of the crisis and the stigmas of Superfund and the tremendous amount of negative, I guess that's my value statement, negative publicity that led many, many folks to think that you can't drive through here and you're going to get sick, you know that kind of thing (#11, 8/14/03).

The threat of the information disclosure and the potential for further economic troubles continued to polarize the community. One CAG member describes the "two sides" that emerged after the story broke.

And you know its kind of funny you could see when this thing first broke, the story first broke, almost immediately there went up two sides. A side that, you know, that was, well at least they portrayed themselves as being concerned with the Libby community and they wanted to get things straightened away with the people that were sick and dying. And then there was the other side that were really upset and angry that that publicity had happened, you know (#5, 7/12/03).

In the very early stages of the CAG's development, this division was evident. Interviewees referred to a variety of reasons for the division within the community, including denial of the severity of the disaster and loyalty to the company.

...I mean preexisting you know to any CAG development, there was a lot of dissension in the community due to the division over you know some people just had these strong feelings of you know 'I don't even want to talk about it. Its not a big problem' you know and others that were very loyal to the residual of the Grace management. So there was a lot of hesitancy of individuals to say 'we're going to deal with this. There was a tendency for people to say 'I just don't want

to deal with that issue' and 'it makes me feel uncomfortable'. So I think a lot of people just didn't get involved with it you know... (#10, 8/14/03).

Early on, ... when I was first involved in it there was a lot of animosity within the community and I think that dealt with 'this thing isn't really happening, there really isn't, these guys are blowing this out of proportion type of thing. And there was both sides on the board, so there was some friction that went on early on. And in fact a lot of the people that really didn't believe that there was a problem, left the CAG and stuff like that (#18, 8/16/03).

I got a lot of real negative comments from people. They were saying you know I've lived here all my life I haven't had any trouble, what are they complaining about. They got a good wage when they were working up there, all you know, all jobs are dangerous or you know could be dangerous and you just gotta take it' and so there was a lot of negative feeling about it... (#20, 7/11/03).

As the CAG developed and became the public forum for the discussion of asbestos related issues, it also became ground zero for the clash between those on both sides of the rift in the community.

Formation of the Libby CAG

The Libby CAG began to form after a series of agency interviews with citizens. Through these interviews with residents, a group of approximately twenty individuals identified as community leaders were invited by the EPA to an informational meeting regarding the formation of a CAG in Libby (US EPA Contractor, 2001). This first informational meeting was held in the evening at the City Hall Ponderosa Room on January 20, 2000. The individuals present at this meeting represented a range of interests in the community including: local government, St. John's Hospital, Chamber of Commerce, asbestos victims, real estate, local media, Libby School District, former W.R. Grace employees, children's interests, economic development council, lumber and sawmill workers, senior citizens, and the environmental community (US EPA, January 20, 2000).

At this meeting the Community Involvement Coordinator for the EPA, Wendy Thomi, explained the agency's idea of what a CAG is (US EPA, January 20, 2000). She explained that

EPA views the CAG as a way for the agency to “keep in touch with the larger community through community representatives” (US EPA, January 20, 2000). She also emphasized that the CAG could serve as a place for the community to bring its concerns and questions to the EPA and other agencies working on the cleanup (US EPA, January 20, 2000).

In addition, Ms. Thomi stressed that who is on the group, how the group is formed, the level of involvement, and the direction the group will take will be up to the community and not the agency (US EPA, January 20, 2000). She explained how the EPA would provide some logistical support for the group including taking meeting minutes, distributing public notices, interpreting technical documents, advertising in the local papers, and providing an outside facilitator for the meetings if the group chose (US EPA, January 20, 2000). Moreover, CAG meetings would be open to the public (US EPA, January 20, 2000).

The group raised and discussed many questions community members had with regard to the formation of a CAG. Libby Mayor Tony Berget called for a vote of the group as to whether or not they thought a group should be formed at all (US EPA, January 20, 2000). All those present at the informational meeting voted in favor of developing a CAG (US EPA, January 20, 2000). The group also voted in favor of hiring an outside facilitator to administer the meetings (US EPA, January 20, 2000). Individuals also volunteered to serve on a sub-group to explore hiring the facilitator (US EPA, January 20, 2000).

Wendy Thomi facilitated the first organizational meetings of the CAG, but was replaced with Gerald Mueller, a hired facilitator from Missoula. A mid-term evaluation report of the CAG, conducted in August of 2001 by an outside contractor, referenced Ms. Thomi’s comments on why an outside facilitator was sought for the group. The report states,

She said neutral third-party facilitation was necessary because of the emotional nature of the subjects discussed by the group and the potential for conflict (US EPA Contractor, 2001).

The group held its first official meeting on February 3, 2000 (US EPA Contractor, 2001).

At that first meeting, the group discussed what the purpose of the CAG should be. The group facilitator proposed that the purpose of the CAG could be,

to provide a conduit for formal and regular communication between the people of the Libby community and the EPA. This conduit is to be two-way. EPA is to distribute information to the CAG and CAG members are to provide questions, concerns, information, etc. from the Libby community to the EPA (US EPA, February 3, 2000).

Community members present agreed to this general purpose for the group and also determined CAG membership responsibilities. The group decided that membership would be self-selected and continually open to all who are willing to take on the responsibilities (US EPA, February 3, 2000). The group determined that membership responsibilities would include: expressing concerns, rumors, and questions to the EPA, attending meetings or sending an alternate, reporting information from the EPA to the Troy and Libby communities, and making members' names, telephone numbers, and addresses available for print in the local newspaper so they could be contacted by citizens (US EPA, February 3, 2000).

At the group's second meeting on February 24, 2000, the CAG made additions to the purpose the group drafted at the first meeting. "Several members asked that the purpose be expanded to include providing advice and/or recommendations to EPA and others such as Montana's Congressional delegation" (US EPA, February 24, 2000). The facilitator informed that group that doing so would require that the CAG adopt a decision rule to specify how it would develop the advice or recommendations (US EPA, February 24, 2000). In addition, the EPA reminded the group that by law, it could not relinquish its decision-making authority, nor can it require the group to come to consensus (US EPA, February 24, 2000). The group chose "simple majority rule while still providing for minority views" (US EPA, February 24, 2000). The CAG agreed to the expansion of its purpose to include providing advice and/or recommendation at the

next meeting on March 9, 2000, after consulting with representative groups and organizations (US EPA, March 9, 2000).

The initial charge formulated by the Libby CAG was to provide: formal communication between the community and EPA, information to the EPA in the form of concerns, questions, and rumors, and advice and/or recommendations to the agency and others including Montana's Congressional delegation. Essentially, the development of the Libby CAG in its first days established group functions, membership roles, and an advisory component that would change very little over the next four years.

Thoughts on Psychosocial Response in Libby

The CAG was formed and has existed within the context of the psychosocial response in the Libby community. To better understand this context, it is necessary to know a little about the initial psychosocial response by the community. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will offer the perspective of Tanis Lincoln, who is a social worker in Libby.

An Overwhelming Need in Libby

During that first year after the story broke, the community was in essence turned upside down in the attempt to respond to the disaster. While the EPA moved in to address the remaining exposure pathways and the Agency for Toxic Substance Disease Registry (ATSDR) organized a massive screening to determine the extent of the health effects in the community. While the federal agencies were busy, the local health care providers were trying to assess the needs for their services in the community and to fund programs to address those needs. With the understanding that a large number of people would require specialized care for asbestos related diseases (ARD), the St. John's Lutheran Hospital and other providers in the Libby community also realized that existing services and facilities were not sufficient to meet those needs. In March of 2000, the medical community began the formation of the Center for Asbestos Related

Diseases (CARD). The CARD saw its first patient in July of 2000 (Lincoln, electronic correspondence 9/30/03).

While the health professionals in the community were scrambling to meet the current and future physical health needs of those with ARD, the mental health and social service providers were likewise scrambling to identify and respond to the psychosocial needs of the community. Many primary and secondary stressors related to a loss of safety and security, loss of control, invisibility, and chronicity were observed. As the seemingly safe and isolated town in the Cabinet Mountains realized it was experiencing a slow motion technological disaster, the community experienced a dramatic loss of safety and security. Many individuals in Libby, especially those who unknowingly brought home asbestos to their families, experienced an intense feeling of helplessness and loss of control for the damage had already been done (CORA, 2003). Moreover, the threat to that safety and security was an invisible and insidious fiber. The minute size of asbestos particles coupled with the knowledge of its extensive use in residential and public spaces lends itself to thoughts and worries. As more and more exposure pathways for the tiny particles were identified in Libby, people experienced increasing fear and anxiety (CORA, 2003). Additional stressors resulted from the long-term nature of the disaster in Libby, which included the latency period from exposure to on-set of symptoms, the lengthy projections of a thorough cleanup, and the generational impact of the exposure. It became clear early on that there was a tremendous need in the Libby community for mental health services.

In the wake of the media attention at the end of 1999, the EPA immediately contacted mental health providers in the Libby community regarding the formation of a support group (Lincoln, 8/14/03). The professionals quickly organized a support group and soon around twenty people began to meet. Anger, betrayal, and the division within the community were topics often discussed at those early meetings.

You know the community was so divided at the time. Where they were frustrated by that, you know their neighbors won't talk to them anymore, you know divisions within employment. You know 'my boss doesn't believe this'

and so kind of, it was a place to process all of that division and frustration and betrayal issues (Lincoln, 8/14/03).

In that first year, mental health professionals applied for grant funding for psychosocial response services. When the grant was denied, Senator Max Baucus went to the Emergency Services and Disaster Relief Branch of the federal Center for Mental Health Services essentially on behalf of the community's established need (Lincoln, 8/14/03 and electronic correspondence 9/30/03). A contract was offered to St. John's and the Libby community, by the Emergency Services and Disaster Relief Branch of the federal Center for Mental Health Services, to develop a training manual (Lincoln, electronic correspondence 9/30/03). This funding began the CARD Outreach Recovery Assistance program, known as CORA (Lincoln, 8/14/03). While the contract was established to create a training manual for communities dealing with slow motion technological disasters, direct services could also be provided to Libby residents during the creation of the manual (Lincoln, electronic correspondence 9/30/03). Once resources were available for psychosocial response programs, local professionals proceeded through the first year of the program with community outreach and an assessment of psychosocial needs in the community (Lincoln, electronic correspondence 9/30/03).

They [CORA staff] worked with what they referred to as 'gate keepers' and those are all like the major social service providers in town like counselors or public assistants or religious leaders, people who have a lot of contact with different populations (Lincoln, 8/14/03).

However, people stopped coming to the support group meetings, and the group dissolved within one calendar year (Lincoln, 8/14/03). Despite the assessments that showed a tremendous need existed within the community and the best efforts of the CORA staff to reach out to those individuals, nobody was coming.

We went to every venue that we could think of...and all the gatekeepers again. And we were like 'look there's this need, but there's no people'. How do we solve it? How do we help these people who are so elusive, kind of? Still nothing was really happening (Lincoln, 8/14/03).

The reasons for the elusive behavior of those in need were unclear to the CORA staff. One hypothesis was that the south Lincoln County area, specifically Libby, is a working class town and always has been. Many of those directly impacted were “older, conservative men that ‘don’t need no stinking hand holding’” (Lincoln, 8/14/03). More importantly, for the most part this population had never needed or utilized mental health services. For that reason they were hesitant to join support group or make an appointment with a counselor or social worker.

... this population of people, predominately have been successful most of their lives. They’ve worked hard and been OK, so asking for help is a big thing (Lincoln, 8/14/03).

Mental health service providers faced a population uncomfortable with asking for help, that also had an extreme lack of trust. The local professionals would have to gain the trust of a population that had been betrayed by the very institutions they trusted most.

These people have been betrayed... by their caretaker... the people that they had so much faith in that they were going to take care of them. And they blatantly betrayed them by hiding this secret from them that is now killing them. And so to trust anyone is a big thing. You know and we think that that’s been a barrier to trying to help them. Because they don’t know if they trust anyone... You know logic says I trusted this company and they screwed me, why wouldn’t it happen again? (Lincoln, 8/14/03).

Eventually, the CORA staff began to realize that mental health services should be included in a patient’s visit to the CARD clinic. Just as the doctors and nurses worked with patients regarding the effects of asbestos exposure on their bodies and physical health, the CORA social worker would work on how asbestos exposure was affecting their lives in general. Whether it was solving problems of how to get an elderly couple into their motor home with their oxygen tanks or assisting with confusing medical bills, mental health services began to reach the individuals that had once been so elusive (Lincoln, 8/14/03). Early misconceptions regarding mental health services were graciously sidestepped and the barriers to trust were chipped away as relationships developed.

Much of the information on the psychosocial response of the Libby community based on primary and secondary stressors related to slow motion technological disasters has been articulated by the CORA staff years after the information of the disaster was disclosed to the community. The mental health and social service professionals of the CORA program have since developed a handbook for professionals offering their experience with the Libby community as one example of a community's psychosocial response to a slow motion technological disaster. While this handbook will hopefully assist other communities and professionals to understand and respond to a disaster such as that which occurred in Libby in the future, those in Libby had no handbook to reference and had to figure out what the initial needs of the community were and how best to respond. These professionals in Libby will tell you that it was a work in progress, and still is to some extent.

In Libby, the psychosocial response to the disaster was, and still is, experienced in many aspects of daily life including public meetings and community involvement forums. Just as the complexities of the disaster from an economic, political, and sociological perspective cannot be separated; it is equally impossible to separate the presence and effect of stressors from the CAG. The following four chapters describe the undeniable influence the psychosocial stressors experienced by members of the community have had on the CAG.

Chapter 3: Purpose, Goals, and Functions of the CAG

The purpose of this chapter is to begin to answer the first sub-question of the study: **how do CAG members articulate the goals of the group, and to what extent do they agree or disagree on these issues?** Results from my interviews and additional literature will explain the purpose, goals, and function of the CAG from a variety of perspectives. It is necessary to explain how I will be using the words **purpose, goals, and function**, as some of the interviewees use them interchangeably.

With respect to the CAG, I define the word **'purpose'** as what the forum was originally intended to do or serve, as determined by the group and the sponsor. The word **'role'** is often used in conjunction with **'purpose'**, as it refers to the community members' position within the originally stated purpose of the group. It is important to remember that the **'role'** of the community in a CAG is inherently constrained by the limits of the group's decision-making power with respect to agency decisions. The **'goals'** are those things that the CAG decided to strive for at the beginning of the process. In other words, the goals reflect the needs of the community from the CAG's perspective. **'Functions'** refers to how the forum has actually operated and what it has served for the people over time, regardless of its intended **'purpose'**.

This chapter begins with a description of the EPA's stated purpose of the CAG program. The majority of the chapter will be devoted to exploring the purpose, goals, and functions of the Libby CAG from the perspective of its members. Interviewees explain three main functions the group has served over time. Subsections will highlight how the CAG has served as a forum for information exchange, problem solving, and emotional expression.

In discussing the purpose, goals, and function of the CAG with members, many aspects emerged that have consistently challenged the CAG throughout the life of the group, such as the emotional component of the meetings, the enormity of the goals they are striving for, and the lack

of a clear strategy to get what the community needs. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the uncertainties about the group's current and future purpose and goals. While there is agreement over what the community still needs, there is little idea of how to achieve these ends through the CAG.

EPA Literature about CAGs

The EPA has a variety of literature on the CAG program readily accessible online for the public. Two prominent agency documents explain the purpose of a CAG from the EPA's perspective. The first, *Guidance for Community Advisory Groups at Superfund Sites*, "is designed to assist EPA staff" (US EPA, 1995). The second document, the *Community Advisory Group Toolkit*, is targeted towards a public audience and is often handed directly to citizens of impacted communities by the agency. Both documents articulate the purpose, function, and participant roles of an EPA sponsored CAG. However, the two documents use slightly different language.

The EPA staff-targeted document states that the purpose of CAG structure and operation should reflect the unique needs of its community. The document further articulates that the purpose of the CAG is to:

...serve primarily as a means to foster interaction among interested members of an affected community, to exchange facts and information, and to express individual views of CAG participants while attempting to provide, if possible, consensus recommendations from the CAG to EPA (US EPA, 1995).

The community-targeted document, describes a CAG to be:

...a way for people to actively participate in making decisions at sites with Superfund or other environmental concerns. People who belong to CAGs can learn more about their site, get up-to-date information about cleanup status, ask questions, and can discuss their concerns with EPA...(US EPA, 1998).

Both documents explicitly imply that this forum will allow for community members to express their questions and concerns. Both documents suggest that the CAG will be a place for

education. However, while the first document states “an exchange of facts and information” will occur, the second suggests more of a one-way flow of information from the agency to the public, where the public is essentially ‘brought up to speed’ on agency actions. Both documents also state that the CAG will be a place for the community to participate, to some degree, in decision-making related to their site. The language in the EPA staff-targeted document more clearly defines the CAGs place in the decision-making, as providing “consensus recommendations to the EPA” (US EPA, 1995). However, the community-targeted document is less clear, by suggesting that the CAG forum will be “a way for people to actively participate in making decisions” (US EPA, 1998).

Both documents define CAG member roles and responsibilities in a similar way. These roles and responsibilities include: attending meetings, learning about site issues, providing information and concerns to the EPA, and sharing information with neighbors and fellow community members (US EPA, 1995 and 1998). The information from the two documents affords both the EPA staff member and the layperson the expectations that the agency has with regard to group functions and member responsibilities of a fledgling CAG. As noted, while the purpose and roles of those involved in a CAG are communicated generally the same for both documents, there are slight differences which could lead to misunderstandings regarding the level of power the community members may have in decision making.

In the formation of the Libby CAG, the purpose of the group and the roles that citizens would play were described not only through communication with local EPA representatives, but also through the distribution of the CAG Toolkit. Ultimately, it was the community members themselves who took the information provided by the EPA and established roles, purpose, and goals of the fledgling CAG that would be tailored to the Libby community.

Initial Purpose and Goals of the Libby CAG

After the group formed, the CAG began to slowly piece together and articulate what they saw as the needs of the community and their goals. A formal set of goals for the CAG did not begin to surface until the April 5, 2001 meeting, when the group crafted a twelve-point list of “priority actions needed to respond to the past and continuing problems arising from the tremolite asbestos contamination of the Libby community resulting from the mining and processing of vermiculite by W.R. Grace and Co” (Mueller, April 11, 2001).

From this list of priority actions, the group developed its primary goals. In a July 5, 2001 letter to Governor Judy Martz the CAG articulated its four main goals for the first time. In the letter the CAG stated its four goals:

- 1) Clean up contamination and long term monitoring
- 2) Medical monitoring, care, and research
- 3) Compensation for victims now and in the future
- 4) Restore business vitality

Although the formal declaration of the goals had been covered in the meeting summaries and corresponding letters, I wanted to know from the CAG members themselves how they described the goals of the group, and to what extent they agreed on the goals. It is important to note that although I asked the interviewees about their thoughts on the goals of the group, many responded with ideas that blend the purpose, goals, and function of the group together. Therefore, the following sections present my interpretation of their responses and my effort to explain the differences between the three concepts of purpose, goals, and function.

Early Confusion about Roles

One of the criticisms of the CAC style of public participation is that the roles and powers of the group are not always clear to the participants or the public. Two Libby CAG members articulated a sense of confusion they experienced in the first few months after the group formed.

In the beginning, sorting out what the community's role would be for the coming months seemed to take some time. For some, the purpose, role, and goals of the CAG were unclear as the group shifted between a forum for information exchange and an action group.

In the beginning, from the beginning of the organization it took people a little bit of time to figure out what their role was as a Community Advisory Group to the EPA. And it took a number of months to get kind of the feel of what everybody was going to do. I think, goals, really from my perspective, should be that we are looking out for the best interests of our community and serving as a group that gives advice to the various agencies that are working within our community... (#22, 7/12/03).

The goals of the group got very cloudy. I think when the CAG started nobody knew what it was supposed to be, other than it was a clearinghouse for 'this is what's going on', and became an educational piece. And then also, it was allowed to become a voice or piece for people... (#10, 6/13/03).

When asked about the group's goals, many responses reflected a distinction between the two-fold nature of the group's purpose, both to serve as a forum for information exchange and to serve an advisory or advocacy function. Interviewees articulated two different types of goals that echo the two-fold purpose of the group. Some CAG members that expressed goals associated with the purpose of information exchange highlighted the importance of being involved, keeping updated, and advising decision makers. The following comments by members illustrate this emphasis on information exchange.

Purpose: Information Exchange

Well actually I thought the main idea of the CAG in the first place was a good goal. Get the community involved, and ah, the fact is, ah, what they hear, go back and tell the public that don't show up. And, that is what we started out to do, and that was basically our whole thing was, to ah, spread the word. And, ah, it is still a good idea (#1, 6/14/03).

Well I think the goals are to, for the ah all the agencies who are here in town to communicate what they are doing, to make sure that um the community understands what they're all about, and also for the community to let them know when they have any frustrations with what the agencies are doing. Just to communicate. To make sure that people are um, that information is getting across to the people that need it (#20, 7/11/03).

The goals of the CAG I think is still to, it is our line of communication with the EPA. We know that. Instead of meeting one on one with a member of the EPA and voicing a complaint, if we go to the CAG, we have a complaint, we voice the complaint or ask a question, number one it goes into the media, and number two it goes into the public record, which goes back to the EPA. And if we make a request through the EPA that request is passed all the way up through the channels (#6, 6/15/03).

Lynn and Busenberg state that the overall information exchange between the community and agency officials is improved with a CAC style of public participation (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995). It is clear from the interviewees that the CAG has provided this opportunity for improved face-to-face communication between agency representatives and the community. In addition the forum has also provided the opportunity for community members to take action towards achieving their goals.

Purpose: Action Group

The group's purpose eventually evolved from solely information exchange to include an action component.

That's basically initially how it started out was just information, but we've got into the actual policies too, you know we've veered into that area too. And taken action and response to some special issues and things that we thought were necessary (#21, 7/12/03).

Well um, when we started out we were more or less kind of an advisory capacity and looked upon ourselves as a conduit of information between the EPA, the government agencies, and the people. Later on I think we turned into more of an action group because we got things done (#24, 6/15/03).

One member expands the action purpose of the group by suggesting that the CAG should work to establish rules that will ensure that the disaster that occurred in Libby would not be repeated in the future.

I think to ensure for the betterment of the community. To bring it back to be a safe community again, but also to try to be a part of a group of people that forced the government, if you want to put it that way, to establish ah rules so this will never happen again, but also to establish a plan that will take care of the people affected by it (#23, 7/13/03).

Issue Focused Goals

Some group members described the goals with an emphasis on specific issues for the group to work on. Such goals mirror those formally stated by the group in 2001, for cleanup, health care, and economic revitalization in Libby. These goals are seen as solutions to the problems that Libby has experienced due to asbestos contamination. The following comments illustrate how some CAG members articulate the purpose and goals of the group with a focus on the issues.

To get the problem solved here in Libby and mediate between the public and the EPA and solve the problems... Well they're solving the cleanup slowly but surely, and now I feel the main problem is research and medical treatment. They are making steps to correct that too (#9, 6/13/03).

We were going to have firstly to clean the community, you know all the asbestos, the second phase was going to be screening... have a screening program which we already have to see who had the disease and who didn't, the ATSDR are the ones who provided all the monies and funds for that, and that was all done right here in Libby, Montana. And the third one was the medical program, we have a medical program with W.R. Grace right now but the program is a weak program because it basically just deals with the people who are really, really sick, about the last six months of their lives. So, we're still trying to achieve a medical program (#21, 7/12/03).

I think that it (the CAG) was a very um important ah leverage mechanism and community voice mechanism for a variety of actions that were taken around those four goals, primarily the first three that I mentioned um, and the two that received the most attention, discussion, work, advocacy, were the cleanup piece and the health care piece (#11, 8/14/03).

The members' comments display a range of opinions regarding the group's level of advocacy and action, as opposed to the forum existing for solely information exchange. There was a noticeable shift over time in the group's focus towards the first two goals of monitoring the cleanup and finding a long-term health care solution. The rest of this chapter will further describe the functions that the CAG has served in the community's response to the asbestos disaster. Embodying the initial two-fold purpose of the group, the CAG has functioned both as a forum for information exchange and as an action group to address issues and solve problems. But finally,

the CAG also has functioned as a forum for emotional expression. In doing so, the complexities of the disaster seep into the CAG forum and present the group with significant challenges for accomplishing their goals.

Information Exchange Function

There is a tremendous amount of information circulating at all times in Libby around the subject of the asbestos contamination. Initially media articles were the source for the people to get information on just what was happening in their town. Over time, thanks to the work of the various agencies involved, an information center and web site were established and numerous fact sheets are available on a variety of topics related to the disaster. However, as in nearly any community, word of mouth can sometimes travel more quickly and effectively than any agency prepared communiqués. In Libby, word of mouth is a primary means of communicating information through out the community.

...you know the news travels by word of mouth here a lot. And so hopefully between the people who are actually CAG members and the audience people who come, hopefully that information does get out there. The downside is that word traveling by mouth is like that telephone game; it also can snowball into nasty rumors. And that happens all the time and then you need to come back and correct it (Thomi, 9/11/03).

A portion of the Libby community has embraced the CAG forum as the place to receive information on asbestos related issues in a public, face-to-face style. As interviewees and I discussed the general functions of the group, we talked about the venue for information exchange that the CAG has provided for the community. While uncertainty remains about the level of advocacy the group should take on, there is overwhelming agreement that the information exchange component of the CAG has been extremely beneficial and remains a valid reason to maintain the group.

CAG is the Public Forum

Group members articulated many reasons why the CAG has been and still is the primary forum to discuss issues tied to the asbestos contamination, especially cleanup and health care problems. There is a general consensus that the CAG is the public forum for these discussions to take place. Many members feel that the fact that decision-makers and others use the CAG as their venue of choice for communicating with the public reinforces the importance of the CAG venue for information exchange.

And that is what is good about the CAG, is that they get the facts and you can go right to the head person and say 'okay now I heard this now, what is the truth?' That is one thing I'll say about it now, they tell you whether you like it or not. They tell you what is going on (#24, 6/15/03).

Ah whether people agree with being a Superfund site or not, I think the CAG was instrumental in helping with that process and anytime officials come to the community they, they, they talk to the CAG, or they come there. So at least they see the CAG as being a group that ah, is viable and ones that ah they would spend the time to come in and talk to (#22, 7/12/03).

Actually because of the CAG right now, the CAG is the source, just like Dr. Holian coming to town, Liz Putnam, coming to town. The CAG is the point that any information is released, before it is released to the press, simultaneously. Any elected official, anybody comes out of Denver, out of Washington, D.C., out of Atlanta, it is the CAG that they come to (#6, 6/15/03).

In addition to the agency representatives and distinguished guests, there are a large number of community members present at the monthly CAG meetings. There is an innately public feel to the meetings, which are open to anyone who wishes to attend. The group members are seated in the front of the Ponderosa Room in a U-shaped arrangement of tables, while the audience fills the straight rows of seats facing them. While the meetings most often employ a presentation style format with agency updates and special guest presentations, CAG and audience members alike raise their hands to ask questions or make comments throughout the meeting. EPA's Wendy Thomi agrees that the Libby CAG meetings are more of a public meeting style, and highlights the tremendous public participation that has remained consistent throughout the life of the group.

It's more, I guess it's more of a public meeting you know. They don't sit around a table looking at each other; they sit around in a U-shape looking at the audience and the public. And it's always been that way. And CAGs very often are public meetings; um it just so happens that in Libby a lot of people come. I mean other CAGs there would be some people that would come and a few people that would now and then, but never the same kind of attendance that it has regularly gotten. That alone tells me that there's a need to have that CAG, because people are coming. They are taking time out of their busy schedules, and they are sitting out there for two hours listening to the discussion and the updates and asking questions and back and forth, and questioning things we're doing. I think there's a place for that. I just really think that's healthy (Thomi, 9/11/03).

This comment by Ms. Thomi begins to address some of the reasons why the attendance, by both CAG members and the audience, has remained so steady over the past four years. There are consistently from thirty to fifty, sometimes even more, seats filled in the audience at the monthly CAG meetings in the Ponderosa Room. Since I have been attending CAG meetings, the level of attendance has intrigued me. In the interviews, we discussed members' views on what motivates the dedicated meeting-goers. The member's comments reinforce the idea that the CAG is the place to get accurate information.

Um the local people around here they know these meetings go on and for three and a half years there's been an attendance of these meetings by ah just common people that are interested. Forty to sixty people every meeting for three and a half years; I think that says it (#17, 8/15/03).

They keep coming hoping that maybe, say the EPA representative is giving a report on problems with contracting asbestosis in your bathroom, well they want to hear about that. So they go to hear from the horse's mouth, so to speak, as to what certain things are taking place (#19, 8/15/03).

This member also touches on the idea that more people attend if an issue is pressing to their own lives.

But when it becomes something that is as big an issue as that is, then you have the turn out you know. And when they initially, way back when, ah when the EPA first come here and start...talked about doing the cleanup you know they had meetings at the gymnasium, and it was full. So you know I'm not saying that people are complacent, but people do kind of just let it go unless its something that really directly affects them or is an issue that is important enough that they feel they should at least hear what's going on. They may not voice anything but at least listen (#18, 8/16/03).

Although there is a consistent audience at the monthly CAG meetings, certainly there will always be members of the community that do not attend. It is part of the responsibility of the CAG members to get the information out to the greater public, and members of the community who do not attend the monthly meetings. There is some uncertainty as to how well the CAG members are serving as information liaisons to the rest of the community.

Is Everyone Getting the Message?

Although there are a variety of formal ways to receive information from the agencies in town, many people receive information from the informal revolving word of mouth updates that circulate around town. While the membership responsibilities explicitly state that it is the job of the members to communicate the information learned at the meetings back to the constituencies they represent and other community members, there is concern that information from the CAG is not always getting back to the constituents or community straight from the CAG members, or that the CAG members are not actively bringing questions or concerns from their constituents back to the meetings for discussion. Despite uncertainties over whether or not the information from the meetings is reaching the larger community, there is agreement that the CAG is the place to go for information and communication on asbestos related issues.

We have twelve, thirteen thousand people within a two, three mile radius. Are all of those people really getting the information they need from the people on that particular group? And when the information comes back is it really from the majority of that group or is it one or two people? That would be the concern that, that I would have (#22, 7/12/03).

And there are a lot of people as you've noticed, even with the CAG today that don't say anything. They don't say anything, and so I don't know what they are thinking (#17, 8/15/03).

I would really honestly wonder if those people that are at the table... if they actually go back and have conversations with their constituencies about what goes on. I have my doubts about that... So even though you have a representative from each of those areas, you see what I'm saying, I don't know how much they don't speak from their own perspective and that they don't go back to that group and communicate what they learned or heard or try to rally a field from the group that they represent... I mean I think they have everybody

represented there, at the table, but I don't think its very effective from the table back to their groups. That's my concern (#4, 9/11/03).

Conversely, as one CAG member articulates, the large number of people attending the meetings each month gets that information out to the public.

I think they're doing a really a good job. We have that broken down into different areas, funneled out to ah different groups within the CAG, so you know with the people that we get at the meetings that vary probably 40 to 70, 80, 100 people...and then we communicate with people directly other than the CAG members other than those meetings so I think a lot of the information is getting out to the public (#21, 7/12/03).

Moreover, this CAG member explained their own strategy for getting the information out to those who may not attend the meetings, to counter some of the inaccurate rumors that can develop and spread quickly in the community.

And you know so many rumors go around town about ah the EPA isn't doing this, or the EPA is doing this wrong, or so on and so forth you know. And you know I make it a point to, I get a copy of the minutes you know on my computer and I print up three or four copies and I take em in to two or three of these people that I know, I'll call em loud mouths, busy bodies, they're business people where they do a lot of talking and complaining, and I say look here's the facts now. I've been listening to you and you've been saying this and this and this and the CAG is not doing this and the EPA is doing this, and I says 'Here, this is the facts.' I say, 'if you have any more questions, ask me or come to the CAG meetings for god's sake.' And I think it has helped. And I think a lot of the other CAG members are doing the same thing (#23, 7/13/03).

As the membership requirements state, individuals on the CAG are supposed to work at relaying information to and from the greater community back to the group and the agencies. To what degree this relaying of information is happening in Libby, whether formally or informally, is still a matter of discussion for the group.

Problem Solving Function

Despite varying opinions on how members describe the group's goals, the CAG has worked on a variety of fronts to get what the community needs. These needs fall in line with the

themes of the four stated goals of cleanup, health care, compensation, and economic revitalization. Due to the course of events and the difficulty of issues, over time more attention and energy have been focused in certain areas and other issues have received less attention. From my observations, the CAG has narrowed its focus to the first two goals, cleanup and health care. These two goals reflect the two overarching needs of the community: to obtain a thorough cleanup that limits exposure pathways, and to achieve a sustainable health care plan for those with asbestos related diseases. To move toward the ultimate goals, the group has employed a variety of strategies to keep issues on the forefront including, applying pressure to politicians and utilizing the media.

Taking Steps

Achieving the Superfund declaration with the Governor's one time 'silver bullet' was by far one of the CAG's greatest achievements. The declaration and use of the fast track alternative hastened the listing and start of cleanup, and secured funds for the Libby site. The installation of the Community Health Center (CHC) was also a great achievement for the CAG. The CHC in Libby now provides affordable health care for all residents in the south Lincoln County area, and is a much-needed piece of the health care puzzle for those with asbestos related disease. Many CAG members feel that the group has been instrumental in much of the work that has gone on in the community, for its improvement, since the story broke.

I think, I really feel that the CAG was more or less responsible for getting this turned into a Superfund project; I really do believe that, with a lot of help from government officials and some other people. But I think we were really the force that stayed with this (#24, 6/15/03).

It's kind of the ebb and flow of how things are. And ah there has been some real good actions that have come out of the CAG um persuading Governor Martz to spend the Silver Bullet and stuff like that, and making the country aware that there really is a problem and its not just in our community, the potential is nationwide. Um so from that standpoint I think the CAG has done really well, really well (#18, 8/16/03).

CHC I think was a cornerstone for showing and demonstrating that the community and the people can do something if they really want to. And that's the guts of the whole thing. You've got to really want to do it, and establish and identify the stepping-stones along the way (#8, 6/13/03).

Over the group's tenure, they have taken steps towards achieving the greater goals of what the community needs. The Superfund designation and the establishment of the CHC are instrumental in ensuring the cleanup and providing health care for those in need.

Strategies for Taking Steps

A few CAG members identified certain strategies that they felt contributed to the group's accomplishments over the past few years. The main strategy identified is to keep the issues at the forefront. As this member describes, sometimes you may have to push to keep the issue on the forefront within the group to make things happen.

What I've found on the CAG is that you've got to have somebody keep pushing an issue, and keep pushing, just keep pushing. And we've got a couple on there that do that. And as time goes on eventually we get one more on to help you, and then the next meeting maybe you get another one to help you, and then pretty soon you've got three or four pushing on an issue and then it looks like things start happening (#24, 6/15/03).

Applying Pressure on Politicians

Sometimes keeping the issue at the forefront can mean being politically active and applying pressure on decision makers. These CAG members' comments illustrate that they feel they have had a positive influence on politicians.

Well you know, because of the nature of its organization you know it can be politically active. And I think it's done well in that arena, you know keeping the issue to the forefront and ah you know making sure that ah you know governmental issues all the way up the chain you know have responded to our needs and I think you know I don't think if ah it had been for the actions of the CAG I don't think that Governor Martz would have ever used her silver bullet (#13, 7/11/03).

So when I said earlier that I think our CAG has evolved, even though we didn't set up a structure in the beginning, we didn't really know our roles, we're all concerned with community health and cleanup... I think the assignment and the

task force and a few key people have taken the lead on some of those and actually done well. Also using our influence with the legislators I think has made a positive difference (#22, 7/12/03).

I think they're just an awful lot of devoted people in there that have worked hard, you know, to try to be the voice of the community and try and help the community. And I think that they've done a good job, I really do. I think it's been an effective voice. I think it's made a difference with the politicians too. I think it's forced the politicians to do much more. It's forced some of the politicians to take a better look at what really happened here. And I don't think there's any politicians that we don't have on our side right now (#23, 7/13/03).

Recall Lynn and Kartez's (1995) comment, "CACs are rarely formed to fundamentally redistribute power. More often, they are used to rationalize established power through shared governance." It remains uncertain whether the Libby CAG has any real political power or whether they are simply being used to rationalize the established power structure. I think that whether or not the CAG has real influencing powers, it is important for the group to believe that they do. Otherwise, the group has little incentive to believe that their efforts can affect any change in the agencies policies towards their community.

Utilizing the Media

Usually at every CAG meeting there is a representative from the local media, and sometimes a reporter for other larger papers. Additionally, what is said at the CAG meetings goes into the public record. The group members and audience know this and often refer to that fact when making comments aloud before the group. The group has realized that to keep an issue on the forefront and to get what the community needs, often they must employ strategies that utilize the resources of local and regional media outlets.

But the whole, the whole reasoning of that, of how that all evolved was from all the publicity that was created in the media. I mean that's where the strength is. If you want something done, if you can get it into the media and make it... So publicity becomes your biggest ally I think, if you want to get an issue resolved (#18, 8/16/03).

Ah, and we have used the facilities of the CAG to do this because we knew it had gone into the media and ah, of course, we have a direct link with most of the reporters, ah, and, and the media staff across the state and Washington, and that we can get this information out to them. And, so it is one way of dispensing information back out to the public, if they want to believe it or not. But, it is the best we got right now (#6, 6/15/03).

Determining what the community needs is no easy task. As the CAG has narrowed its focus to the two main goals of cleanup and health care, the group seems to have trouble prioritizing interests to establish and agreed up strategy for accomplishing the goals. As the purpose of my evaluation is to raise the issues that are challenging the CAG in its work towards achieving its goals, I must inherently spend less time highlighting the group's successes. Despite my scant reference here, the CAG deserves commendation for the successes that they have had throughout their tenure.

Emotional Expression Function

Recall that one of the criticisms of this type of public participation forum is that often the meeting solely becomes a place for venting frustrations and anxieties without effectively influencing public policy for the community's concerns (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995). The acknowledgment of the asbestos disaster and the stressors associated with it, resulted in a multitude of frustrations and anxieties in the Libby community. While the mental health services were struggling to establish a workable program during 2000 and 2001 to meet the tremendous need, the CAG was quickly established as the public forum for individuals to come together and discuss issues related to the disaster.

In addition to hearing the latest updates from the federal agencies, there is little argument that the CAG also became the forum for individuals to express their emotions, frustrations, and anxieties. The CAG was the place to bring their concerns, grievances, and in some cases, anger. Many members present during the initial months of the CAG feel that this opportunity for expression became ingrained in the very function of the group itself.

...when I think about the CAG group,...my opinion is that they are really utilized as that spot to vent (Lincoln, 8/14/03).

...and it's given way to the healing process if you will, of the folks in Libby. And they come to the meetings and go through a, it's almost like divorce. The first thing you've got is emotion, anger and then it gets... hurt and then anger and that's just exactly what you witness these people go through. That's why I call it group therapy (#8, 6/14/03).

First of all it allows people a place to vent that's safe. Nothing's going to happen, people are not going to get in fights, that sort of thing. The group sort of moderates that sort of behavior. It allows them to vent (Mueller, 9/15/03).

...for people who are really angry about the situation, and they still are, and I think it's a way to kind of defuse the anger kind of to let them express it and then diffuse it. They can at least hear that other people have the same problems they have, and you know kind of feel like somebody's doing something about the situation and things like that (#20, 7/11/03).

...we saw the need in the CAG, it was very visible that we needed outreach programs for these people that we needed support groups for these people because they had no where to go. They had been diagnosed they sat back in the wings for sometime with their disease and suddenly they found out the actual fact, the truth, not only had Grace done this to them, but the City and the County and the State officials sat back and let it happen, and there was a lot of anger. I think the biggest thing from CAG showed the need for all of the outreach services that we have for the CARD clinic, um, medical services for support groups, ah, for counseling, for mental health. Because these people would come to the CAG as soon as they got a diagnosis, looking for help, and at that point someone was there to say, 'Well here, call me, come see me.' Or, we would direct them. So, I think that was the biggest thing. Ah, the most important part of the CAG was a place for people to go. It was a meeting place for people to go to get help (#6, 6/15/03).

While many people acknowledge that the CAG served an important function in the early stages of the group's existence as a forum for emotional expression and venting, there are an equal number of people who felt that the CAG forum was an inappropriate venue for this expression. Many feel that this process of expression has eroded the ability of the CAG to serve as an effective, representative, and credible voice of the community to the agencies.

Let's not talk about, in that setting... I'm not trying to be callous about it... let's not talk about the individual circumstances of a victim... I hate to use that word... or a family um. That's not the place for that; there are other places to do that. We're all concerned that people get care they need, um we want to make sure that there's funding and resources for that... But the CAG, in my opinion, is not the place for that. It should happen in other places (#11, 8/14/03)

I don't see that it was therapeutic for them because they...needed a different venue than that for them to...And that's why it went on for so long because it wasn't the process, it wasn't set up to be used as a mental health process. So it was an inappropriate use of that (#4, 9/11/03).

...some of those people, they're not going to go to support groups. A lot of them won't go. But that's where the forum for anger...if you just have every meeting and somebody else is angry and comes up and beats on the podium, everybody just shakes their heads and says 'oh no, we've heard this. We understand your frustration we've all been there, we've done this for the last two years.' You can't keep doing that. And you keep pointing them back in a direction to deal with their anger and you're right there have been services for that but they have not used them. But the CAG shouldn't be used for that. The CAG should be directing people and saying 'we understand your frustrations' (#10, 8/14/03).

The Challenge of Anger

Despite the establishment of the CORA program, and the work with patients at the CARD, the emotional component of the CAG meetings continued. As the following quotations illustrate, anger was often a recurring element of CAG meetings. People were angry for a variety of reasons. Most of the anger I witnessed at CAG meetings had to do mainly with two things, the level of risk associated with the remaining exposure pathways, and the lack of funding for asbestos related health care.

Concerning risk, it seems obvious that there is a disparity between the EPA's "acceptable level of risk" used to make cleanup decisions and the level of risk many people in Libby feel comfortable with. The invisible nature of the asbestos fiber further heightens anxiety in the discussion of risk. In turn, when the agency makes a decision based on a level of risk community members do not feel comfortable with they again feel a loss of control over their lives and the health and well being of their families. I have observed angry outbursts at CAG meetings from audience members that demonstrate this connection between perception of risk, loss of control, and anger.

As for the health care funding, many people feel that if it wasn't for the asbestos disaster they would not need or have to pay for the extra health care. The fact that this care is not

provided for by some entity angers many people greatly, especially since evidence exists that W.R. Grace was aware of health problems associated with the fiber. Moreover, the economic stressors associated with rising costs of health care and some individuals' inability to pay the bills increases anger for some people.

No matter how understandable the anger is, some saw the continued emotional expression as a hindrance to not only the group's ability to effectively work towards solving problems, but also the longevity and stamina of its members.

It seemed to me like there was a lot of anger at a lot of things, which is very understandable, but very unproductive (#7, 6/14/03).

So you have an individual who is in the audience who is extremely angry, um and it becomes this forum to vent. Um and you know there are a variety of psychosocial ah kinds of issues and that's not the place for it but it happens. And that may be a rant and rave that goes for twenty minutes, or if individual members of the CAG engage in that rant and rave, it may go for an hour! Most of us, some of us who have fairly tight schedules who desire an end and outcome kind of orientation, that's really hard to stay at the table with, on a long term. And yet we've done, you know all kinds of things, a variety of things to do... support groups, individual counseling opportunities, and that's a hard sell in a community like this (#11, 8/14/03).

And it just, you know there was a lot of anger vented several years ago but then some people didn't deal with it then and then they deal with it later. Well, you can't carry that anger into every meeting and disrupt it and then have the meeting continue to stay on track and to get to solutions and bringing people in that need to be there. Ah yeah, that just turns people off (#10, 8/14/03).

Emotional Expression Turned People Away

The idea that the emotional component of the meetings turned people away from the CAG is an issue that permeates the discussion of the past and current problems of the process, especially with respect to representativeness. It is important to note that in the first year after the story broke, the polarization in the community was evident at the CAG and combined with an intensely emotional response by some, while other individuals of the community were in fact 'turned off' by the process and eventually abandoned the meetings all together.

...my understanding of the CAG group is that it was for the dissemination of information. You know you have all of your agency reports and your updates, and kind of that it was an educational forum rather than...and a problem solving forum...rather than an emotional expression forum. And I think that these two different ways of it being is destroying it in a way. I think that the people that are there for emotional expression are driving those away who are there for education and problem solving (Lincoln, 8/14/03).

And then it kind of evolved into what I call a bitch session. It really got, I mean I think it really went downhill, and that run off some, what I feel are some really good people. Because you were trying to focus on stuff that needed to be, and there was just some people that, especially from the audience that really had, needed to be taking counseling probably, but didn't understand that. And that went on for a while (#18, 8/16/03).

The other thing that a lot of people did not like and turned them off is it became such a venting session and you know a lot of people were very, very turned off by that...And unfortunately you know it's a mixed bag because that helps some people but by the same token it turns other people off and they don't come back (#13, 7/11/03).

The discussion of group representativeness in chapter five will further explain the effect the emotional expression had on the group.

Continued Presence of Emotional Expression at the CAG

The intense emotional response of many members in the community to the disaster has been a challenge for mental health and social service providers as well as the CAG. This element of the CAG is an issue that has confronted the group since its inception. Nearly four years after the story broke, the presence and level of emotional expression at the CAG is still up for debate. Though anger and outbursts over current issues and agency decisions are still present, some feel that the emotional level of the meetings has subsided over time to a more workable level.

It was more emotional, there was more anger expressed in the early times. The anger against W.R. Grace I think has not gone away, but the people in Libby have seen the EPA come in and have done a whole lot (#2, 9/15/03).

The tone of the meetings has changed, I think in four years. It was much more emotional in the beginning of the meetings, when the group first started meeting there was a lot more yelling a lot more accusing, a lot more anger and venting in the meetings. And for the most part now they are fairly calm, I think they're fairly calm, I mean there's still some emotional issues and occasionally someone will get up and get really mad about something but the first meetings were like

the whole meeting was like, you could just feel the tension in the room (#3, 9/11/03).

While it is generally agreed that initially this was the forum for such expression, as time has gone on the acceptance and tolerance of that emotion has waned.

...I think that some of the bitch sessions started back up again and I just don't think that, quite honestly this far in the game we don't have time to listen to bitch sessions...I think we need to just take care of business and just get that done. And that's probably my biggest complaint... And I understand it being a therapy session; I just think they should take it to a therapy session. But because, you know in the beginning you know I accepted that as being what it was. I really considered it, and it probably helped a lot of people. Because they've got to get it off their chests, but three or four years later... you know OK we've heard this same thing over and over and after fifty times it gets a little repetitious. And I think that we just need to get down to what needs to be done (#18, 8/16/03).

However, another CAG member recognizes how the emotions held by people in the community can be a resource if directed and applied properly.

And you know a lot of us have tried to ah bring, bring to light within the community is should we have all this frustration, we have all this anger, but lets vent it and use it in positive ways. And that's a hard thing to get people to get people to come to that. But I think that more and more people are (#13, 7/11/03).

The on-going psychosocial response of the community and long term effect of a slow motion technological disaster is something that will be with the Libby community for generations, and undoubtedly will also continue to penetrate the proceedings of the CAG. Although the cleanup activities of the EPA will end at some point in the future, the community must adapt to the legacy of the exposure and resultant long-term physical and psychological impacts for years to come. As little research exists on the long-term psychological impacts to those who have experienced a slow motion technological disaster, the Libby community must adapt to its own specific situation and set of needs with little guidance. Essentially they are creating a guide for other communities to follow based on their experiences.

Confusion over Current Purpose

Some interviewees are unsure whether or not the group has a current purpose. Some are asking, should there even be a CAG anymore? While group members have a general sense of 'what the community needs' in the form of a thorough cleanup and health care solution for those affected, there is some dissatisfaction with the current state of work by the CAG towards these ends. Moreover, there is some sentiment that the CAG may not even be the group or venue to continue working on these issues.

A few members expressed concern that the current purpose of the group seems to be lost, or at least out of focus. One interviewee equates the purpose of the group with its usefulness in creating positive changes in the community.

Well I think the CAG itself, my own opinion of the CAG right now is they're wasting everyone's time. I don't think it serves any purpose any more... So I don't know, anyway I think that the usefulness of that group for the most part is past, in my opinion. I don't see that they are affecting any change, or you know, doing anything, or creating positive movement in the community (#7, 6/14/03).

Two other interviewees also questioned the current purpose of the group, but were less amenable to dissolving the group any time soon. They concur that there are still useful days ahead for the CAG, despite present uncertainties. One interviewee describes how the group may need a pressing issue to re-invigorate the spark in some of the more active members of the CAG.

And, ah, so ah, maybe the CAG has served its purpose. I don't like to think so, I don't like to think so, I think we should continue to go to the meetings and I think as some point we are going to have to rear up, and the minute we stop we cease the CAG, it will never come back, and ah, so for that reason I have just continued to go. And sometimes I have something to say and sometimes I don't, but I am just there because at some point I think it is going to be necessary to reactivate the, you might say the militant members of the CAG... (#6, 6/15/03).

Moreover, they explain that the open door membership policy of the group allows for individuals to leave the group or join at their own discretion, if they feel that their purpose has been served.

... We have had a lot of people come and go, that have dropped off, that have come in and served their purpose, and felt they couldn't contribute anymore and have dropped off. Um, and new people come on, and we are always watching for

new people. And ah, at some point I think it [the CAG] would be a very useful tool (#6, 6/15/03).

This member raises an interesting point regarding exhaustion. Both group and audience members are tired and some may be burned out after nearly four years of dedicated work. The necessary long-term nature of the work the CAG has been engaged in is compounded by the complexity of the issues.

In addition to reinforcing the earlier point that the CAG serves a valuable purpose as an important public forum, this member suggests how the tone of the meetings could shift to potentially increase involvement by a larger cross section of the community.

It has served a good purpose, no matter what anybody says. There has been a lot of major progress, and a lot of things, good things have happened because of that group. It's still a group that if the Governor were to come, they would come to that group and speak, because they see it as a viable community organization, because it's been in existence a long time. EPA, ATSDR will listen because they don't have a lot of choice in the matter. So it serves a good purpose, if we could just brighten it up a little bit so that more people would want to come, because there are... its more diversified as to what its looking at, more global as its approach to health, cleanup, community well being. Which would be projects. Future growth, ah, all of a sudden you could have 500 people there because it's the place where you'd find out and be able to contribute... Ah, you could be there and share your thoughts where other people could hear them, a lot of other people...that can't be bad (#22, 7/12/03).

This member offers a valid suggestion for the integration of a positive project oriented work through the CAG, to enlist some enthusiasm and new membership and interest from others in the community. However, this comment begins to touch on the idea that the CAG has not been an entirely positive place or one that provides an uplifting discussion. The group is often criticized for being too emotional and negative. As portions of this chapter illustrate, the presence of emotional expression at the CAG forum is largely an unresolved issue. The issues that the CAG is discussing and the problems they are working on are complex, confusing, and inherently emotionally charged. Many of these issues and problems are long-term in scope, and often times it seems that the proverbial 'deck is stacked against us.'

Chapter four provides further elaboration on the issues of cleanup and health care that the CAG is working on. The chapter will explore the relationship between the community and the agencies and the institutional challenges the group is facing. As the complexities of the issues are more clearly articulated, I see the need to reevaluate the uncertainties concerning the current purpose of the group. Perhaps the concern some members have over the relevance and future of the group is not due to a lack of purpose, but the reflection of frustrations and a lack of direction for how to tackle the complex issue that are before them.

Chapter 4: Working with the Agencies to Accomplish Goals

For the past four years the CAG has worked with EPA and ATSDR agency representatives from multiple levels, in some cases other agencies, and Montana's Congressional representatives to try to get what the community needs in the way of a thorough cleanup and a long-term health care solution. The complexities of the group's goals are challenging the relevance of the forum itself. A large part of the complexity of the issues comes from not knowing exactly who can give the community what it needs. With issues ranging outside the mandates of the agencies involved in Libby, the community is left scratching their heads about who to ask for help from next. This chapter begins with a closer look at the difficulties of the goals from the interviewees' perspective.

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the second sub-question of the study: **to what extent has the CAG been successful at working with the agencies to reach their goals?** To answer this question, I must first describe the relationship that has developed between the CAG and the agencies working in Libby, and second explain the difficulties the CAG has had concerning the two main goals of cleanup and health care. While agency documents describe the CAG as a simple two-way communication system between the community and the agencies, it is evident that the relationship between the community and the agencies that has developed through the CAG is much more complex.

While the relationship between the CAG and the agency representatives working in Libby has been generally positive, the group has had little success at influencing agency officials and politicians in powerful decision-making roles. In order for the community to get what it needs, the reality is that they will have to find a way to and utilize existing relationships with the agencies to influence higher-ranking politicians and decision makers.

Beyond 'Two-Way Communication'

The relationship between the CAG and the agencies goes far beyond 'two-way communication'. In my interviews I asked a series of questions concerning the relationship between the CAG and the agencies, namely the EPA. I wanted to know how well CAG members thought the group was getting the community's interests across to the agencies, and conversely how responsive the agencies are to the group's concerns. My goal was to get beyond the simple 'forum for two-way communication' idea and find out how well communication from the CAG was received and acted upon by the agencies, from the perspective of the group members. The responses to these questions describe the relationship between the agencies and group.

The Role of the Agency

In November 1999, the EPA's Emergency Response Team led by Paul Peronard arrived in town with little idea of the magnitude of the cleanup that was required. The EPA Team was met with a mixture of relief and skepticism from the Libby community. As one interviewee remarks, the EPA was viewed as an outsider and a regulatory agency some were wary of.

When the EPA come here, I knew that it wasn't going to be easy for them. For in any economy that relies on extraction you know the people are never very happy to see EPA people. So that was part of the reason I got involved, at least I could go in and help the EPA (#24, 6/15/03).

The agency did need the community's help. They needed a historical view of where the hotspots of exposure were in town. Large maps were rolled out, and residents were encouraged to come and point out existing contamination. As another CAG member points out, it was impossible for the agency representatives to know what the town was like when the mine was in full production, and the extent of contamination the operation had caused.

But, I think it was just overwhelming. Cause when they came in here; Paul Peronard thought they'd be here a couple of weeks. And, I think at the time I think they were just overwhelmed at the fact that there is so much of it. I think they are still that way (#1, 6/14/03).

Despite the skepticism and uncertainty of some at the arrival of the EPA, four years later there is an overwhelming agreement that the EPA has been a powerful force, and a much-appreciated addition to the community.

The EPA has done an outstanding job here, you know, and I can't say enough of the EPA. You know they've always been there and they always will be there. So you know, there's been a lot of things going on you know in other areas of the US that people aren't happy with the EPA, but I have no complaints at all with EPA, a lot of compliments (#21, 7/12/03).

And I thank God they are here, because our situation is better... far better than if they'd never shown up. You know and I am appreciative, every time I see another load of that stuff heading out of town, one less person going to be exposed in the future. That's what we want to stop is the exposure. We want to deal with the result of our historical exposure um and hopefully accomplish that other Americans don't have to endure Libby, what happened here (#17, 8/15/03).

While support for the EPA and their decisions remains generally positive, the relationship between the CAG and the agency has been strained over certain topics, and there are mixed reviews by the members concerning the responsiveness of the EPA.

Hearing and Listening

The CAG forum became the place for the community to meet face to face with agency representatives and discuss the issues the problems the community faced. Many residents felt comfortable utilizing that forum to express their concerns, questions, and frustrations. Moreover, as the group realized their goals and main issues that required their attention, it also became a forum to question and attempt to influence agency decisions. As one member puts it, the CAG meetings are an opportunity to 'grill the EPA' with questions.

I think its good for people on the CAG and for people that live here to grill the EPA and their employees. Why isn't this being done, why is this being allowed to happen? I think that's alright... (#16, 7/13/03).

Two interviewees spoke positively of both agency response and the ability of the CAG to bring the interests of the public to the EPA's attention. When asked about agency responsiveness the first interviewee said that the EPA has been,

Totally open. Always willing to try to find solutions, um willing to do whatever they can within their own constraints to address all kinds of things. I think the individuals, the EPA individuals that have been involved with us for three years, even as they change, but even the ones that have been here on the ground, assigned to our area, have been superb (#11, 8/14/03).

Another member expressed how well the group has expressed the community's interests to the agencies, and in turn the responsiveness to those requests.

I think we've been reasonably successful in that. They certainly sit up and take notice you know when we pose a situation to them or ask a question. I would have to say that they have been extremely responsive (#13, 7/11/03).

Another member's comments begin to explain the complexity of an EPA response to a request by the CAG. It is not always up to the on-site coordinator to make a decision; often it must move up the agency chain of command. Group and audience members realize that comments made at CAG meetings are not only part of the public record, but also of the EPA record and in turn often receive better response.

Well I tell you the CAG minutes have to go into the record, the EPA record. It's discussed up and down the ladder. If there is a request, we get a response, a yes or no to the request, we've always had that. I think they respond. (#6, 6/15/03).

However, some have seen a distinction between *hearing* and *listening* by the agency. One CAG member expressed that sometimes the agency has 'selective listening', and although the group may be clearly articulating a concern, that concern may not be actively listened to.

I think the CAG and the audience have been pretty straight forward about their feelings about all of these issues. And if the federal government, our government people on scene here, don't hear it then they're not listening. I think the issues have been brought forward and laid out on the table and you know sometimes they have a hard time listening, but they hear (#17, 8/15/03).

It is important to remember that the CAG has no decision making power. While the agency may do its best to tailor plans to meet the concerns and suggestions of the group, they are not required to do so. Two interviewees expressed the idea that, not only can the agency have selective listening to concerns, but also to certain people.

Depends on who is talking, I think. Ah somewhat. You know, they listen, they always listen, whether or not they act on it is another story (#7, 6/14/03).

The agencies chose pretty early on who they were going to listen to in this process. And it wasn't specifically the CAG as a whole... You know its kind of like, 'well we're going to work on this piece so we'll invite these people. Because I know they'll support this idea that I have.' And now we're going to work on this piece and I'm going to work with these people because I know they are going to support this idea that I have (#4, 9/11/03).

Furthermore, this CAG member also suggested that both the agency and CAG have used each other for various purposes.

But actually I believe that the Region used this CAG process to get what they needed, you know to get things done... Um, if the region was going to make a move in the suit against W.R. Grace, they would come into the local politics and CAG process and get the CAG to speak out at different times. To help facilitate what they were also pushing for... Oh, it's a strategy that's been used frequently in this process... I'm not saying its an unfair process, I think it's a great process. We've helped push some health care issues with W.R. Grace through that process you know right before the civic court hearings, that's the process that we've used. I'm not saying that it's right or wrong, I'm just saying that it happens (#4, 9/11/03).

And I think that the EPA knows how to selectively use members of the CAG when they have political pressures and things that need to be taken care of. They know how to get support out of the CAG to do that, and I don't know if that was supposed to be part of the CAG process. But it is a part of it. And they see it for the good of the community; I'm not saying that. And you know what, this whole world is politics so. You know we have to use it sometimes, for the good of the community. But its not a defined process of the CAG, but it's something that you learn real fast (#4, 9/11/03).

This CAG member's comments begin to address the innately political nature of not only the CAG process but also the Superfund process itself. The CAG, the local agency officials, the regional agency decision makers, and the federal agency bureaucrats are continuously finding

ways to leverage power in one way or another. Sometimes these groups are working towards the same ends, and sometimes they are not. The complexities of the relationship between the community and the agencies are further compounded by the inherent difficulties of the goals the group is striving for.

The Problem of the Goals

In discussion with the interviewees regarding the group's goals, some CAG members feel that today the goals are less clear than they were at the beginning of the process. Members described different reasons for why the group's goals seem so uncertain now. They placed the fault for this uncertainty either internally to the CAG, or externally towards the agencies or greater political forces. The different reasons for the group's stagnation include:

- Not taking steps to accomplish the goals

For that you have to establish a set of goals and timetable and move on and do it. That is where CAG falls short. That may or may be CAG's mission. They have these goals, but the never take the steps to get there. They are unwilling to take the steps to get there. They want to leave it in a state of flux (#8, 6/13/03).

- Running up against bureaucracy

The goals of the CAG were to get Libby completely cleaned and have all asbestos removed and to get long term medical care coverage for every asbestos victim. That was the long-term goal. It's not clear because the EPA is not going to remove all the asbestos and we're not going to get medical care, so I don't know (#16, 7/11/03).

- Not influencing change as effectively as it did in the beginning

... we started off you know I think we were kind of the directional force to the EPA. I think that we kind of indicated to them what we wanted them to do and what you know, I don't know if we're ever really that way anymore or not (#5, 7/12/03).

- A sense that the goals are too high

Well I think the goals are higher than they're ever going to reach, that's my personal feeling... Well the goals are that they think their gonna get a lot of medical help for people, and I don't think so... Well, for one reason now this asbestos disease is all over the United States and if they do too much in Libby, Montana, I'm talking about the federal government now, if they do too much in Libby, Montana, its gonna expose the whole...maybe the world even (#15, 7/12/03).

- **No end in sight**

One group member claims, "At this stage of the game after three years into this process, I don't believe there are any goals." When asked to explain the comment, the interviewee articulated the difficulty of working on issues, like a long-term health care solution, that has no visible end in sight or road to get there (#11, 8/14/03).

Um so we've done some work on that and kind of about as much work as that work can probably do. So part of why I say 'no goals now' is I think we've done a lot of what we thought we could do or influence, or make an impact with, and now some of those things are just in holding patterns because nobody knows what's going to happen next. You know we tried up other kinds of resources or avenues for getting things done, um and I'd venture to say the last year um its been more of a um EPA reporting and talking to the group of things um and individual members of the CAG with their own unique agendas. Um so the collectiveness and a collective movement of the group to achieve certain aims I don't think is there right now (#11, 8/14/03).

Many of these explanations for the lack of goals or direction that exists give attention to many challenges the group is currently facing, including a perceived shift in EPA's residential cleanup plan, a health care problem with no obvious structure in our society for a quick remedy, the fact that the Libby cleanup sets a precedent for the rest of the country, and the struggle for those active in the community to work collectively. The following two sections delve deep into the issues of cleanup and health care to present some of the group's struggles.

The Challenges of the Cleanup

The first of the CAG's two main goals focuses on the cleanup of contamination in the community. This involves a thorough cleanup aimed towards removal of remaining exposure pathways and a long term monitoring plan. From the CAG's inception, its first step towards achieving a thorough cleanup was to persuade the Governor of Montana to use the state's one

time 'silver bullet' to fast track Libby through the Superfund listing process. Step one was accomplished in late December 2001. However, inclusion on the Superfund list does not necessarily equate to a method of cleanup that is satisfactory to the community. Achieving the listing was a high point for the CAG after an ardent battle to secure the cleanup. Since the listing, the group has yet to influence another major agency decision so profoundly.

Although Libby is the nation's number one priority Superfund site, there continues to be disparities between what the agency has the capacity to do and what some members of the CAG and audience want. For the CAG, step two towards a thorough cleanup was influencing a policy decision by the agency to remove Zonolite insulation from the ceilings and walls of residential buildings. One CAG member vividly recounts the difficulty the group and local agency officials had in gaining that policy decision.

Well down the road about two or three months, one day Paul [Peronard] called me up when I was down there and said I got some bad news for ya. He said 'I'm trying to sell this house cleanup to everybody along the line.' And he said, 'I'm not having any luck at all.' He said, 'They don't even want to talk about it.' So this was, even prior to that, they had the committee meeting here when Baucus and Bill Yellowtail come here when he [Yellowtail] was head of Region 8 EPA at the time. And, ah, I asked him and he said 'well that guy right there is my boss and whatever he says goes,' and he pointed to Paul Peronard and so I went back over to Paul and after all of this, he told me he couldn't clean the houses. And this is the way it set for a long time, a couple of years. So pretty near ever meeting that we would have even with the CAG, I said, 'Paul how are you coming along on cleaning those houses?' I'd put it on the record. I will say one thing for them he stayed with that all through this whole thing and he got it done. And this is the kinda people we got, and that is how the CAG worked. If I hadn't been there, or the rest of us, and just brought this up all the time, it might have never happened (#24, 6/15/03).

This member's story illustrates how a strong relationship between the local agency officials and the CAG can assist the group in achieving its goals. Moreover, the CAG's insistence in keeping this issue on the forefront and in the minds of the local officials most likely assisted in moving the policy shift forward. However, despite hard work and negotiations, one step forward can easily move half a step backward.

'Leaving it in the Walls'

In May 2003, the EPA announced that they would be unable to remove all of the vermiculite insulation from residential homes. Specifically the agency had decided not to remove the insulation inside the walls of homes. This announcement was troubling for many, as it looked as if the EPA was moving from total removal of contamination to controlled release and containment. The timing of this decision coincided with the start of my interviews, and I think that this change in policy was weighing heavily on the minds of some interviewees. There is a diversity of opinion on the notion of removing the insulation from residential walls. The EPA website states that,

At present [May 19, 2003], cleanup of Libby homes and businesses is not being affected by budget cuts. EPA's decision not to take vermiculite out of the walls is based on the low risk of exposure from vermiculite that is contained inside walls. The difficulty and cost of the work cannot be justified with risk reduction because the vermiculite contained in walls does not present a high risk (US EPA, May 19, 2003).

As the interviewee's comment alluded, they felt that the decision was made due to budgetary constraints. I think that the decision to not remove insulation from the residential walls again highlights the difference in perception of risk that the agency has and that of some of the community members.

As the EPA claims its decision is based on the low incidence of risk, perhaps community members do not feel comfortable with that level of risk no matter the scientific justification for the decision. At the June 2003 CAG meeting, the Ponderosa room was crowded with all the chairs occupied and people standing in the back. I think that the high turnout for this particular meeting may have been due to the high level of concern residents had regarding the agency's decision not to remove vermiculite insulation for residential walls. I think that some community members simply see this decision as another instance where the agency is stepping away from initial claims of removal of exposure pathways.

Is the EPA Changing its Tune?

Some interviewees concede that the EPA never promised the community that every fiber would be found and removed. They argue that community members who complain about the agencies subsequent decisions, such as leaving vermiculite insulation in the walls of homes, did not want to hear about any residual contamination that would be left in town at the beginning of the process.

But Paul Peronard never said that we were going to remove everything. He always said, from the beginning, that there would be some residual contamination. There has to be a balance that's struck between how much it costs to remove it and the benefit that you get from it. I think it was hard for them [some community members] to hear that in the earlier days (Mueller, 9/15/03).

You know it used to be when we first started and we would come to the meetings when Paul was here, and we'd say, 'we gotta do this, we gotta do that.' And that's kind of the way it went. And I think now its, I don't know if its budget constraints or the different process they use. But it doesn't seem like they are doing as much as we ask anymore. I think they're kind of, I think they've got some constraints of them, somehow I don't know (#5, 7/12/03).

Whereas the first guys through this emergency response thing is like fighting a forest fire, you throw as much money at it as you can as fast as you can and try to put out the fire. He's trying to put out the fire, but he also made a lot of promises and did a lot a things that he wasn't necessarily able to do. And I think that CAG and a lot of people were led down a path, somewhat myself, that's just my opinion (#7, 6/14/03).

While others feel that the agency is going back on statements made in the beginning stages of the cleanup. They associate these changes with the frustration of budgetary constraints and the ever-changing political climate.

Well, we pushed for Superfund declaration and we got it. We pushed for a medical trust fund to provide care that the people need, we haven't gotten that. As far as the cleanup goes, the EPA said they were going to remove all the asbestos and as the cleanup, quote unquote cleanup, progresses they are not removing all the asbestos, they are leaving lots of it in place in the houses and leaving it on the ground. So the cleanup isn't progressing, but its not actually being cleaned up (#16, 7/13/03).

Right now I think the number one thing is keeping EPA on task and I honestly I think, I honestly think that the EPA is just kind of dropping the ball on this asbestos issue. They keep pulling back away from what they initially said they

were going to do. And I don't think that's right; you know I know it's not right. And I know, they initially you know when Paul Peronard was here you know he expressed time and time and time again that zero was, that was the only answer. Though you know you could never reach that. But when they go from at least trying to get to that level to where they're just going to leave stuff completely, that's not, that's just wrong. And I know that it all boils down to funding, and I don't think funding should be the issue, but I know it always is. I don't agree with it, and I don't know the answer to resolve that (#18, 8/16/03).

And just noticing and observing, if you will, the tone of the conversation from the EPA is more quote unquote the corporate line, the political line. Um it's always injected that there's not enough money now, that we're not going to cover anything up but we're going to cover up some asbestos. It was total removal in another phase and now its controlled release. I'm not so sure some of that might not, probably would have been reality. You never will get every fiber in south Lincoln County or whatever. But it doesn't seem that the dedication to doing the job as thoroughly as what occurred in the earlier phases is there now. Um the political dollar constraints, we're being dittled by dollars. And basically I've just told them in the last couple of weeks that they're turning this into a political Brownfield. And this was one of EPA's real successes as far as community relations and acceptance by the community. I think it was such a rarity that they were really taken aback by it. And Paul Peronard did a hell of a job. But once the political winds shifted, a lot of things have started to shift (#12, 8/16/03).

The political winds have shifted. After September 11, 2001, the federal priorities took a dramatic turn, and dollars began to flow in alternate directions. There has been great concern among community members that money for the Libby cleanup would be curtailed. At the June 12, 2003 CAG meeting EPA Director of the Office of Emergency Response and Remediation, Mike Cook, attended the meeting and assured the community that funding would be there for Libby's cleanup as it is one of the highest priority sites in the country due to the human health concerns (US EPA, June 12, 2003).

However, it appears that local EPA project manager Jim Christiansen will be back in negotiations with Mike Cook regarding the FY 04 funding, as additional funding (\$2 million) received at the end of FY 03 was considered as an advance against the next years funding and has since been deducted from FY 04 (The Western News, November 7, 2003). While the total amount of money allocated for the Libby cleanup in the coming years remains uncertain, it is pretty clear that the decisions concerning the funding of the Libby cleanup are being made not by

the agency officials on the ground, but by decision makers much further up the chain of command. In some way, this leaves the CAG scratching their heads about what to do next to achieve their goal of a thorough cleanup.

The Challenges of Health Care

Now granted again, Libby is totally unique, I mean I don't know if there are any Superfund sites, well there probably are Superfund sites where people have died as a result of their exposure, but certainly not near the numbers that we have here in Libby of sick and dying people (Thomi, 9/11/03).

It has been said time and time again by numerous EPA representatives that Libby is a top priority site in this country due to the dramatic health concerns in the community. As Wendy Thomi states, there is no other site in the country where so many people have developed illnesses and lost their lives due to their exposure. While the federal government spends tremendous amounts of energy and money to alleviate the remaining exposure pathways to this contaminant, there is little to no effort or funds directed towards the long-term care of those who are suffering from debilitating and painful asbestos related diseases caused by their exposure in Libby. Moreover, there does not seem to be any public agency that believes that the duty to provide care for the people of Libby is within their mandate or funding capabilities.

While our nation does not provide specialized medical care for all who need it, such a provision of law does exist which could provide care for the people of Libby. This provision allows for the EPA and/or Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to declare a public health emergency for a site (CERCLA, 1980). The CAG fought for this declaration, yet powerful decision makers lacked the political will to invoke the untested provision, as described below. Without the public health emergency declaration, the long-term health care funding crisis in Libby remains. This leaves the CAG and others scratching their heads about where to turn to for such a grand sum of support.

This section will attempt to explain this tenuous place the Libby community finds itself in, concerning long-term health care funding and the mandates of the various federal agencies involved. Plus, I hope to give voice to some of the frustrations the CAG members have felt in working towards a solution to this seemingly insurmountable goal.

No Mandate

Getting what the community needs in the way of long-term health care is an issue seemingly out of the purview and mandate of both the EPA and ATSDR. Essentially the EPA's job is to cleanup the contaminant and minimize the exposure, while the ATSDR is supposed to assess the threat of the exposure from a scientific perspective and to provide recommendations and education. From Wendy Thomi's perspective, this can be a very frustrating place for an agency official to be.

As an agency representative, you would like to sit there and say, 'we will find you medical care.' We're not even authorized to. We're not authorized to provide medical care; we don't have the funds to provide medical care. We barely have the funds to do the cleanup. Um ATSDR doesn't really have any funds, and most of the funds ATSDR does get come directly from EPA. Um so I mean yeah its very frustrating. And then the federal programs that are there to do that kind of thing, Medicare and Medicaid, um I think often either don't apply you know because either the person doesn't meet the criteria for those programs, because they're not that are programs designed specially around the Libby asbestos disaster... Um so yeah, there just isn't a program and you know I don't know what more to say about that. It seems pretty much like people here want a program that is specific and special to this situation and the government hasn't come through in that respect. I mean there isn't, there hasn't been a centered appropriation for it. There have been little things along the way (Thomi, 9/11/03).

While the EPA and ATSDR remain adamant that long-term health care is out of their purview as federal agencies, some people are not entirely convinced. Most of this reluctance to accept the agencies' stated positions comes from the remaining confusion over the issue of the public health emergency. In order to understand this confusion it is necessary to hear more from the interviewees regarding the role the ATSDR has played in Libby.

The Role of the ATSDR

The ATSDR arrived in Libby shortly after the story broke in 1999. The stated mission of the ATSDR is to,

Serve the public by using the best science, taking responsive public health actions, and providing trusted health information to prevent harmful exposures and disease related to toxic substances (ATSDR, 2003).

In accordance with its mandate, in the summers of 2000 and 2001 the ATSDR coordinated and conducted free medical screenings and interviews for approximately 7,000 current and former residents who lived in the Libby area for at least six months before 1990 (Peipins et al., 2003). Its results from the ATSDR's screening and subsequent study that provides the scientific proof that the Libby community is suffering an unprecedented rates of lung abnormalities and incidence of asbestos related disease, directly caused from the historical exposure from the mining operations.

Although the agency's screening and study meet the need to document the effects of the exposure on the Libby population, many CAG members expressed dissatisfaction with the agency. Moreover, one member even expressed disappointment at the ATSDR's approach to its study.

You know I think initially the EPA they fell over backwards to do just about anything the CAG wanted them to do, you know within the constraints of the law... ATSDR, my perception of them from the very onset they dictated what they were going to do instead of asking what we wanted... we provide this; we provide that, and all this kind of stuff for [this] study. And to me it's the other way around; they're here to serve us, not just to study this stuff. This study that they're doing is just a side thing. But to [them] the focus is the study. And you know to me it seems like the ATSDR's line of thinking is that we're guinea pigs and we provide all of this (#5, 7/12/03).

Much of the dissatisfaction with the ATSDR appears to be directly tied to the lack of a long-term health care funding source for those affected. For many it is frustrating to see money directed towards a study, when many people have medical bills piling up with no relief in sight.

Many times I have heard people say, in effect, ‘Millions for research and not a dime for health care!’ One CAG member used humor to express their anger over this disparity.

HA! What a joke! That’s the biggest bunch of money wasting bozos on the face of the earth. They have done nothing but conduct studies. That’s all they’ve done. And if you try to ask them what they’re doing, the guy at the meetings, he won’t tell you anything. They never have a report and all they do is say, ‘Oh guess what folks? We just released a new study, we found out that people are dying in Libby!’ Oh here’s a new study that says people have asbestosis in Libby, HA! Look at this! That’s all they do. It’s a total waste. I don’t even know why that agency exists (#16, 7/13/03).

The ATSDR representative attending the monthly CAG meetings has insisted that providing health care is not the function of the agency. However, it is unclear to what extent the agency is working on behalf of the community in its communication with other agencies. One member very astutely explained their unhappiness with the ATSDR’s efforts to assist in achieving money for medical care.

We weren’t very happy initially with the ATSDR, ...that’s the screening part of it. I’m still not totally sold on the ATSDR either. I think that they could’ve been a little more involved on the medical part. You know we spent six or seven million dollars on the screening part and found out that there are a thousand, twelve hundred people that have the disease and we still to this day have nothing for them on medical. So, I kind of thought that the ATSDR would kind of be a front runner and go to the different agencies that we needed to contact to get money and even to our legislatures. But they’ve kind of been held back...been in reserve on that, and I...I’m not too happy with that part of it (#21, 7/12/03).

As a constant observer of the CAG process, the group’s facilitator had this to say about the ATSDR’s role in the health care equation.

There were two basic issues from the start, one was the cleanup and the other was the health issues. The health issues haven’t been addressed. The long-term health care is still not provided for, and that’s going to be the hardest issue to solve. It’s the most money. We really don’t have institutions...that ATSDR wasn’t set up and doesn’t see its mission as providing long-term health care. They try to come in and figure out what went wrong, try to figure out what’s the source of the pathways for exposure, make sure EPA addresses those pathways. They are not there to provide health care...and they tend, again because the health issue hasn’t been addressed, I think most of the emotion exists around that topic (Mueller, 9/15/03).

A weakness of my study is the omission of an interview with an ATSDR representative. Perhaps such a discussion would provide some answers to the members' questions, and a response to some of the criticism of the agency expressed in these comments. However, I do think that it is necessary to give voice to some of the interviewees' frustrations regarding the work of the agency within its mandate, like the study, and those issues ranging outside the mandate, such as long-term health care. Moreover, their comments begin to illustrate how the problem of long-term health care funding is extremely difficult for a CAG to address and solve.

No Funding

The problem of health care is the biggest challenge that the Libby community, and subsequently the CAG, faces. Despite the tremendous uphill battle it will take to solve the problem, members of the CAG remain committed to the goal of achieving a long-term health care solution for the people who need it. However, not everyone has had the same idea of how to go about attaining this goal or what the solution should look like. For some members, obtaining funding for care has become priority one for the CAG.

The main thing for the CAG right now is to come up with some medical for the people that have no insurance that are having problems paying their bills, you know. How many people have the disease between the asbestosis and mesothelioma, there are a lot of them out there so we have to get some type of medical program. And think that that is basically the main objective of CAG right now (#21, 7/12/03).

This medical thing we've worked on that a long time and it just doesn't seem that we can get... for some reason we just can't make people understand that a couple hundred thousand even a million dollars isn't a lot of money when you start talking about what we need. And this is, it's just hard to make people understand that we are dealing with something that's going to be here for a long, long time and a lot of people are involved and its going to cost a lot of money to keep the doors open (#24, 6/15/03).

The current system in place in Libby for health care funding is the W.R. Grace medical plan, often referred to as the Grace plan. Under the Grace plan, W.R. Grace will pay medical bills and costs accrued for those patients who qualify. However, it is up to the company to decide who qualifies for the program. A patient's chest x-rays are sent to company appointed

radiologists to determine whether or not the patient appears to have the tell tale signs of an asbestos related disease. A problem with this system is that more often than not asbestos related diseases can be illusive on an x-ray. Such diseases are more readily diagnosed from a patient's symptoms. Without the opportunity for a more one-one method of determining illness based on symptoms, many Libby residents have been denied from the Grace plan. Moreover, as CAG members often point out, as long as the Grace plan is only option for medical care funding Libby will remain beholden to W.R. Grace.

No Structure

The Libby health care community and members of the CAG have worked hard to foster the development of a local system of care for patients with asbestos related disease. Though many recognize the difficulty of finding a solution when not only is there no federal agency with a mandate to correct the problem, there is also no structure within our national health care system to take address of the problem either.

Oh I think the biggest challenge is trying to address the medical issue. Trying to find a system that will provide them with long-term medical care. The reason that that is so hard is because there is so much money at stake and there isn't an institution that's set up to do it. Our system of medical care in this country is crumbling (Mueller, 9/15/03).

So ah yeah ah the hope is that we've tried to do each one ah each, you might say each straw that we've been able to grasp is is to ah you know find another avenue to ah to meet you know something that hasn't been met in the past. Of course the goal having been that you know it would be very nice to have seen us deliver. We're not going to have that. It's not going to happen. We don't even have that in our health care system in America. We don't have one stop shopping, so as frustrating as it is, it's really the reality of today (#13, 7/11/03).

The following comment, again by Wendy Thomi, does an excellent job of explaining the pieces that have been put together, and the frustration over the gaps that remain.

Right, I was trying to think if that situation exists anywhere in the U.S. Um I mean our medical system in this country involves private doctors, Medicaid and Medicare, insurance companies, um you know what it is. So those services, there's a hospital here, there's a mental health center, there's a senior center,

there's a nursing home, there's the Libby Care Center, I think the Libby Care Center is the nursing home. There's actually now a specialty clinic, the CARD clinic that specializes in asbestos related stuff. The community has applied for a grant to start a Community Health Center where they can do... they have doctors that can see the general public. It's not only asbestos related; it's any health care. They charge on a sliding scale, so people who don't have money can get free visits. Services are here, the problem is there are so many un-insured and under-insured people, people who can't afford it. And then the complicating factor is that there's still that, 'if it weren't for W.R. Grace and the asbestos exposure and the fact that our government agencies, state and federal agencies, didn't stop this exposure from happening even though they knew it was bad, I wouldn't need the health care that I can't afford.' So therefore, they think 'since the reason I need this medical care is because of these other factors, somebody ought to be providing it to me. It should be part of the program.' And I don't know if there is any program like that at other Superfund sites (Thomi, 9/11/03).

While the health care community and members of the CAG have worked very hard to secure funding for local facilities and programs to form a network of care, members of the CAG also attempted to invoke an unused provision in the 1980 Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) legislation regarding the declaration of a public health emergency.

Declaration of a Public Health Emergency

A provision in CERCLA allows the EPA to declare a public health emergency at a site. In the 1980 legislation, such a declaration would provide health care for those affected. Although this provision has yet to be enacted in the United States, the CAG pushed for such a declaration in Libby. The CAG meeting summary for March 14, 2002 states that Paul Peronard met in Washington D.C. with EPA administrators regarding Zonolite insulation removal and the possible declaration of a public health emergency in Libby (US EPA, March 14, 2002). This mention in the meeting summary was seven months before I attended my first CAG meeting in Libby, and in fact there is little mention of the declaration in the meeting summaries until the October 10, 2002 meeting. Coincidentally, this was my first CAG meeting.

At the October meeting, a CAG member presented the group with a letter they wrote detailing the responsibility of the ATSDR under CERCLA to provide medical care for those affected by exposure to toxic substances (US EPA, October 10, 2002). The letter describes how the EPA was able to achieve the residential insulation without declaring a public health emergency. Section 9604 (i)(1)(d) of CERCLA describes the establishment, function, and authority of the ATSDR (See Appendix 2). The part of this section dealing with public health emergencies states that the ATSDR will be responsible,

...in cases of public health emergencies caused or believed to be caused by exposure to toxic substances, provide medical care and testing to exposed individuals, including but not limited to tissue sampling, chromosomal testing where appropriate, epidemiological studies, or any other assistance appropriate under the circumstances; and... In cases of public health emergencies, exposed persons shall be eligible for admission to hospitals and other facilities and services operated or provided by the Public Health Service (42 U.S.C. § 9604 (i)).

The public health emergency declaration became a very contentious issue for the CAG, and arguably for the agency administrators and higher-level decision makers. In my opinion, a public health emergency declaration for Libby would have created a precedent for not only medical care, but also removal of vermiculite insulation (originally from the Zonolite mine) in residential properties across the country. To set such a precedent in the current political climate was not going to happen, no matter how much the Libby community needed a secure funding source for health care.

The ATSDR insists that the world we live in today is different from when the statute was written in 1980. Our medical system has grown increasingly more private since then, with the last public health hospital closing its doors in 1985. Therefore, despite the language in the statute, the reality of the agency's current role and funding situation does not leave room for fulfilling obligations to communities around the United States who have been exposed to toxic substances, including Libby.

Despite the insistence by the agencies, the public health emergency declaration remained a topic of CAG discussion for many months. Again, the decision by the agencies not to declare a public health emergency in Libby is a fairly recent development and still a timely issue at the time of my interviews. Many of the interviewees offered their opinions on the issue of the declaration. Their comments provide a variety of opinions on the declaration including support, suggesting that the issue became a distraction for the group, to recognizing the full extent of such a declaration and the innately political constraints.

Continued Support for the Declaration

There remains a level of support for a public health emergency for Libby, despite the denial by the government. As one member suggested, the work to get the declaration exposed the extent of the problem to a larger audience. Therefore, even without the declaration, the exposure could ultimately prove to be in Libby's benefit.

Well we tried real hard to get Libby declared a health emergency and haven't succeeded with that so far. But even by us trying I think had made the government officials more aware of Libby and the problems we do have here (#9, 6/13/03).

One member maintains the belief that the provision in CERCLA to provide care for victims is there for a reason and must not be ignored.

It's like all these issue that we deal with, at times it feels like we're beating a dead horse. But some of these dead horses we've got to beat em until they get up and run, you know? We've got no other choice, and that's my view. I'm sure people are tired of hearing about a public health emergency. We've been told there is no legislation that exists to address this situation. Well, I say we amend it, the legislation and make it address the situation. And you know that's my view but I'm going to be viewed as beating a dead horse, but that's OK (#17, 8/15/03).

Need to Move Past the Declaration

While some support for the declaration remains, far more members expressed frustration over the continual attention that has been directed towards a declaration, that many viewed as impossible. As one member stated, perhaps the group was hoping for too much.

But anybody would have known what the response was going to be, I mean it was silly to think that the federal government is going to pay for the health care of everybody in this community, you know I think they were, I think they were hoping for too much and I think that they were pushing something beyond where it have gone (#20, 7/11/03).

Others suggested that the declaration became a distraction for the group, in that they spent way too much time discussing something that was not going to happen. Some comments seem to imply that the continued discussion about the declaration refused to acknowledge reality.

I say the CAG has gotten off on a tangent in a sense, but we have other groups out there, the CARD center, the group there realizes the need for compensation and medical care, and not just medical care, because they are dealing with the people who are dying on a daily basis. And ah, so, whether or not the CAG ever gets back on that I don't know (#6, 6/15/03).

And so, then they suddenly got off on a tangent... where it was very difficult to get back on track, in other words we end up shooting off in directions that had no, you know it was wasted energy... Well I mean well, specifically the one thing that really comes to mind is the declaration of a public emergency. You know, that was something that was there and it was a possibility and the White House basically turned and said 'you know we're not doing it' ok and so you know that became very obviously a dead road, don't waste your time you know... Let's go back another route. And nobody listened so I thought well heck I'm not going to, I can't deal with it. I tried to tell them, they didn't listen and we spent all this time and effort and meetings and I just lost it. I thought my gosh if that's the tangent of the meetings I don't know how to get it back you know, it was just headed off and it was just a lot of wasted energy. When we needed to be working on the long-term health solution and supporting that and figuring out how to get that organized and to get a trust created before the health network was done, before Grace insurance was gone, which is disappearing fast (#10, 8/14/03).

While another interviewee explained that while the declaration was an option at one time, it had been explored and subsequently rejected. Thus, the group needs to look towards other avenues for a solution.

I think it is a true statement that we, CAG, tackled a lot of issues and questions and followed a lot of pathways, some of them turning out to be blind alleys some of them turning out to be more productive. But we got over a series of hurdles and did what we could do. Whether that was trying to achieve the public health disaster designation and you know have that piece of the obscure arcane Superfund law actually be activated for us, so we went down that road and we couldn't...it didn't go anywhere (#11, 8/14/03).

Some saw the continued attention to the public health emergency as 're-inventing the wheel', as the solution was in the local health care network that the community had been working on.

Rather than try to reinvent something. It's going to be real hard to go to Congress or the Senate and tell them to re-appropriate some money for this new effort as opposed to saying here is an effort that is already funded that we can enlarge upon. We don't have to go sell the whole idea all over again. And expand it to embrace other things (#8, 6/13/03).

Yeah, exactly, I think they need to work, they need to figure out things that can happen and work on those and let go of the stuff that they have been told isn't going to happen. And keep sticking their hand out for an advance, this and that and the other thing. I think the structure is there, it just needs to be pushed through and finished and get put in place (#7, 6/14/03).

In some ways the attention to the declaration pushed the work on local health care initiatives out of the CAG and into smaller work groups. Group and audience members appear frustrated when the topic is brought up at meetings, and some are concerned that continued attention could be challenging the group's relevance in the search for solution to the problem.

All the Way to the Top

It's not enough to say 'well that's what the law says.' Laws are not self-actualizing. Without people, the law doesn't mean anything (Mueller, 9/15/03).

This comment very astutely acknowledges the potential emptiness of a federal statute. As the group's facilitator states, without people and the political will to enforce a law, it will not be realized. The decision not to declare a public health emergency went far beyond Libby, the CAG, or the local agency representatives.

Recall the decision by the EPA to remove vermiculite insulation from Libby residences. The EPA could have declared the public health emergency as a means to allow for the removal of the insulation from homes in Libby. A letter to Montana Senator Max Baucus from EPA Administration Christie Todd Whitman dated April 4, 2003, explains the agency's rationale not to declare a public health emergency in Libby (See Appendix 3). The letter states,

The Comprehensive Emergency Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) generally prohibits the removal of "product" from a residential structure as part of a removal action, but provides an exception where a health emergency exists. As we have previously discussed, EPA chose not to rely upon CERCLA's health emergency provision, in part, to minimize the possibility of removal work in Libby being delayed by possible legal challenges to this untested approach. Instead, EPA determined that it has the authority to remove the insulation in Libby based upon more traditional legal authorities because many of the homes contained insulation that was not inspected, packaged, labeled, warranted, regulated, or sold as a commercial "product" (Whitman, April 4, 2003).

Administrator Whitman continues,

The Agency's decision not to invoke CERCLA's health emergency provision to remove attic insulation in Libby has no relationship to how EPA communicates potential exposure risk of asbestos contaminated vermiculite attic insulation to the wider American public. EPA has not changed its long standing guidance to homeowners because we do not have the scientific basis to do so at this time. Until more is known, the best way to safely manage vermiculite attic insulation is to leave it undisturbed or, if necessary, retain the assistance of a professional for removal (Whitman, April 4, 2003).

A full year prior to the Administrator Whitman's letter to Senator Baucus, the EPA was apparently ready to make the public health emergency declaration for Libby (Schneider, 2002). On December 20, 2002, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch ran an article by Andrew Schneider, the investigative journalist who broke the Libby story, entitled "White House Budget Office thwarts EPA warning on asbestos-laced insulation" (Schneider, 2002). Schneider claims that while the EPA had plans to announce the declaration and a national warning regarding the hazards of vermiculite insulation in April 2002, the decision to halt the declaration was made by the White House Office of Management and Budget just days before.

Five months after Schneider's article and just one month after Administrator Whitman's letter to Senator Baucus, the EPA finally made a national announcement regarding the hazards of vermiculite insulation. On May 21, 2003 the EPA launched its "National Consumer Awareness Campaign on Vermiculite Insulation" (US EPA, May 21, 2003). However, instead of the awareness campaign making the front page in newspapers across the country, another EPA story was making top news. On May 20th, Christine Todd Whitman resigned from her position as Administrator of the EPA. The news of her resignation was a lead story across the nation's newspapers, radio stations, and television news programs on May 21st.

In an effort to avoid any dramatic conspiracy theory allegations, let's just say the timing of the consumer alert announcement and the resignation of Administrator Whitman, considering the controversy surrounding her role in the public health emergency declaration, is at the very least curious. Much of the story of the controversy surrounding the public health emergency declaration is well known to those in Libby who are paying attention. In the interviews, some expressed their dissatisfaction with the handling of the declaration and thoughts on the fact that the decision went all the way to the top.

Yeah, that's my feeling. And you know Paul was held back sometimes. I mean he'd go clear to Washington to testify, but he could only do so much. You know, and still Christie Whitman up there at the top, you know... why couldn't, you know Paul wanted to get Libby designated as a health hazard, whatever it was, so that they could receive some specific help...but he was turned down and it was disapproved by what the Dept. of Administration... all the way to the top, but they had nothing to do with EPA and yet they were the ones who were coming down and saying 'No' to that. I could never understand how they had any business with it, and I think that's why Christie Whitman finally got fed up and resigned. I mean she kept beating her head against the wall and somebody else in another part of the government kept shooting the saddle out from underneath her. But I do believe that she also felt that Libby was a unique situation that needed to be treated differently (#23, 7/13/03).

Right up to the time the agency had to pee or get off the pot with the declaration of a public health emergency, it had become such a hot potato. And even some of the comments made by the Centers for Disease Control head guy and all were almost laughable. I don't know if they know what they truly said on the record on the meetings, but it was just 'we've never done this before and we don't know how to do it, and it's too hot to handle'. And it was a part of their mandate; it's

part of their organization's formative powers and the reason they are in existence. But it didn't mesh politically. And so when all was said and done and the decision not to declare the public health emergency was made at the White House level basically things went downhill from there (#12, 8/16/03).

The problems facing the Libby community exist within a larger and much more complicated mosaic of political interests. One CAG member explained how the change of administrations shifted funds away from the EPA and its programs.

Well ah, first of all when this first started no one understand the whole scope of it and as we apply pressure for cleanup and money started being spent that was early in the Bush Administration, but as the Bush Administration has regressed through its time, with cuts to EPA, it's just...its been the installation of the Bush Administration and coupled with the realization of what has to be done. We need this much [using hands to show how much], and the Bush Administration started with this much, and now they want to cut it back to this much. So, we have to have a different administration in Washington in order for us to get what we want (#16, 7/13/03).

The group's facilitator explained the magnitude of the funding need and what it would take for such a solution to be realized.

So the medical issue is the biggest problem. And they have the CAG and people who live in Libby have a story to tell. There is no question that bad things happened here, it was unjust, but what they have to figure out is how to motivate the political system that has the ability to address their problem. They've started, there's sort of a whine every once in a while that comes up and that is, 'well if we can spend 87 billion dollars in Iraq, we can fix this problem.' Well there is a kernel of truth in what they are saying; we as a nation do have the ability to provide long-term health care for these people. Even if it's a billion dollars, we have a trillion dollar multi-trillion dollar economy, so we could it is possible. It is not that the resources do not exist; its how you get them applied to Libby. And you know what its like to go to Libby, because you've been here. Libby is very isolated. It's remarkable to me that they have gotten as much money from the government as they have (Mueller, 9/15/03).

The medical care issue in Libby remains to be solved. The local network of providers are doing their best to secure funding and resources to meet the need. However, much of the foundation of this network is derived directly from the \$250,000 that W.R. Grace gives to St. John's Hospital each year and the care provided under the Grace plan for those who qualify. The Grace plan is one solution provided by the company, which can be removed at any time as the

company is under no such obligation to provide the program. As the group's facilitator stated, a long-term health care solution for Libby is an exceedingly expensive venture. It will take an act of Congress to appropriate money for such a program; there is simply no other governmental entity that could fund an answer to the problem.

Chapter 5: Perception, Polarization, and Representation

Polarization developed in the Libby community shortly after the news of the asbestos contamination broke in the media. This rift was an ideological separation of the community that has presented the CAG with continual challenges on how to best remedy the problems of the past and move forward into the future. The purpose of this chapter is to answer the third sub-question of this study, **how well does the CAG represent all relevant entities working on the problems related to the asbestos contamination?** An answer to this question is not necessarily as straightforward as who is at the table and who is not. The ‘how well’ aspect of the sub-question forces a more complex and layered discussion that attempts to determine *why* certain entities participate at the CAG and why others do not.

This chapter will aim to thoroughly describe the polarization that emerged, and arguably has continued, in Libby as a result of the asbestos disaster. The chapter includes four distinct sections including: first, attention to the importance of perception; second, a description of the early representation of the group; third, a closer look at the split that occurred in the CAG; while the final section addresses the creation of additional groups in Libby working on aspects of the CAG’s original goals.

While the group initially worked to include all aspects of the community, that goal was never truly achieved, as the business community was never fully represented. Moreover, over time further fracturing has occurred amongst those who remained active with the group, as various smaller working groups have developed to work on issues related to the cleanup, health care, and economic revitalization. It is necessary to reiterate early in this chapter that my analysis is not wholly representative of all the views in the community. This discussion is my interpretation, as an outsider, of what I have learned through my research and interviews with a very select group of individuals from the Libby community.

The Importance of Perception

The CAG is just like anything in life, if it's there and you chose not to ah grasp it, hang on to it, learn about it, know about it, shame on you, because it's there. And that's just what's here, it's out there, people just don't want to know about it. What can you say? (#1, 6/14/03).

Recall the discussion in chapter two about psychosocial response to technological disasters. As mentioned, one's perception of a disaster can shape their response to the disaster. Perception of the disaster can occur at different rates for different people. While one person may experience the death of a loved one from exposure, or have problems with their own health and acknowledge the disaster quickly, another person may feel no direct effects and more slowly develop an understanding of the disaster.

The awareness that a disaster is occurring tends to be an independent journey as people who have different experiences, are exposed to different amounts of evidence, and are more or less receptive to the concept that this type of disaster is even possible (CORA, 2003).

Once an individual recognizes that a disaster has in fact occurred or is occurring, they usually respond in one of two ways. People who are not directly impacted by the disaster are able to continue their normal lives, paying little attention to or even avoiding the issue (CORA, 2003). On the other hand, those directly affected may intensely focus their attention on issues surrounding the disaster. "There is a tendency to become engaged in, or even obsessed over, topics related to the disaster..." (CORA, 2003). A CORA social worker acknowledges that this behavior has occurred in Libby,

I read this statement because I had to do a lit review for this training manual and it said, there is no healthy response to a toxic exposure, there is only obsession and denial. And that is so true I think here, you know. You see the people who are, in a way obsessed with it. It's their whole life. It's their identity; it's everything in their world. And then you have the other population who just wants it to be quiet. 'Let's move on.' Or they don't want it in their life, you know. When you're at the restaurant and you see the man with the newspaper who just skips all the asbestos articles, you know... doesn't even want to know, you know? And I think that we really see that here (Lincoln, 8/14/03).

In Libby, it seems that this polarization of perceptions ranging from obsession to denial was the first component of dissensus in the community.

Perception: The First Component of Dissensus

It could be argued that some CAG members embody the characteristics of an obsessive response to the disaster, such that working on asbestos related issues has essentially changed their life and become part of their identity now. Many interviewees agree that a silent component of the community, like the 'man with the newspaper', continues to deny the severity of the disaster. One CAG member's comment reemphasizes the difficulty for many to acknowledge the disaster based on its inherently invisible properties.

...if this was a radioactive material so that everybody that walked on site all of a sudden glowed like a Christmas tree you know people would you know a little a greater note to what is happening. But because it's not, and because you know really the science is still out there, that what is clean... You know um and then of course we'll still dealing with people who say, 'there's not a problem' you know we still have that contingency in the community that say 'we don't have a problem with asbestos' (#13, 7/11/03).

Denial Persists in the Community

Some people said that they feel it has been part of the CAG's purpose to keep the issue of the disaster in the public discourse; in essence, to continually remind people that the problem does in fact exist. However, some say that many people still refuse to hear about it.

I mean I still have people talk to me about the fact that had we not, had we left everything alone everything would be fine. Honestly, and they still say that (#22, 7/12/03).

That has kinda been the whole thing here is trying to tell people, that this really did happen, and I guess there are people who really don't want to know about it (#1, 6/14/03).

I think the CAG is being a good representation for those who have been paying attention and um, for the people that are not in denial. We have a lot of people in denial here (#17, 8/15/03).

But you know the real, real tragedy of this community, and I think this community is unlike any community I have ever heard about. Is that there are still people who are in denial who'd rather this did not happen and they feel that if the EPA leaves the problem will be gone, that there isn't a problem (#6, 6/15/03).

I asked CAG members what their impression is on those in the CAG who do not attend the CAG meetings. It is not my intention to place everyone outside of the community in a single mass group, however I did want to hear from the interviewees what they have heard or the sense they have gotten over the years from other parts of the community.

Representing The Uninformed

Some interviewees mentioned that they believe there is an element of the community that is uninformed about the issues related to the asbestos contamination and subsequent cleanup. While they do not expect all members of the community to be active and informed, it is difficult to work on behalf of the rest of the community if people choose not to discuss the issues with the group members. Moreover, there is the constant and expected issue of people forming opinions with little information.

The one thing you're leaving out is that there are a lot of people who are grossly uninformed. They don't read one news article. They haven't read one book about it. They haven't listened to the radio. They haven't done anything except they have their own opinion about it and they listen to other people talking who don't know anything about it. Well when you look at CAG, it's what...there's 25 people on the CAG and usually thirty-five to forty people in the audience sometimes 50 so what's that, 80, 90 people, a hundred people on a good day? One hundred people who know what's going on anymore, hearing the issue... (#16, 7/11/03).

Well sometimes it's hard to, you know, to determine what the community wants because the community doesn't come forth and let the CAG know. You know, they'll do a lot of complaining and stuff, but they won't come for a meeting and tell us, you know, we need to pursue this or this is not working...there's only a few people who've done that. And they're.... people are hard to deal with I guess, they get the microphone and they won't sit down (#23, 7/13/03).

I think its with anything in any small community that the community tends to polarize around this subject and the salient points jump right out at you, but from there on out you don't hear too much about it. And so if something is in the

Western News that the CAG said this and agreed upon this, then they will take that and grab on to it like a dog on a bone and really shake it well. But not realizing what went on before. And I think its hard for people, watching things over the years, its hard for people to get a clear vision of what's happening if they're not there. But they form opinions anyway, and they voice their opinions (#19, 8/15/03).

I think that confusion over the issues and timeline of events and decisions resulting from begin uninformed can contribute to dissensus in the community. As information helps to shape one's perception of a disaster, insufficient or selective attention to information will inherently affect the perceptions within the community.

A Change in Perception

Despite the frustration that some feel over a perceived element of denial in the community, there are others who recognize that some who initially denied the severity or existence of the disaster have shifted from their original position. Two CAG members attribute this shift, independently, to two things. First, the results gleaned from the ATSDR's initial screening was solid evidence for the connection of illness in Libby to the asbestos contamination.

Initially...I think they were very disgusted with the CAG group, but you know they didn't understand really the seriousness of the asbestos. You know it took a year or two years for people to really understand it. When the ATSDR came out with statistics and found out that 23% of the people that were screened that have asbestosis and didn't even work up there, and then how severely the mesothelioma is in this area...its just unimaginable how many people have mesothelioma. So I think that's really opened up their eyes, and most of the community I think now really sees the whole picture (#21, 7/12/03).

And second, the feared economic downturn from the Superfund designation was not as severe as many predicted.

And I think that was the biggest thing that worried everybody, the Superfund declaration. They were afraid that it would be a stigma for the whole situation; you know people would be afraid to come here. And I think we've got past that, I think we've got more people moving here than we ever have. The realtors were one of the big doubters to start with, finally some of those have realized that it wasn't hurtin' them...But as time went on, that's what I say I think the CAG was probably the pusher for the declaration of the Superfund and that split the town in

a lot of ways. I think after that happened and we found out that, and there are still some people who don't like it, I think they found out that it didn't really hurt that much and its going to be better in the long run by a long way (#24, 6/15/03).

An individual's perception of the disaster and corresponding willingness to either ignore or engage in the situation appears to inherently complicate community involvement and public participation initiatives. While information can be provided from various sources, meetings are open to the public, and members are willing to speak with others about the current issues, that can shape perceptions about the disaster, there still will be members of the community who choose not to participate.

Representation and the CAG

Ideally, a CAG is as representative of the larger community as possible. By design the CAG forum strives to provide a voice for a variety of interests and groups within the community. Complete representation of a community is all but impossible to attain, and representation of the larger community on the Libby CAG is no exception. The group has struggled throughout its tenure to attract and keep representatives from certain portions of the community, namely the business community.

In my interviews with the CAG we discussed the notion of representation extensively. While the majority of those interviewed had much to say about the causes for a lack of representation on the CAG, it is important to acknowledge that there is a wide range of opinions on the issue of representativeness. Some interviewees responded with positive remarks concerning the representativeness of the CAG, while others were more critical. It is this critique of representation that deserves additional discussion, as the problems the group has had achieving representation of the community start to reveal the many layers of the dissensus that has occurred in Libby.

Representation is Good

It is important to present the range of opinions on the representativeness of the group. Thus, first let us hear from those who feel the representation on the group is satisfactory. In their opinion, a healthy portion of the community is represented on the CAG and it is the diversity of opinions on the group that has aided in its effectiveness.

I think it's well cross-sectioned for the whole community on the people that we have on CAG. We had probably around 18 to 20 people there and we have people from all different walks of life, professional to just common workers and I think that its really well representative, representative on the CAG (#21, 7/12/03).

...there's so many different types of people in the CAG that it really helps. A lot of them have different ideas of what should be done, how it should be done and by everybody bringing their points out they come to a happy medium usually and accomplish quite a bit (#9, 6/13/03).

Open Seats Around the Table

A few members indicated that whether or not all groups were represented or not, the seats around the table at the CAG were open to anyone. In turn, they view it as the fault of those not represented for not coming to sit at the table.

You know it's advertised and it's pretty much brought up at every meeting that anyone that wants to sit on the CAG can sit on the CAG. And there's been members that have come on you know since I've been there. You know shoot, there've been quite a few of them come on and then some of them have left. So I think it's a pretty open forum for people to be able to have their concerns discussed (#5, 7/12/03).

It can be as representative of the community as the community wants it to be because there are seats that are still vacant there. The realtor seat is vacant, the Chamber of Commerce seat is there, every seat, there is a seat for anybody who wants to sit on that CAG and it isn't just the victims, I mean the victims have taken in the places. But every member, every member of the community could have a seat on that CAG, and we have tried at one time or another, if you look all the way back and see the seats that are vacant now that the people won't even come to it (#6, 6/15/03).

We've invited anybody and everybody to participate, so anyone who has a real gripe about it, it is their own fault. All they have to do is come down there and grab a chair and sit down. They can put in their two cents worth anytime they want. And, they will probably find some support; there are a lot of people there

that have different ideas. You know, that is what was so good about it, is you have all of this information from different angles (#24, 6/15/03).

How Representation was Supposed to Be

For some members there is an awareness of how the representation on the CAG was 'supposed' to be when the group formed, but also an acknowledgment that the group never really achieved true representation of the larger community.

Two or three people can't do this; you've got to have as a whole. And what it started out to be and was, it was someone from each, like from the realtors or business. All, ah, the different types, and it never really came to that, a couple of times it did, but they were trying to get them from all walks of life, you know of the city in itself. So that to go back and be able to tell each of their, I guess I don't know what you'd call their constituents or what, but their people like from the ministers or the realtors or just the business people or anybody, but we started it out to have everybody sit on the CAG from each different type, and to go back and to tell them of what they hear of this CAG. But it really never developed into that per se (#1, 6/14/03).

And so but we were never able to amass the distribution of CAG members so that it involved all elements of the community. We never had a membership that really you know stayed with it and was committed to the process (#10, 8/14/03).

Lacking Business Representation

Furthermore, some members indicated that the group has been less representative than it could be, especially as members from the business community were not as actively engaged. Some felt that the absence of this part of the community has been a detriment to the group.

I had a feeling that you weren't seeing much of the business community there. And I can't equate that to anything, give you statistics or anything, I just had a gut feeling that there weren't a lot from the business community there. The hospital was usually representative of the caregivers and some of these people, but it seemed like the business community across the board was not represented. And I think they should be because this entire thing effects them, whatever goes on, so maybe they should have been there for more input (#19, 8/15/03).

I think that we should have better representation, more representation. You know like we never did get um any of the realtors involved and yet they need to be involved because you know the value of the homes went down and all, and there's been all the discussions about that and the discussions about cleaning the homes and getting the clean up notice, the safe notice, from EPA...and everything. And ah there's a number of realtors that sold homes without saying

anything about it, in the beginning... and we found out about it. And that wasn't right, you know. They needed to be part of it too, and they needed to be a positive part of it, not a negative part of it. And I didn't see that (#23, 7/13/03).

As Lynn and Busenberg (1995) state, "selected members may not accurately represent all attributes of the community including policy preferences, income, and education levels." The Libby CAG's inability to sustain membership from the business community supports this criticism of the CAC style of public participation. However, it must be said that this lack of representation on the CAG does not seem to be limiting the business community's voice from being heard. As with most things in Libby, there is more to this story as well.

A Closer Look at Dissensus and the CAG

The CAG has become, over our three years or three and a half years whatever, less and less representative of the larger constituencies of the group, of the community (#11, 8/14/03).

As I was not present in during the first two years of CAG meetings, I can only go on what the interviewees told me happened during that time and read the past meeting summaries. Therefore, it is imperative to restate that this presentation of why the business community is not fully represented on the CAG is my interpretation and not a fully representative viewpoint, as my pool of interviewees consisted only those CAG members who are current or recently dropped off of the group, so many of those who 'dissented' were not in my pool. All biases accounted for, I do think that the perspective of the interviewees on what happened is worth presenting to deepen and give context to the discussion of representation on the CAG and the dissensus in the community.

Interests: The Second Component of Dissensus

Representatives from the business community were invited to participate on the CAG and were present during organizational meetings and some continued to participate on the CAG for

many months. However, there was a tremendous tension that developed between groups in the community, namely those with business interests and those with asbestos victims' interests. I think that this diverging of interests acted as the second component of dissensus in the Libby community. I choose to include the following comments by the interviewees to illustrate their perspective on this time in the group's history.

Because, you know in the beginning they did try to really pull people from you know all different aspects. And it worked well to a certain extent, and then it would kind of somewhat splinter because of the economic downturn, the business people really got very, very angry. Ah because ah the story broke and they thought you know, this is it, I mean on top of losing everything else, now nobody's gonna want to visit Libby. And so we spent you know several months getting everybody back, you know back to the table (#13, 7/11/03).

I mean there were people from the real estate and there was a whole bunch of people on the CAG initially that after oh a few months, they just kind of one by one dropped off. I think some of those people were on there with the idea that um they're not going to make this go away. They would have liked to maybe down play this, do what they could to defuse the whole issue, or whatever you know (#17, 8/15/03).

The whole business community was never there. They didn't dare go there, initially. And some of them tried to engage early on, and that is what I am talking about, the backlash. If you even dared mention the economic hardship it created on the community, you just, you were just blasted, bad. You know, I mean the backlash was just incredible. So everybody retreated (#7, 6/14/03).

Because this is probably a year ago or maybe or more. Yeah probably a year ago at that, but there was a lot of discussion you know about the business community being kind of not excluded, because they could come any time they wanted to, but they didn't really want to. I think some of them are not pleased with what's happening but they don't want to criticize either because small town, you lose people's business and so there are a couple of people that are kind of vocal but a lot of them don't want to say anything ah even though they're not, you know that they don't like the whole thing, you know the whole clean up and everything that's going on (#20, 7/11/03).

As the CAG was designed to be a representative group of community voices and interests, originally there was a range of interests present including those individuals representing the business interests in the community and those representing asbestos victims in the community. As the interviewees attest, the differences between the interests of the two groups

became extremely emotionally charged at the CAG meetings. Almost immediately it became clear that the interests in the community were facing drastically different problems and issues.

While the victims had an intense interest in securing the cleanup and finding a source for health care, the business community also had an intense interest regarding the perceived negative media attention and a potential economic downturn from a Superfund listing. As the result, the representatives slowly dropped off the CAG membership list. The reasons why the individual members who quit participating are most likely quite varied.

Reason to Quit #1: Your Interest is not Our Interest

As two CAG members report, when those representing the business interests of the community on the CAG expressed the position they were there to represent, they became painted with a brush of 'not caring' about the plight of the victims.

Oh, because there was a lot of local politics in there and um any time certain people would try to stop that process or suggest that it was not an appropriate process, then the person that would stand up and try to suggest that would be seen as 'they didn't care'... But ah somebody needed to point it out. And politically, you know their feelings were on their shoulders and anybody that pointed it out they were arbitrarily painted with this brush of 'you don't care.' Instead of them understanding that they were misusing a different process (#4, 9/11/03).

... That at least initially you were branded as unsympathetic, uncaring, you know, just the only thing you cared about was money and everything else, and if you even mentioned some of the other problems that this brought to the community... (#7, 6/14/03).

EPA Community Involvement Coordinator Wendy Thomi explained her frustration over this dissensus on the CAG and, in her opinion, the reluctance of many initial members representing business interests to honestly address the group.

Well they didn't bring it out because they felt like they would be ostracized or they would be looked at only caring about business as usual in Libby, and not caring about the victims. And you know my response to that is, 'so say that, just say it!'... And you know that's what I always just encouraged them to speak up, speak out, tell it like it is, um you know tell people that you care about their problems, its not that, but you need to also look after another part of the

community, the economic side of the community. Um but it was too gentle for people, they really felt like they would be blacklisted, they would be looked upon as being harsh. Didn't want the conflict, didn't want the confrontation, didn't want to be yelled at, it was easier to stay quiet and drop off the board (Thomi, 9/11/03).

Reason to Quit #2: Small Town Business Pressure

Some say that the pressures of operating a business in a small town are not conducive to actively speaking out publicly.

And I think that part of it is just the nature of a small town. People feel like they'll get on a black list, people will be vindictive, they'll never frequent my business anymore, my business will get black listed. Those kinds of issues that you wouldn't find in a larger city, but could really mean a lot to people in a small town (Thomi, 9/11/03).

...and you will find this I would say in most I would believe, most rural communities... whether it's a community advisory group or your school board. But the smaller the community, the less likely that people are going to speak up during the formal presentation when the press is there. Because it's going to make the press, and in most rural communities you need the entire market to support your businesses or you're going to go broke. And so you don't want to be at public meetings speaking out because they will black ball your business and it can make the difference of whether you make it in your business or not. Because people do not live, they do not compartmentalize their life and say 'this issue really doesn't have anything to do with where I shop. We're just having a discussion.' That's just totally unrealistic. They take that issue, and if you said something that they don't like, they won't walk into your restaurant, your bowling alley, or your hotel, or your clothing store. And that's why you don't hear very much process going on around that formal table (#4, 9/11/03).

Reason to Quit #3: The Group is Too Emotional and Unorganized

Other members suggest that individuals quit participating on the CAG because the group's approach to solving problems and discussing issues was too emotional and unorganized.

So it was perceived because of the, you know some of the activities of the CAG were so ah offensive to some of these people that they never joined it and so ah and maybe some of them would have stayed. I've heard that some would have stayed, would have kept going if it started moving in a more organized approach to solving community problems (#10, 8/14/03).

Ah we tried to engage the business community in a lot of ways into that setting, because we represented that third goal area um and the structure, format, and process is such that for a lot of people that are having to be very concerned about

their work and their businesses and making a living they don't orient to spending two or three hours in a meeting 'spinning wheels' quote unquote (#11, 8/14/03).

After the Split

After the majority of the business representatives on the CAG quit coming, over time the EPA would meet on occasion with members of the business community individually. Ms. Thomi acknowledges that there were only a few of these meetings and most interactions between this part of the community and agency occur on a one-on-one basis. When asked about the individual meetings the EPA has held with members of the business community, Ms. Thomi emphasized her desire for a dialogue to exist between the two groups.

And if they'd like to continue meeting, we'd meet with them even though personally I feel its much more beneficial for them to join in this CAG, rather than meet with the group separately... the two sides talk to each other and understand their different points of view, I feel like the community has a better chance of getting together on issues and moving forward (Thomi, 9/11/03).

Being able to fully come together to discuss issues and move forward is something that remains to be seen in Libby.

Stigma: The Third Component of Dissensus

Edelstein and others often refer to stigmatization in the discussions of contaminated communities. This stigmatization can occur at many levels and from many different perspectives. Outsiders can stigmatize the town, and the victims can be stigmatized within their own community. Edelstein states that,

Stigma always involves a victim identified by an observer as marked (deviant, flawed, limited, spoiled, or generally undesirable). When the mark is noticed, it changes in a negative and discrediting way how the observer sees the victim, whose identity is now spoiled (Edelstein, 1988).

This definition of stigma does not necessarily have to be, though often is, referring to victims of contamination. The definition can be applied broadly to say that a group of people, for

whatever reason, becomes viewed by another group of people negatively. Based on my conversations with CAG members, I would say that a lack of understanding and acceptance of the two groups from the initial polarization still exists today. Thus, I think that stigma acts as a third component of dissensus in the Libby community.

It is impossible to expect that all the interests in a community will agree or look at each other favorably. However, in my effort to explore the dynamics within the CAG and between the CAG and the larger community, it is clear to me that a level of stigmatization has occurred on both sides of the rift. The allegations of 'you don't care' and 'all you care about is money' demonstrate how the business community has felt stigmatized throughout this experience. The reluctance to speak out in front of the group for fear of the backlash to a family business is an illustration of the effects of stigmatization. However, there is evidence that stigmatization of asbestos victims exists as well.

A Victims' Group

Through some of the interviewees' accounts, we have heard that the CAG has consistently remained a forum for those affected by the disaster to gather; whether that is to discuss the issues, get information, or vent their emotional frustrations. Moreover, as the business community fell away from the CAG, asbestos victims filled in the vacant seats at the table. Other comments describe how many view the CAG, in audience and member participation, as a group of victims who have been directly affected by the asbestos disaster.

You know, from even just people that don't have it (ARD), people of the community rather not get involved. And I guess as you know, there is quite a stigma in the fact that it's here, people that are trying to do something about it, have gotten a lot of negative response from the people in town, and, ah, I don't know... Either, even right from the start there never seemed to be a lot of people, audience participation, coming. It was always just pretty much the same people (#1, 6/14/03).

...I thought the whole group and whole process was extremely one-sided. Being kind of driving and pushed, and whatever, by victims, or people that you know, were more directly involved (#7, 6/14/03).

I think the people that formed the CAG itself are a pretty good representation of the community. And then the audience is usually filled with people that are directly affected by asbestosis or somebody in their family, and that's why they're there. I think that some of the CAG members never said a word, at meetings (#19, 8/15/03).

Wendy Thomi is adamant about the range of perspectives that have been present at the CAG over time, and she refuses to immediately put individuals in one camp or another. Yet at the same time she concedes that the business representation remains absent from the group.

I mean everybody's different; everybody brings something different to the table on the CAG. There are victims you know, who think one way and there are victims who think another way. They are both victims, they're both sick. There are people who aren't sick and one of them may want EPA to fold up their tent and go away, and the other may completely relate to the victims and think something ought to be done and wants to hang in there and make sure the community is being cared for. We still have most of the representation on there that we started with the exception of the business people (Thomi, 9/11/03).

Many argue that this inability to separate from the emotional context of the issues to create a step-by-step approach towards solving problems has been a constant source of frustration.

The sense of why was we heard, 'It's like a support group. People just come here to vent. It's too emotional. People are too focused in this CAG on whining and complaining and being angry about what happened in the past, and how they are victims, and how the whole town of Libby is a victim. And its all negative, rather than putting the energy into positive, progressive, let's move forward, let's get it taken care of, cleaned up, done.' That was a huge issue (Thomi, 9/11/03).

I have noticed over the three or four years the audience has, is boiled down to it's the same folks now that come there. But they're the ones that want to create a debate if you will; as opposed to logically reviewing the issues. And with intelligence and everything saying we gotta get through this and step to the other side as to what can be done positive here and in a fashion correct the problem. There's a few of us in there that feel that. And we don't speak up very often because we sit there and let the emotion go by... (#8, 6/13/03).

As the CAG has become perceived more and more as a 'victims group' and a forum catering only to those directly affected, the group has become more isolated within the

community. However, as the CAG has become increasingly isolated there has been corresponding fracturing within the group as additional groups have formed to address aspects of the CAG original goals concerning the cleanup, health care, and economic revitalization.

Many Groups, Many Goals

Evidence of dissensus can be seen both inside and outside the CAG. Interviewees that spoke about personal agendas seem to connect this idea to self-interest, greed, and the failure to work for the good of the entire community. Many of these comments are confusing to me as I struggle with the idea of 'community good.' What exactly does 'community good' mean, and more importantly who gets to decide or define 'community good' for the rest of the people?

It has become, in my opinion, it [the CAG] has become more and more narrowly focused to individual agenda, as opposed to community wide agenda and that's about all I can say about that (#11, 8/14/03).

You know its been a diverse group, ah I think if nothing else I think everybody's had to work with some very unique personalities. We probably seen some things that we probably wished we hadn't seen. I think the one that bothers me the most has been the greed issues. The 'me, me, me issues'. Not necessarily what is workable or what is the best avenue for the good of the whole, but you know the 'me, me, me'. (#13, 7/11/03).

No they are special interest. Totally special interest, I think. I think that is the biggest thing we've got is the ones that are on there now are strictly special interest... and you know they are not interested in the whole community (#6, 6/15/03).

I think there's too many groups with individual view points that are so stuck on those views that we can't get them to look at the bigger picture... CAG is a similar way, in that even though everybody has their own views, we're still looking for the total community good, not just for one thing (#22, 7/12/03).

The idea of agendas and self-interest is further confirmation that dissensus continues to permeate the CAG and those active in their attempts to solve problems related to the asbestos contamination. One member very directly states that this narrowing of opinions on the CAG is pushing the group out of relevance.

To be very black and white about a gray thing, we started with the CAG so that members outside of the CAG, community members, wondered what it was about, skeptical, moving to seeing some things come out of there that were broader theme based, as opposed to individual specific based. So there was support for that. Recognition that this was a group of people that maybe were advocating for good things to happen, in a lot of ways along those four goal areas that I talked about. To a point now, again being black and white in our shades of gray, that it's a waste of time. It's single focused, there's only one point of view on one thing there, and we don't even know why it's around anymore (#11, 8/14/03).

According to some of these members' comments, as the CAG has become more single issue focused the real work of the CAG has been moved out of that forum and into new groups that have emerged. The development of additional groups like the Libby Area Technical Assistance Group (LATAG), the Healthy Communities Initiative (HCI), and the ARD Network have emerged including members within or outside the CAG to work on various components of the group's original goals.

While I have stated many times that the goals of the group are extremely complex and challenging, there appears to be an inherent trade off as the work is moving out of the CAG and into smaller working groups. As multiple groups develop and address aspects of the CAG's original goals, there is the opportunity for more focused and directed work to be done. However, I also think that as the work begins to shift into smaller working groups the CAG begins to lose relevance in the eyes of those working on the problems. It is my view that if those active in the community do not view the CAG as a worthwhile forum it will cease to exist. Moreover, if the CAG disappears, the established, open, and public forum for discussing asbestos related issues will disappear as well.

Libby Area Technical Assistance Group

The LATAG has taken on the role of working specifically on monitoring the clean up work by the EPA. In August 2002, the group received an EPA grant specifically for the development of a TAG. This group aims to more closely monitor the clean up activities of the

agency and report back to the community. The group has also incorporated and obtained non-profit 501c3 status. The grant funding allows for the group to hire an outside consultant to act as the group's technical advisor. The stated mission of the Libby Area TAG is to, "Achieve satisfactory superfund site remedial action through community involvement and participation as provided for in all phases of the EPA (NPL) cleanup process" (LATAG, 2003b).

Since the LATAG's inception it has been an aggressive in its attempt to question the work plans of the EPA. In July 2003, the LATAG asserted itself and staked its claim by issuing the EPA a 'white paper'. The 'white paper' is an organized and very specific list of questions and concerns the LATAG has regarding the work of the EPA (LATAG, 2003a). The paper also contains recommendations and requests for further information and documentation of agency rationale for site based decision-making. I think that many people are impressed by the work the LATAG has done so far, and welcomes their attention to the fine scientific details associated with the cleanup.

...we're the only ones who have the resources to go out and say OK let's, let's get somebody else's opinion on this. This is what EPA is telling us, but lets go out to somebody else who's worked with this, with this contaminant and get their feeling about how this process should be working. And then let's all get back around the table, identify the problem, identify the solution, and most importantly put the process in to place that is followed by every single person involved, down to the letter... And I think that's where we're getting in trouble. We're not following the work plan (#13, 7/11/03).

The TAG is a bright light. Ah now whether they may be somewhat squashed politically because they are being somewhat aggressive, straight forward right now, but I don't see this group as doing anything but calling a spade a spade. I think we'll try to do it politely but things aren't going as well as it should. There's some things the EPA and these contractors, clean up contractors, should be embarrassed over right now. Both technically and operating protocols, procedures, et cetera. [The TAG] kind of slapped their hand, but a little more time will tell (#12, 8/16/03).

Many of the CAG members are also active with the LATAG. Moreover, some of the leaders of the LATAG are very diligent about reporting back to the public forum of the CAG with respect to the latest developments and work of the LATAG. In addition, they have consistently

encouraged the public to attend their meetings or join the group to work on cleanup related projects.

It is important to remember that the agency is under no obligation to act on any of the LATAG's recommendations or requests. The LATAG, like the CAG, is solely an advisory group with no real decision-making power. Similar to the CAG, in order for changes to be made in the agency's work plans the group must find ways to leverage power and influence.

Healthy Communities Initiative

With the decline of the timber industry in Libby and the corresponding economic stresses associated with asbestos contamination, a group emerged called the Healthy Forests/Healthy Communities Coalition. In August 2002, a representative from this group addressed the CAG about the group's intent to secure a long-term timber source for the Stimson mill. The group suggested that perhaps a portion of the proceeds from the sales could be dedicated to Libby's long-term health care needs (US EPA, August, 8, 2002).

Over time, the group changed its name slightly to the Healthy Communities Initiative (HCI). The mission of the HCI states that the group "intends to provide healthy economic, social, and environmental systems while enhancing future generations' ability to do the same" (Healthy Communities Initiative website, Accessed November 12, 2003). This group boasts a strong community wide representation, an organized approach to discussing and solving problems, and an emphasis on positive projects for the community. There are a few members of the CAG who are also members of the HCI. The group appears to be made up individuals from the business and political circles in the community. "The most active and influential people who have traditionally been the most active and influential... tend to be more on the HCI board" (Thomi, 9/11/03).

The goal of economic revitalization was never really addressed by the CAG. I think that this is due to the prioritizing of interests by those on the CAG that determines what the group will

work on. As the business community left the CAG, the economic revitalization interests left the group as well. Therefore, the group focused entirely on clean up and health care issues. The interest and discussion of economic revitalization issues has thus shifted entirely to the HCI forum. EPA officials now attend HCI meetings as a part of their community involvement strategy (US EPA, September 11, 2003).

You are aware of our Healthy Communities Initiative?... That is a broad based community represented organization, um and the EPA person in charge came to that meeting this morning um to get some other feedback, some other input (#11, 8/14/03).

You know they really are doing things. And so that's our interaction with the business community, that's who I look at as sort of the 'business-y' group of people now" (Thomi, 9/11/03).

The development of the HCI and the resource the group provides for the EPA seems to have further isolated the CAG. At the September 11, 2003 CAG meeting the EPA site manager, Jim Christiansen, announced the formation of an Operations and Maintenance (O&M) task force to begin addressing the long term monitoring and maintenance that will be required in Libby once the EPA has completed the cleanup. He stated that,

At a meeting of the Healthy Communities Initiative, they offered their services. And I asked them would it be a good idea for you guys to start in forming that group for me and they said that would be great, they would be interested in that. So that's kind of the direction we're taking right now. I think that's good because Healthy Communities pulls in some parties that are not part of this group necessarily, or the environmental response per se. But they are very involved with the health of Libby and the future both economically and otherwise. And the group that we have, it is important to have a good cross section business, government, folks that are affected by it, real estate, all those folks (US EPA, Audio recording of CAG Meeting September 11, 2003).

Although there will most likely be members of the CAG on the O&M group, I think that this decision to form the new group from the HCI further isolates the CAG. This decision further delegitimizes this group as a representative voice of the community or group to work on long-term solutions for the Libby community with respect to issues associated with asbestos contamination.

ARD Network

The ARD Network is a group made up of primarily health care providers and representatives from various health care service programs in the community. The group meets to discuss and address health care related issues. I attended an ARD Network meeting in August 2003. At that meeting the group addressed various local health care issues associated with the insurance funding sources and programs to supplement the Grace plan. At the September 11, 2003 CAG meeting the ARD Network announced the creation of the Libby Asbestos Medical Plan (LAMP) that will supplement expenses for those who qualify for the Grace plan when the plan does not cover a patient's complete bill (US EPA, September 11, 2003).

The ARD Network, like the TAG and HCI, is truly a working group. Likewise, the issues related to health care for those affected are complex and require multiple meetings to bring all of the providers up to speed on the latest developments. It appears that the ARD Network can provide a forum for this specialized discussion, while the CAG cannot. I think that as the CAG spent more and more time discussing the public health emergency declaration, there was little room for the pressing day-to-day local health care issues. Thus, this discussion moved from the CAG and into the smaller working group of the ARD Network.

The Result of Division?

It is uncertain where this separation and creation of groups leaves the CAG. The interviewees and I spent a lot of time discussing what they see as the divisions between those individuals actively working on asbestos related problems.

... we just need the total voice of the community so that when the CAG speaks it would be, it would be a reflection of that (#22, 7/12/03).

Quite frankly that is a big problem community wide, I think in Libby. There is a lot of people pulling in different directions where you know, I think some more positive things would happen if people would learn to communicate and you know function as a whole instead of a bunch of fractured little splinter groups... I always thought the thing to do here was, and I never did know how to accomplish it, was to get every group from all facets of the community into one gymnasium

or somewhere and lock the door behind them, and tell them we are not leaving until you come up with a plan and we triage everything and then prioritize it and then we accomplish them one at a time, and you are going to have to accept this when we leave the room, if you are 10th on the list, you have to wait until we get down there, and you know, or whatever. And if you are first on the list and we get done with yours, and you are not done, you help us do all the rest. But, I don't know how you would ever do that. That is something that really needs to happen. And the CAG, I think some of that needs to happen there too... There is all these boards for all these things, but they are not necessarily communicating (#7, 6/14/03).

We've got all these little groups out here that have come about in the last three and a half years, the public forum where people feel that they have an opportunity to say something in regard to these issues is that CAG meeting (#17, 8/15/03).

I mean they have leaders but they still seem like they just have so many different little groups that often seem to be working, if not at odds with each other, at least not coordinating and cooperating as much as they could to really strengthen a whole effort. You know it seems like there are lots of people out there looking to grab a little slice of the pie and do their thing (Thomi, 9/11/03).

The CAG remains the longest running public forum for the discussion of asbestos related issues in Libby. However, whether or not all of the new groups will utilize the CAG forum to come together to not only inform each other on their progress, but also inform and involve the community with their work remains to be seen. Moreover, if the EPA does not view its own Community Advisory Group as a representation of the greater community and as a capable group to address long term monitoring and maintenance of the area, then the group's relevance and future purpose remains questionable.

Chapter 6: Challenges, Suggestions, and the Future of the CAG

Towards the end of each interview I asked the interviewees to describe what they see as the biggest challenges facing the CAG, and their vision of the future of the CAG. These questions fostered many suggestions for how the group could make changes to improve the CAG process including adopting a more task based approach to problem solving, directing more effort towards influencing legislators, and developing leadership positions within the group. The questions also prompted the discussion of ideas of what may become of the CAG such as a smaller group that is more focused on education instead of action projects.

This chapter gives voice to these remarks and aims to answer the fourth sub-question of this study: **how will the CAG need to change or evolve in order to accomplish their goals and solve problems?** Therefore, this chapter will focus on the interviewees' thoughts on the biggest challenges facing the CAG, their suggestions for improving the group, and their opinions on how the group might change in the future.

It may seem strange to present 'challenges the group is facing' as a subsection of the sixth chapter, when the previous five chapters are devoted to detailing the struggles and challenges the Libby community and CAG has faced for the past four years. However, this section offers the perspective of the interviewees on what they see as the biggest challenges currently facing the group, when asked directly. Remarks from the interviewees, in this section, highlight *their* interpretation of the challenges the group is facing.

The interviewees articulated challenges that are specific to a contaminated community, while others are general challenges to public participation. Challenges to a contaminated community shared by the respondents include exhaustion and frustration, a need to stay together, and continued issue based struggles focusing on health care and the cleanup. Challenges to

public participation mentioned by the interviewees include difficulty finding focus, renewing interest and hope with positive projects, and the need for leadership.

Challenges to a Contaminated Community

Edelstein states that, “groups become exhausted as they enter slow-moving and protracted stages of the incident during which continued mobilization becomes difficult to sustain” (Edelstein, 1988). This statement appears extremely poignant for the Libby CAG nearly four years after its inception. Several interviewees’ comments echo Edelstein’s observations of exhaustion, frustration, and stagnation that community groups often face.

It just seems like I think, sometimes you are going and nothing ever changes. You rehash and rehash, the same thing that has been going on, and I think why is because you don’t get no place. No matter how many letters you write no matter how many people you talk to. Nothing happens. It just seems like you can’t break that (#1, 6/14/03).

And unfortunately, you know, probably some things aren’t going to get done because people are just, they’re tired they’re worn out. We’ve been at this three years, its no different than little league and all these other organizations where you know its so cyclical that you get a real, you know, up and arranging eager beaver group and you know it lasts for four or five years and then it just kind of wanes until that next cycle of eager beavers comes in to play (#13, 7/11/03).

I don’t know, I think we have dwindled down. Ya know, I lose interest myself sometimes when you don’t feel like you’re accomplishing anything. You still have to keep in mind that there are little things that need to be done, and ah, if you’ve got something on your mind it is a good place to get it out there, where you can maybe get some help (#24, 6/15/03).

I asked one interviewee what they thought it would take for the CAG to reach its original goals. This members’ reply demonstrates the constant struggle to maintain energy and enthusiasm for goals that remain illusive.

I think that that all depends on how much stamina everyone on this CAG has, if they are willing to have their monthly meetings and keep battling and keep writing letters and keep arguing, keep questioning, and if they’re willing to do this for years and years and years and more then its conceivable that ultimately we would get more of what we want. I doubt that we will ever get what they say, what they said they were going to give us at the beginning. And I doubt that we

will get what we said we wanted at the beginning, which was the medical care and the removal of the vermiculite (#16, 7/11/03).

Another CAG member vehemently expressed the importance of maintaining vigilance and keeping the issues on the forefront.

The biggest challenges facing the CAG are the same challenges we had on day one. Try to keep this from being swept under the rug, which believe it or not I think it could still happen. If the people lost interest, got so damn tired that they couldn't do it anymore...I mean we're tired, you know? We're tired, but we don't quit easy, it ain't going to happen, we're not going to quit (#17, 8/15/03).

Need to Stay Together

Some members expressed the feeling that the CAG may have already served its purpose, while a few feel differently. One CAG member sees staying together as one the biggest challenge facing the group.

I think staying together, I think staying together and unifying right now is going to be the challenge. Just simply keeping the organization going. People are saying well the CAG has served its purpose, no, I don't think it has, I think we are into another level of the clean up and whatnot here in Libby and I think just hanging together (#6, 6/15/03).

While another member's comment suggests that staying together is not only something for the group, but also for the other groups in town, and for the community as a whole. Working through differences and speaking with a collective voice is also a great challenge.

In a small town like that, if you're going to have any clout, everybody has to pull together, everybody. You cannot let the perception out there divide it. And if it's a perception that it's a joke and you've got two or three factions calling the congressional delegation and they're getting two or three conflicting stories...all we're doing is sending a multitude of mixed messages and there is no power in that. You have to be cohesive, sit down and talk with each other, if you have differences you take them to bat and find out why you're (disagreeing) and work that out. And then when you come out you still present a unified front. They can't grasp that. They can't grasp the necessity of truly working together (#12, 8/16/03).

Issue Based Struggles

As the initial goals of the group remain unfulfilled, two interviewees spoke of specific issues that remain troublesome for them. One CAG member stated that the biggest challenge is the change in policy to keep vermiculite insulation in the walls of homes.

The insulation in the walls. I think it's the biggest issue... I think that, I almost think that they're accepting the fact that that's the way it's going to be. And I don't know what's a way around that... Well I don't know how you fight it. I don't know how you get around that. They've made the determination, that's what they are going to do and that's what they're going to do (#18, 8/16/03).

One member suggests that the only avenue left is for the CAG to push legislators to enact laws that will help solve the problems in Libby.

The only thing that the CAG can do at this point that I can tell is to lobby with the federal legislators, Congress, to get laws passed to give us the things that we want. That's the only thing I can see us being able to do now (#16, 7/11/03).

Challenges to Public Participation

Some interviewees had suggestions for how the CAG process could be changed or improved. One member suggests that the group needs to re-focus and perhaps be more selective as to who can serve on the CAG.

...the biggest challenge is probably focus. I think they need to find a focus, I think they also need to change the forum of the thing a bit, in that everybody new that comes a long that has some kinda of a malady or something and all the sudden become angry, wants to jump on the CAG to be mad at somebody to get their stuff taken care of. I think they need to be a little more selective maybe on who serves on the CAG and they just need to back up, sounds like maybe Gerald tried to do, revisit their goals, and get some kinda of a focus to decide exactly what they want to do. If they are going to be a dissemination group of information, or if they are going to try to effect some kind of change. I think it just needs more structure (#7, 6/14/03).

This member also suggests that perhaps the meetings could be structured around tasks, with less time spent 'going off on tangents'.

The CAG um... I think probably making the meetings more relevant rather than going off on the tangents that they do sometimes. Um making, making people feel that they come to a meeting that something is accomplished and its not just um tilting at windmills um I

don't know what else. I don't know that there's anything else that the CAG can really accomplish on its own (#20, 7/11/03).

Focus on Positive Projects

While the goals of the CAG remain largely unfulfilled and the group has entered what Edelstein describes as "slow-moving and protracted stages of the incident," a few members suggested their desire for the group to focus on positive local projects, where results could be readily seen and enjoyed by the community as a whole.

And basically that has been my mission with CAG was to pass on the things that could be taken and driven and evolved into something that is credible and something that's successful in the community. And as you well know there's a lot of things to discuss there, but lets do things that are positive (#8, 6/13/03).

...but I think they need to concentrate one heck of a lot more on the positives. I mean what can we do here, we have a group there that represents a lot of different people and yet we are sometimes in my view talking the negative... Whereas you still need to clean up, you still need to have community health, you really need some good positive things for the people to be able to enjoy. And if you don't work on those things and when it's all said and done and its all over, its just the same as it was (#22, 7/12/03).

Both members' comments highlight their view of the importance of positive projects for community morale. Moreover, accomplishing some small local projects would not only affect community morale, but the CAG's morale as well, perhaps renewing the exhausted spirit of many group members.

In order to make some of these changes at the CAG, the effort needs to be a concerted and decisive. Such an effort requires strong leadership. Leadership in general does not necessarily have to come from elected officials. Anyone can be a leader based on how they interact with their peers and their ability to inspire action in others. The Kaufman's observed in 1946 that the Libby community lacked strong leadership with vision. Arguably the same can be said of the Libby community today. While there are plenty of elected officials and individuals working on portions of the issues, there does not seem to be a unifying force from these folks to really inspire and draw the community together to act.

The Value of Leadership

Interviewees talked at length about the element of leadership within the community and the CAG. There is a sense that leadership is lacking in Libby and is something that could bolster the community's efforts to get what they need. While the company town mentality may still exist, the big corporations that provided leadership in Libby are gone.

The last resident corporations in Libby were W.R. Grace, which closed down the mine in 1990 and the Stimson lumber company, which ceased its mill operations in 2003. As the corporations have moved out and the EPA has moved in for the asbestos clean up, it has been suggested that the community has looked to the EPA for the leadership that the corporations used to provide. Not only that, one CAG member suggests that the scars left on the community by W.R. Grace and others have not phased some members of the community, who would welcome a new harmful or polluting industry back into the valley.

Now they were actually treating the EPA just like they would a corporation. You gotta help us. Cause this town has been corporate owned. I mean it's been taken care of. It ah, it always had a company or a corporation taking care of them. It has never been independent, never been on its own. And now they are desperately looking, if a corporation were to walk in here and put a nuclear plant in here, this town would embrace it. I am serious; they would embrace it because it is a company. And the company will take care of us. These people have lived in the valley too long, they are not, they always feel that they have to have that (#6, 6/15/03).

The lack of leadership in the community also has been observed at the CAG. Multiple interviewees suggest that improved leadership on the group could improve the group's ability to address and tackle the issues.

It's gotten to the point where the CAG just sits around and looks for leadership. Can't seem to select any or accept any. The facilitator in essence becomes the leader or if any strong group comes to present they seem to be the leader for the night. And that's kind of sad, but that's the legacy of a smokestack community (#12, 8/16/03).

...well the problem that occurred was the leadership of the CAG was allowed to be, nobody stepped up to take the leadership role of the CAG from the community... Um you know we just don't have a lot of folks that feel like they, I

guess they don't see how important that is, I guess. I don't know. To me its always been subservient too you know, it's the same old pattern you know somebody comes from out of town and takes a leadership role and there's no contention. I mean its like a company comes here and you know it dictates what your community needs as opposed to you dictating what your community needs. It's the same phenomenon, people are willing to sit back and actually let somebody else lead that may not necessarily be good for their community (#10, 8/14/03).

When I asked EPA Community Involvement Coordinator Wendy Thomi about leadership in Libby, she also mentioned the connection between leadership and the past.

I think on the 'why' here in Libby it could be the company town mentality, the people are used to being taken care of and they're not used to needing to rise to the top and lead others, but they are used to being led (Thomi, 9/11/03).

Furthermore, she also agrees that leadership is something that is needed in the community at various levels and not just at the CAG.

I just have kind of a visual in my head of like a mass of people and everyone is struggling to get on top, you know. And as one person gets on top, it steps on someone else's shoulders and pushes them down, and then person becomes struggling again, just like a mass of people. I know it's a strange visual. But nobody in the CAG rises up to me, as being you know, a strong leader... I've heard people, even leadership, you know county commissioners, mayors, talk about how Libby needs new leadership, Libby has a lack of leaders, um they need leadership training (Thomi, 9/11/03).

They have been unwilling to entertain the idea of having a chairperson, citing that having Gerald Mueller as the facilitator was good enough (US EPA, March 13, 2003). However, one interviewee did suggest that establishing leadership positions on the CAG from within the community could be a helpful change.

And maybe if there were a board of directors, not a board of directors, but three or four people who maybe would set the agenda each time or something. But we don't really have anything like officers or anything, and maybe that's a problem (#20, 7/11/03).

There needs to be more ownership of the process by the group members. Wendy Thomi says repeatedly that the CAG is not the EPA's group; it is the community's group. However, without active leadership within the group, the process functions more as a public meeting run by

the EPA than a community group that is directed from the members. The real value and inspiration that leadership from within the community could provide is unknown. *How to cultivate leadership from within the community is also a complex and difficult task. I think it would be beneficial for community members to address this idea of leadership and determine for themselves what the value of leadership could be for Libby.*

Future of the CAG

Um, that would be a really good question for us to talk about in the CAG. What is our focus, what is our purpose, what are our challenges now... um what is our new, you know, work agenda at this stage of the game... three plus years into the process. With everything that's gone on, where are we now? (#11, 8/14/03).

With everything that has gone on, where is the CAG now, and where are they going? At the end of every interview, I asked group members what they thought was going to happen to the CAG. I purposely left the question very open ended. As a result the interviewees had a variety of responses to this question: some had suggestions for how the group could change over time in the way of size or function, while others maintained that as long as there was an unresolved asbestos issue in Libby, the CAG would be there.

Shrink or Dissolve

Perhaps the CAG will look differently in the future. There seems to be two general ideas among the interviewees regarding the future of the group. First, that over time the CAG forum will inevitably shrink into a smaller group, or second that the group will dissolve soon and cease to meet.

I think it will eventually go down to a very small group, once more and more gets done and there's less for the CAG to do. I don't think it will disappear, but I think it will go down...reduce. It's already gone from two meetings a month to one meeting a month, where there's some arguments there both pro and con. But I think it will eventually, not die out, just reduce because there's not going to be that much more that they can do (#23, 7/13/03).

I think a smaller group could evolve out of it that would be more of a working group. They would deal with problems, find answers, put it in the paper, things like that or maybe four times year... I think so and maybe every other month have an open meeting for anybody that wanted to attend it and bring them up to date. Point one, point two, point three, point four, point five, point six, and present these things plus things that have happened and maybe things that we haven't been able to do anything on and go down the line. Does anybody have any suggestions? And that might be a more workable situation from the standpoint of the bigger your group the more cumbersome it gets (#19, 8/15/03).

Another member suggests that the forum could take on more of an educational function, reverting from an action group to more of a forum for information exchange.

Maybe it's an educational program. Maybe that's what the CAGs role will have to be. To be the sounding board for what's the best educational program now. Kind of like we're the sounding board for 'have we gotten close to an acceptable health care system that's going to work.' So I see it just as a venue for people communicating and a sounding board for the agencies when they are like going, 'what do we need to do next?' But as far as the power of it, its money. And we can shake money out to get a system F or a system A in place. Is it going to be a lousy system that they are going to leave behind or an A plus system? I think we'll cover all of the bases; it's just like how good will the systems be? (#4, 9/11/03).

Other members suggest that the group will eventually dissolve. One member suggests that the group will eventually cease, as much of the work towards the goals has been funneled into different working groups.

My personal opinion is I think that the CAG will probably go away in the next several months because the real key players in each on of those issues is already involved somewhere else, the technical people are moving over to the TAG and the people dealing with the health care issues are moving over into the health care subcommittee. So they're doing it... yeah I don't think that you'll see that setting because you know, basically what's happening is that those people are working over here and once a month you know we're all coming together and sharing what's happening. If you went through the audience last night actually there were very, very few ah community persons there... So I, you know I think it will probably just melt away and you know these groups of people, you know TAG will keep going, they've got a big job ahead of them (#13, 7/11/03).

Another member states that without a renewed purpose and focus, the group will most certainly reduce and eventually disband.

It seems to me that if we don't have a purpose and a re-focus of that then the reason for the group to continue to exist becomes questionable. I suspect it will continue until EPA is complete with this project, which may be another three or five years. Um if meaning, purpose is not found in that group it will just continue to be kind of what it is I think, and will probably continue to be narrowing in focus, less participation, more withdrawal, more people doing things without any involvement from the CAG (#11, 8/14/03).

I think they're going to hang on as long as they can hang on, because ah they feel that its something important. And it has its place. So I can't see them really stopping meeting until the clean up is finished which is like two years, two and a half years from now, so that's quite a long time. But I guess I might see it as getting less and less important because fewer and fewer people will come um because they won't have all that much purpose anymore (#20, 7/11/03).

'As Long as There's an Issue'

Whether or not the group will change its size or structure, many interviewees expressed the feeling that the CAG will continue to meet as long as there are asbestos related issues and problems in Libby. Many connect the CAG's work to that of the EPA, such that the completion of the clean up and the exit of the EPA from town will be the end of the CAG.

How far will it go into the future you know and I've wondered that you know, when will it use up its usefulness and not be necessary. And I guess that's when EPA is gone. I guess it's going to be here as long as EPA is here. So as long as there's an issue (#18, 8/16/03).

EPA Community Involvement Coordinator, Wendy Thomi lays out the uncertainty of the CAG's future and the reality that it will be up to the group to how long they would like to continue meeting.

Is that CAG going to continue to meet, or are they going to say 'ok EPA's left town, let's stop meeting?' Or sometime between now and the time EPA leaves are they going to say, 'I think we've fulfilled our mission' or are they going to say, 'I don't think we need to meet anymore, its not really useful anymore.' Or are they going to say, 'I think we've talked about things enough.' You know, I really and truly don't know. I mean they cut back from two meetings a month to one... Um but you know will they decide to cut back to quarterly? I doubt it; I think they would think we might as well just quit. Um will they ever increase to twice a month again? I doubt it. I think they've passed that passionate point, you know? But I certainly don't see them quitting any time soon. I think there are a lot of people that really want to go to those meetings (Thomi, 9/11/03).

Another member's opinion on the future of the group seems directly tied to the group's goals of clean up and health care, thus until those goals are achieved there will be a need and purpose for the CAG.

When the town is clean and the medical care is here and the research center is here. Probably then we won't need the CAG anymore (#9, 6/13/03).

These last few comments, I feel, really demonstrate how difficult the work of the CAG has been and the level of frustration and uncertainty about the future that remains for many group members.

Somewhere down the line. You can only beat your head against a wall so long till it gets to hurtin too bad, as someone used to say. I ah, it ain't gonna be right soon but I think that there's a day will come... that's just my personal feeling (#15, 7/12/03).

I think its just going to go along and along until, like we'll keep having the meetings because we still keep trying to do more for the medical. Ah and that type of stuff. But still I don't know where it's going to go, I don't know where it's going to end. I don't think there's an ending, really. But where do you go? (#1, 6/14/03).

The last two sentences of this comment, spoken out of pure frustration, are more profound than I imagine the interviewee intended them to be. Is there an ending for the CAG? Is there an ending for the Libby community with respect to tremolite asbestos contamination? What can the CAG's experience teach us? Where should we, those witness to the asbestos disaster in Libby, go from here?

Chapter 7: Questions Answered and Lessons Learned

As I reach the end of my analysis and writing, I have been asking myself the same question posed by an interviewee in the last chapter, ‘where do you go from here?’ For me, the next logical step would be to present an evaluation of effectiveness of the CAG based on my criteria to answer my overarching research question: **to what extent does the Libby Community Advisory Group serve as an effective forum for bringing entities together to discuss and work towards achieving their state goals?**

However, as I reflect on my criteria for effectiveness it seems that more questions are raised than answered. I struggle with how valuable such an evaluation would be for the group members. A group could meet all aspects of the criteria of effectiveness, yet still fail to achieve what the community needs through the process. To me, this renders such an evaluation significantly incomplete. It is very useful to see that meeting all the criteria does not mean that the group will be “successful.” The answer to the overarching research question of this study is not merely the sum of these parts. Something is missing from such a simple checklist of criteria. Consistent with everything I have learned in Libby, there is more to the story.

To conclude this thesis I ask myself not only “where do you go from here?” but also “what can I offer that will be helpful to the Libby CAG and other groups responding to a disaster such as this?” Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will offer my personal opinions and reflections on the four sub-questions of the study and that will hopefully raise ideas and elicit thoughtful discussion on how the CAG could more effectively help the community get what it needs.

Sub-Question #1: How do CAG members articulate the goals of the group and their role in it, and to what extent do they agree or disagree on these issues?

The interviewees share a general understanding of why the CAG formed and has continued: after the story broke, the community needed a place to come together and find solutions to the problems. Over the past four years the CAG has served both of these goals. However, the complexities of the issues and the response of the community pose challenges to both of these goals.

The need for a thorough cleanup of contamination and a long-term health care solution for those who have been affected remain the paramount reasons why the CAG formed, and as shown in Chapters 5 and 6, they continue to struggle with these issues. However, there is a distinct difference between what the group is striving for (their goals) and how the group has actually served the people. Information exchange, problem solving or action, and emotional expression are three clearly recognized functions the CAG has served for the community. However, the group members do not support the presence of the three functions at the CAG equally.

The opportunity for information exchange about site-related issues between the agencies and the community is a well-supported function of the CAG, while the interviewees seem to be less accepting of the action component and the level of emotional expression. Especially since the Superfund listing at the end of 2001, I think that the CAG has been less effective in its action and advocacy on behalf of the community than it could be. I think that the overall lack of action taken by the CAG is the result of an underlying lack of trust among some members of the CAG. There are probably several contributing factors to this lack of trust. While some factors may be due to personality conflicts and historical disputes, others may be due to the psychosocial response to the disaster itself. As described in Chapter 1, a 'non-therapeutic community' often develops in response to a slow-motion technological disaster. The development of a 'non-therapeutic community' is characterized by a tendency for distrust and dissensus as opposed to a

more supportive coming together by members of the community. Whatever the causes for this lack of trust, it seems obvious to me that it has held the CAG back from more effectively advocating on behalf of the community and using the power that it had.

Another example of the lack of action at the CAG is the formation of alternative work groups like the TAG, HCI, and ARD Network as shown in Chapter 5. The TAG has taken on the community advisory role to the agency on the cleanup, the ARD Network and specific health care players are working on piecing together a sustainable local health care program, while the HCI and others are working on economic revitalization issues and projects. As the additional groups have taken on more focused and task driven work, there is uncertainty now over the current and future purpose of the CAG. Some suggest that the group may be losing its relevance and may eventually serve solely as a public meeting. In my view, the CAG remains a relevant entity for the community. Even after four years there remains a great need for public forum for people to come together to discuss these issues.

For many of the people who embraced the CAG forum, it has also served a therapeutic function. However, over time some members of the group are less accepting of this use of the CAG forum. The CAG has been criticized for being too emotional, driven by individual agendas, and lacking a clear focus. Some suggest that the emotional expression is getting in the way of more productive problem solving work. However, even though four years have passed since the story broke, anger and frustration are still entirely appropriate responses, as each month seems to bring new challenges to achieving a thorough cleanup and long-term health care solution. Moreover, it is precisely this passion and emotion that keeps people mobilized. Suggesting that the CAG is not the place for the expression of these feelings, may only serve to silence voices in the community.

Sub-Question #2: To what extent has the CAG been successful working with the agencies to achieve their goals?

The cleanup work in Libby has progressed much faster than in other contaminated communities, but in some ways the community is largely in the same position that it was when the story broke in 1999. The work of the CAG to secure the Superfund designation, and pressure on the EPA to remove vermiculite insulation in residential properties were key steps towards achieving a thorough cleanup. The good relations and communication between the CAG, other community members, and the local EPA staff has contributed to the success of these steps.

However, while interviewees generally agree that the on-site EPA representatives have been responsive and helpful, there is a strong sense that ‘the caring stops’ at higher levels where the difficult decisions are made. Some members feel that the EPA has changed its tune since the change of administration, from full residential cleanup to controlled release and containment. Some cite the decision to leave contaminated vermiculite insulation in walls of homes as an example of this change.

It is curious to me that although Libby is continually referred to as the ‘nation’s number one priority site’, Libby’s on-scene coordinator is unable to receive his requested cleanup budget for 2004. The less money allocated for the cleanup, the fewer houses the EPA will be able to clean during the cleanup season. Thus, many families continue to wait for the promised cleanup of their contaminated homes. It seems clear to me that either Libby is not as high a priority as espoused, or that the EPA is not a high priority of the federal government.

As for health care, the CAG tried unsuccessfully to invoke the public health emergency clause in CERCLA, as explained in Chapter 4. Many interviewees feel that the agencies passed the issue around like a hot potato, with none claiming it as their responsibility. For some interviewees, the argument by the agencies that no precedent for such a declaration existed does not seem to be an adequate excuse for not making the declaration. In my opinion it is a horrendous excuse. No matter how unprecedented such a declaration would be for the federal

government, the fact remains that a public health emergency exists in Libby, Montana. Hundreds of people have died from their exposure, are suffering from ARD, and are currently living with remaining exposure pathways to a known toxic fiber. If the situation in Libby does not qualify as a public health emergency, I do not know what would. Moreover, it seems clear to me that the intent of the legislation was precisely to provide care for individuals in just such a situation.

Even though the White House Office of Management and Budget blocked the declaration, some on the CAG have continued its pursuit while others have resigned to accept that the declaration will never happen. This split has caused some problems at the CAG. I think the continued pursuit of the public health emergency declaration has frustrated some individuals and monopolized the CAG's discussion of ways to solve the health care problems. Despite many group members' reluctance to continue striving for the public health emergency declaration, I do think that it is important that they recognize that achieving a long-term health care program requires more than just local solutions. Thus, I think it is imperative for the CAG and community to mobilize and more aggressively pursue such a solution. In doing so, the CAG and community need to find creative ways to leverage their existing power and garner new sources of power.

Sub-Question #3: How well does the CAG represent all relevant entities working toward the four goals?

When the group formed, representatives from all aspects of the community were included. However, initial dissensus, varying priorities, and different interests in the community made working together in one place virtually impossible. Over time representatives from certain interests, namely the business community, dropped off the CAG. While there is a good mix of people on the group, many of the vacant seats were filled by asbestos victims. Consequently, some interviewees suggest that the group has become a 'victims' group', a label with a decisively negative ring to it.

This stigmatization of the victims is an interesting and painful similarity Libby shares with other contaminated communities. It is hard for an outsider to understand how community members can continually 'blame the victim' for many of the town's economic woes, when clearly the real blame belongs with the corporations who decided to continue poisoning the town for their own profit margins. Since the corporation is long gone, those left to blame are the one's who 'caused all the trouble'.

I think that the classification of the CAG as a 'victims' group' de-legitimizes the group. The EPA itself seems to view the CAG more as a place for venting and complaining as opposed to a place to get things done. This is illustrated by the agency looking to the HCI for leadership in forming the Operations and Maintenance group to look at long-term remediation issues after the federal agency is gone. Why wasn't the CAG given the leadership position in the formation of that group? If the EPA does not even view its own public forum as a legitimate group, why should anyone else in the community?

The presence of a 'victims' group' in a contaminated community does not have to be a negative thing. The mobilization of victims can be a powerful force in getting what the community needs. Arguably, it is only from the voices and pleas of victims that other contaminated communities have ultimately been granted the funds and programs to regain a clean and healthful environment to live in. Who else but those who have been directly affected by a disaster would be more effective spokespeople? Strategically, it is in the Libby community's best interest to mobilize and leverage the power that the victims of this disaster can provide.

Sub-Question #4: How will the CAG need to change or evolve in order to realize their goals?

While there may be some uncertainty about the current and future role of the CAG, there is still a need for the group. There is a tremendous turnout from the community at the meetings each month. People still crave the information and discussion of the issues that the CAG offers. Furthermore, the CAG continues to serve a mental health function for those who utilize this

forum for emotional expression and release. However, as an advisory group with political power, the CAG has failed in many ways. And the real question is *why* have they failed? If they have been ineffective, what does the group need to become effective?

While the group was influential in gaining the Superfund designation, they were unsuccessful at achieving the public health emergency declaration. It may not be that the CAG is truly “powerless”, but more that the group is up against some very powerful government officials. The group needs to find ways to leverage the power that they do have against these powerful forces, or find alternative means to gain power, such as legal representation. Legal representation could have been a way for the community to leverage power regarding the public health emergency declaration.

If the CAG wishes to rekindle some of the power it once had and garner new sources of power, some changes are needed. The CAG could be a place for all of the various groups to come together to discuss issues and involve the public on the progress of their projects. However, the CAG has not yet become that place. Representatives from all of the groups do not consistently attend or utilize the forum for that purpose. The cooperation of the many groups working in Libby is also tantamount to achieving their goals. It seems to me that if all the groups are not working somewhat collectively and speaking with one voice, then they will have less and less success at getting what they need. However, it should not solely be the job of the CAG to bring all aspects of the community together. It is the responsibility of the entire community to recognize that fracturing and dividing power and influence among each other is not in the best interests of the entire community.

Where Do We Go From Here?

But I think that part of it is; so used to being a company town, um and now I think they are caught between kind of trying to grab a slice of the pie and do something good. Trying to lead because there's this idea of 'we don't want to be a company town anymore', people come right out and say it, you know 'we've got to try new things' (Thomi, 9/11/03).

Over my time in Libby I have heard, on more than one occasion, that if the mine opened tomorrow that there would be a line of people willing to work there. I am more than curious as to why people would say these things, considering the extent of the illness and death that is the mine's legacy. It is undeniable that the traditional economic base in Libby has all but vanished over the past fifteen years or so. However, what does this sentiment say about the community's response to the realization of the asbestos disaster.

While the traditional extractive industries that built Libby are dwindling, there is a shift occurring. New people are moving into the area. Retirees looking for a comfortable mountain town are descending on Libby and south Lincoln County. There is a swelling amongst the ranks of those active in the community who wish to shed the lingering company town mentality and move forward into the future with vision. However, an element of divisiveness remains even among those groups working to solve the problems in Libby,

But I also hear people openly talk about, I see people doing some creative things too. I mentioned all of these different little organizations and stuff, um and with a lot of them people are sort of trying to grab a piece of the pie and run with it, and do something good for the community, trying to be leaders (Thomi, 9/11/03).

It would seem that the problems of leadership, widespread participation, and cooperative vision identified in 1946 by the Kaufman's continue to echo in the Kootenai valley. I think that the Libby CAG and those active in solving the problems due to asbestos contamination are at a crossroads. The community is in a transition from a company town to an independent community. If the community is to get what it needs, those interested in achieving those goals must speak collectively with one voice. This voice will only be heard when all the groups in

town realize that, despite their different interests, they all have the common interest of a clean and healthy community. As one CAG member said,

You know, you and I both know you'll never get everybody on the train, its not going to happen. And in fact, you're always going to have few who are gonna keep trying to slow the train down. But you just have to, you know keep going. You just have to keep pursuing... (#13, 7/11/03).

It is not just a question of 'where do we go from here' but also why is it so important that we do. The answer to that question is simple, with at least 1200 homes waiting for cleanup and hundreds of people diagnosed with lung abnormalities and asbestos-related disease, it is too grave a situation not to find a solution and help for those suffering as quickly as possible. Moreover, it is in the best interests of everyone in the community to fight for the cleanup and the health care solution.

I do not believe that Libby should strive to shed its past or speak quietly of the asbestos disaster. The disaster that has occurred in Libby is a part of the town's past and also its collective future. It is important for those working hard at developing Libby's future to listen to their own words about the town's past struggles. It is my hope that the Libby community will find a way to utilize their collective past, listen to their fellow citizens, and move forward together to get what they need.

Interview Questions for Libby CAG Members

Individual Experience

How long have you been a member of the CAG?

How did you get involved with the CAG?

Goals/Action of the CAG

How would you describe the goals of the CAG?

How do you think the CAG has done on achieving its goals?

- **Cleanup issues?**
- **Long-term health care?**
- **Economic revitalization?**

(What have you done so far? What still needs to be done? What are the obstacles?)

Why did the CAG drop the goal of receiving victims' compensation?

Do you think that this was a good idea?

CAG/Agency Interaction

Do you think that the CAG is representative of the rest of the Libby community?

- **Are there any parts of the community that are missing from the CAG and its meetings?**
- **How does the rest of the community view the CAG?**

How well do you think that the CAG advises the agencies from the community's perspective?

How well do you think the agencies work with the CAG to actively address the community's concerns?

Thoughts on the Future of the Group

What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the CAG?

What do you think is going to happen to the CAG?

- **When do you think the CAG's job will be over?**

Is there something that I didn't ask that you think I should know?

**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON D.C. 20460**

APR 4 2003

THE ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable Max Baucus
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Baucus:

Thank you for your letter of February 3, 2003, regarding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) asbestos cleanup in Libby, Montana. I share your concern for the health of Libby residents, and continue to support the cleanup of the Libby site as a top priority.

I appreciate the opportunity to explain EPA's actions with respect to the question of whether to declare a public health emergency in Libby. Many press accounts have mischaracterized EPA'S position on this matter, as well as EPA's handling of broader public outreach on vermiculite attic insulation.

The Comprehensive Emergency Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) generally prohibits the removal of "product" from a residential structure as part of a removal action, but provides an exception where a health emergency exists. As we have previously discussed, EPA chose not to rely upon CERCLA's health emergency provision, in part, to minimize the possibility of removal work in Libby being delayed by possible legal challenges to this untested approach. Instead, EPA determined that it has the authority to remove the insulation in Libby based upon more traditional legal authorities because many of the homes contained insulation that was not inspected, packaged, labeled, warranted, regulated, or sold as a commercial "product".

The Agency's decision not to invoke CERCLA's health emergency provision to remove attic insulation in Libby has no relationship to how EPA communicates potential exposure risk of asbestos contaminated vermiculite attic insulation to the wider American public. EPA has not changed its long standing guidance to homeowners because we do not have the scientific basis to do so at this time. Until more is known, the best way to safely manage vermiculite attic insulation is to leave it undisturbed or, if necessary, retain the assistance of a professional for removal. To improve communication of EPA's guidance to a broader audience, EPA will make available to the public a consumer pamphlet that will provide the Agency's current guidance on how to address vermiculite attic insulation if it is found in the home. Because so much about the risks posed from asbestos-containing vermiculite attic insulation remains unknown, EPA will step up its efforts to research and investigate the potential health effects of asbestos-containing vermiculite products, including a multi-phase study to further evaluate the potential exposure risk from vermiculite attic insulation, so that we can provide more guidance to the public in the future.

Again, thank you for your letter. Please find enclosed detailed responses to your other questions. I appreciate your continued support for the cleanup activities in Libby. If you have any further questions regarding the cleanup or the Agencies activities to evaluate asbestos-contaminated vermiculite, please contact me, or your staff may contact Betsy Henry in the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at (202) 564-7222.

Sincerely yours,

Christine Todd Whitman

Enclosure

TITLE 42 - THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE

- CHAPTER 103 - COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSE, COMPENSATION, AND LIABILITY
 - SUBCHAPTER I - HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES RELEASES, LIABILITY, COMPENSATION
 - Sec. 9604. - Response authorities

(i) Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry; establishment, functions, etc.

(1)

There is hereby established within the Public Health Service an agency, to be known as the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, which shall report directly to the Surgeon General of the United States. The Administrator of said Agency shall, with the cooperation of the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, the Directors of the National Institute of Medicine, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Administrator of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Administrator of the Social Security Administration, the Secretary of Transportation, and appropriate State and local health officials, effectuate and implement the health related authorities of this chapter. In addition, said Administrator shall -

(A-C) Removed for this Appendix

(D)

in cases of public health emergencies caused or believed to be caused by exposure to toxic substances, provide medical care and testing to exposed individuals, including but not limited to tissue sampling, chromosomal testing where appropriate, epidemiological studies, or any other assistance appropriate under the circumstances; and

(E)

either independently or as part of other health status survey, conduct periodic survey and screening programs to determine relationships between exposure to toxic substances and illness. In cases of public health emergencies, exposed persons shall be eligible for admission to hospitals and other facilities and services operated or provided by the Public Health Service.

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