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A Cannon for Cooperation: A Review of the Interagency Cooperation Literature

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Abstract

This literature review encompasses a myriad of sources that offer a wide-ranging view of the subject of interagency cooperation. The review is thematic in nature and draws primarily on resources (i.e., books, academic databases, and EBooks & EJournals) available from multiple libraries. Interagency cooperation is an imperative part of the United States research and development (R & D) diffusion agenda, principally in the manufacturing sector. Nevertheless, the principles of realizing efficacious cooperative relationships are important. Thus, the review focuses on literature that can offer direction for policy stakeholders planning to establish, or re-evaluating governance oriented delivery structures. The components of this review include: a definition of interagency cooperation and essential elements of interagency cooperation-external (systematic and random) forces, shared problems, resources, and capacity building.

Keywords: Interagency Cooperation, Organizational Theory, Governance Theory, Public Administration, Diffusion of Innovation

1. Introduction

It is important to understand that interagency cooperative approaches are critical for the success of R&D diffusion programs, such as the National Institute for Standards and Technology-Manufacturing Extension Partnership program (NIST-MEP). Specifically, synergy in efforts by federal and state governments and various agencies prevents waste and enhances effectiveness. R & D policy cuts across education, science, technology, corporate, social, legal, defense, and foreign policy, among others. Thus, effective interagency cooperation is vital to successful policy implementation. To more effectively enhance the readers' understanding of interagency cooperation, a clear definition is provided in the following segment.

1.1 Interagency Cooperation

Although the literature on interagency cooperation is sparse, there is no deficiency of related terms and definitions, which include: inter-organizational relations, intergovernmental cooperation, intra-governmental cooperation, inter-sectoral cooperation, and inter-organizational coordination (Aiken, Dewar, DiTomaso, Hage & Zeitz, 1975; Rogers & Whetten, 1982; Gargan, 2000; Oliver, 1990).

For this review, Weiss's (1987) definition of interagency cooperation, as it most closely reflects the interagency cooperative process of a plethora of R & D diffusion initiatives, is used. Weiss says that interagency cooperation exists when two or more organizations that share a problem area agree to deal with the issue by establishing a link via a formal contract that provides for resources and for the adjusting of internal and/or external procedures to adequately support the new arrangements.

Even in well-designed political systems, the responsibilities of authorities will overlap, which means that a certain amount of cooperation must already exist (Hudson, Hardy, Henwood, & Wistow, 1995). Hence, development and implementation of public policy often requires multilateral cooperation that blurs or eliminates traditional boundaries or jurisdictions. However, diverging organizational goals and operational routines can make policy implementation difficult and, therefore, a more formal cooperation process is required. Interagency cooperation becomes necessary when a single agency cannot adequately address a policy objective, such as the eradication of poverty. Thus, stakeholders such as the local constituency, clients, street-level bureaucrats, industry managers, local senior public officials, and legislators (state and federal) must work together to achieve successful policy implementation.

1.1. 1 Mechanisms of Interagency Cooperation

Interagency cooperation becomes necessary when large and diverse organizations that represent government agencies must collaborate, coordinate and cooperate on a broad front to implement policy objectives presented by formal policy makers (Scharpf, 1978). A joint response must be presented to implement policy objectives in an optimal manner, decide what role will be played by collaborating agencies, what resources will be allocated by each agency, and what tasks will be performed. Clearly, federal agencies acting to implement

policy on a nationwide basis face a huge undertaking when designing cooperative initiatives.

In the discussion of the practical workings of interagency cooperation processes, the terms cooperation, collaboration, and coordination appear interchangeable. It is important to note, however, that policy implementation measures result in the identification of agencies that will collaborate (i.e., be willing to discuss issues collectively to find a solution). Additionally, it is assumed that an established network will employ a coordinating body or a coordinator that will ensure that the agencies involved interact cooperatively to implement policy.

2. Literature Review

2.1 An Overview of the Guiding Framework

The Janet Weiss (1987) "Process Model of Cooperation" is applied to this review to determine what factors promote enhanced interagency cooperation. That is to say, the review utilizes the four part Weiss (1987) model (external forces, shared problems, resources, and capacity) as a guide to highlight and identify the relevant literature and variables presumed to be essential to encourage interagency cooperation. The model fundamentally explains that local agencies must undergo a three-step process driven by external influences, systematic or random, to be encouraged to engage in the level of cooperation necessary to achieve the maximum implementation of an initiative. The steps in the process include (Weiss, 1987):

Step 1: Perceived problem must be shared across agencies

Step 2: Resources must be available to handle problem cooperatively

Step 3: Institutional capacity has to be established to mount cooperation

2.2 External Influences

Weiss (1987) argues that interagency cooperation is most likely to occur when external influences are present to compel agencies to collaborate, coordinate, and ultimately cooperate. Weiss explains that these external influences may be random or systematic.

2.2.1 Random Influences

Weiss (1987) states that:

…random forces include the unexpected intensification of a problem …, the unpredictable availability of staff energy or personal ties across boundaries, the sudden flow of external funding for particular projects, the fortuitous fit between existing procedures and new demands for coordination (p.111).

Imperial (2005) refers to these components as "rationales for using collaboration as a governance strategy" (p. 14). Imperial's meta-analysis of the collaborative activities of six watershed governance efforts (i.e., Lake Tahoe, California; Tampa Bay, Florida; and Tillamook Bay, Oregon) found that there were several motivational factors (rationales), a few being random, behind agencies engaging in collaborative efforts. Random factors have been provided in the following list (Imperial 2005):

1) Response to political pressure: Increasing demands from politicians and the public to do more with similar or reduced resources.

2) Reaction to institutional pressures: Participants come to view collaborative processes as an important way to solve important economic, technical, and strategic problems.

3) Promotion of democratic values: Sharing the burden of addressing societal needs (p. 14).

Imperial found that collaboration as a governance strategy led to "enhanced service delivery, improved a network's capacity to solve shared problems, supported performance management, promoted information sharing, and encouraged the development of performance measures to enhance accountability" in all three watershed cases (Imperial, 2005, p.4).

Based on Weiss's (1987) results, and given Imperials (2005) findings, it is easy to hypothesize that it is likely that organizations will engage in cooperative practices when they lack the capability to reposition their processes to respond to random demands. However, if the random demands are too intractable for a cooperative relationship to assist in efficient service delivery, the cooperative relationship most likely will not occur. As a result, the implementation process will suffer and agencies will not meet their goals and objectives (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; Barrett, 2004).

2.2.2 Systematic Influences

Weiss categorized systematic influences that pressure agencies to cooperate as legislative mandates, internal organizational issues, and societal demands. Weiss (1987) specifically states that:

…systematic forces driving districts to overcome barriers to cooperate were new demands for performance from local districts. But active demands focused on a few areas at a given time. Sometimes these demands were carried by state or federal law. Federal law and state laws combined with parental activism pushed districts to define their then-existing services as inadequate, to seek out resources to improve their programs through cooperative activities, and to build institutional capacity to operate and to share specialized staff"(pp.111-112).

Ansell and Gash's (2007) research corroborates Weiss's findings, but Ansell and Gash (2007), characterize these external influences as critical starting conditions, which is consistent with research presented by Futrell (2003) and Imperial (2005). The studies undertaken by these researchers have produced results that show agencies will be encouraged to engage in cooperation when critical starting conditions are present. Critical starting conditions include but are not limited to the following: (Ansell & Gash, 2007):

1) Equal shares of power, resources, and knowledge with other stakeholders.

2) Incentives, legislative mandates, and heavy interdependence to meet client demand.

3) History of cooperation or conflict. Conflict may reduce resources available to individual agencies, therefore prompting agencies to cooperate in order to utilize shared resources to deliver services efficiently.

Each of these external influences is important in pressuring or encouraging agencies to engage in the cooperative process, but let's focus on the more tangible systematic aspect of external influences, legal mandates. Political pressure or legislative mandates are usually fixed into policy initiatives by formal policy makers. This external influence is a part of Weiss's model and is substantiated by additional research (Imperial, 2005; Ciborra & Navarra, 2005; Futrell, 2003). It is important to expand on the legal imperative of systematic external influences. Mazmanian and Sabatier, (1983) and Lennon and Corbett (2003), as well as others, state that there are both empirical and normative reasons to focus on legal mandates in the implementation process. Empirically, they argue that implementation failure is due to a lack of legal structure imposed by statutes. Normatively, they argue that policy decisions should be made by policy makers rather than street- level bureaucrats, as failure to do so may cause mission drift within agencies, among networks, and cause ineffective and inefficient program service delivery. A more detailed account of this focus is provided in the following section.

2.2.2.1 Legislative Ambiguity & the Implementation Process

According to Goggin et al. (1990), policy implementation is defined as "a series of… decisions and actions directed toward putting an already decided…mandate into action" (p. 34).

Explicit in the definition is that policy implementation should reflect what has been set forth in legislative initiatives by formal policy makers. However, research **(**Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; Matland, 1995; Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999; Meyers, Riccucci & Lurie, 2001; Worsham & Gatrell, 2005) suggests that ambiguous policy mandates will lead to ineffective program implementation. According to Meyers et al., (2001) "goal clarity increases motivation by linking staff efforts to mission-related tasks by insulating staff from organizational politics and by encouraging innovation and risk taking in the organization" (p.167). Put simply, the clearer the goals and missions within the organization, the more successful the program outcomes. Conversely, other research argues that implementation of goals should be un-politicized, where clear goals should be set, but administrative agencies should reserve the right to exercise discretion with regard to the organization and administration of policies (Handler, 2005; Brodkin & Majmundar, 2008). Brodkin and Majmundar (2008) specifically argue that formal laws "often require judgment in their execution, and moreover, are too complex to be reduced to a rote set of practices" (p.3). Additionally, they explain that discretion allows the street level bureaucrats to "develop in-formal modes of practice that enable them to balance resources with demands made of them by management and target populations" (Brodkin & Majmundar, 2008, p.3). So, the literature suggests an important question: does the extent of ambiguity (i.e., high or low) in legislative mandates influence the success (or failure) of policy implementation?

2.2.2.2 Does the Extent of Ambiguity Matter?

In governance or network partnerships, participants are fairly independent and they all have their own goals (Hodge & Greve, 2007). This makes it particularly difficult to judge the success of one clear goal, and based on the heterogeneous nature of such networks, policymakers find it quite difficult to develop universal objectives. For clarification, this is not to suggest that policy makers take either a "grass roots" or "bottom-up" approach to policy implementation goal development. However, high policy ambiguity and low goal conflict afford agency executives an opportunity to couple operative goals with formal policy goals and add supplemental objectives that enhance connectivity between network affiliates (Matland, 1995). Although Meyers et al., (2001) states that "congruence of formal policy goals and agency level operative goals may be a pre-requisite of substantive policy attainment," there is evidence that flexibility in the goal setting process has produced positive implementation results. One example is the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). Although the federal government set benchmark standards for states, they did not create a strict program structure (Lennon & Corbett, 2003). If the federal government had been too specific with the implementation process, most states would have failed to meet program metrics (Brodkin & Majmundar, 2008).

By providing states with some structure autonomy, the government enabled them to tailor program goals and structures to their operational capacities. In doing so, many states were able to develop very clear goals that established congruence with formal policy intentions, provide sound program infrastructure, enhance connectivity between network partners, establish clear protocols, and largely achieve policy implementation success.

Based on the literature, there are essentially three issues to be considered when attempting to forecast the possible success of legislative directives (systematic external influences) driving a particular initiative: (1) legislative clarity, (2) level of mandate conflict, and (3) the level of political and social support for an initiative in a given program environment (Matland, 1995; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; Matland, 1995; Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999; Meyers, Riccucci & Lurie, 2001; Worsham & Gatrell, 2005). These issues are clearly related to the systematic external influences of Weiss's (1987) framework. While the literature has established that the overarching legal component will initially have a strong bearing on pressuring agencies to cooperate, it is easy to ascertain that the ultimate level of policy implementation success is efficiency. The efficient administration of policy will lead to the most inexpensive successful or unsuccessful outcomes. This is ultimately reliant on the support of the policy environment in a jurisdiction.

Weiss (1987) argues that continued, consistent influence from external influences will more often than not motivate agencies to move from one step to the other in the process model (See overview above).

2.3 Shared Problems/Goal Congruence

Step one in Weiss's "Process Model of Cooperation" is contingent upon external random and systematic factors influencing its initiation. The model suggests or indicates that once

external pressures arise, often derived from complex social or economic problems, agencies are faced with a decision about engaging in cooperative arrangements (Weiss, 1987). This notion implies that agencies are not readily willing to engage in a cooperative mode of service delivery if it is not absolutely warranted. Weiss (1987) explains that:

…new problems or intensification of old ones trigger a search for solutions. Cooperation may produce relief for many problems through reduced costs, improved service, or broader perspective…Framing problems in ways that made cooperation seem fruitful was a sticking point. Unless cooperation is considered a solution to the problem, cooperation goes no further. If some group within the agency framed the problem to admit the possibility of a cooperative solution, the process moves to the next step (p. 111).

According to Weiss (1987), agencies will not cooperate solely to address shared problems, but mostly to comply with complex community and legal demands that merit cooperation, as organizations seek to maintain their functional autonomy. Research is in agreement with Weiss's assessment of agencies' desire to maintain their autonomy (Meyers et al., 2001; Sarkar et al., 2001; Serrano, 2003; Das, 2005; Lundin, 2007). Given an agency's reluctance to concede goals, shared problems alone are not enough to influence motivation toward the first step in Weiss's model (Matland, 1995). Weiss explains that a pre-requisite condition for an agency to cooperate is the existence of goals shared between agencies in a particular sector aimed at addressing a perceived shared problem. Hence, an essential preliminary focus encouraging the first step in Weiss's model is the level of goal congruence between agencies. It seems practical to assume that the extent to which these agency goals are in agreement will be the degree to which a cooperative delivery structure can be made operational.

2.3.1 Goal Congruence & the Implementation Process

Goal congruence is an essential factor in encouraging interagency cooperation. It is important to investigate the similarity of agency goals, as exchange interactions between agencies are less likely to occur if agency goals are in high conflict. Meyers et al., (2001) provide an operational definition of goal congruence and explain the importance of operative goals by stating the following:

Goal congruence is "…the extent of agreement between the official or formal policy goals of political officials and the operative goals of the organizations or networks charged with delivering that policy…It is the operative goals that tell us what the organization is actually trying to do, regardless of what official goals say are the aim…They go beyond the life of a particular interaction and become the standards by which the organization's actions are judged and around which decisions are made. They provide an important indicator of policy as delivered because, they identify the preferences and choices of those who control organizational resources…" (p. 168).

Implementation studies have confirmed that goal congruence is important in the cooperative process, for example, Lundin (2007) states that "a shared interest can be a powerful facilitator of cooperation, whereas diverging objectives may decrease cooperation" (p. 654). Das (2005) indicates that mutual commitment (common obligations or goals) "offers a way of enhancing

the robustness of cooperation and diminishing the attractiveness of defection" (p. 712). Additionally, Lasker et al. (2003) find agreement of agency goals is associated with the cooperative process in their study of partnership synergy in the United States health care system. In Tett et al.'s (2003) study of cooperation in the Scottish community educational program, it was established that in order to reduce the risk of cooperation failure in delivery of services, it is critical to be clear about the purpose of cooperation and to enable staff to work together to develop a common sense of purpose that they were committed to implementing (p.44).

2.3.2 Conflicting Mechanisms

While common goals serve as an initial encouraging factor for cooperation, an agency's heterogeneous nature (e.g., type and structure) dictates the type of mechanisms utilized to realize goals. Different means of achieving goals may lead to conflict in the cooperation process, which in turn may lead to the diminishing of services provided to the target population. To reduce this risk, Serrano (2003) suggests that cooperation structures should keep the level of interdependence among agencies to a minimum. Serrano argues that by reducing the level of agency interdependence, agencies reduce the need for increased consensus on mechanisms (i.e., regulatory instruments guiding network actions-contracts, and agreements) used to mitigate problems. As Agranoff and McGuire (2001) put it, network managers should seek to improve cooperation by "minimizing, or removing blockages to cooperation" (p.7).

In addition to using fragmented efforts to reduce blocking mechanisms, all stakeholders should engage in behavior that more efficiently reduce mechanism conflict between cooperative actors on a broader scale. Weatherly and Lipsky (1977) perhaps provide the most effective strategy to achieve this feat. The authors point out that policy principles or goals established in formal policy should reflect the goals and principles of the street level bureaucrats implementing the legislation (e.g., means of service delivery in the law should reflect bureaucratic principles/capabilities) as this would reduce goal incongruence between the two entities, and increase goal congruence between target network agencies in a given sector. The authors find that it is problematic for law makers to engage in the rulemaking process without consulting pivotal individuals at the agency level, which is in concert with positions taken by other "bottom-up" research pioneers (Hjern, 1982; Hjern & Hull, 1982). As Weatherly and Lipsky (1977) describe:

One must study street-level bureaucrats within their specific work context to discover how their decision making about clients is modified, if at all, by the newly articulated policy…Now the lowest levels of the policy chain are regarded as the makers of policy and the higher level of decision making is seen as circumscribing, albeit in important ways, the lower-level policy-making context. The relationship between the development and implementation of policy is of necessity problematic since, in a sense, the meaning of policy can't be known until it is worked out in practice at the street level (p. 173).

Formal policy goals developed by all stakeholders utilizing the above process, could better serve to establish a common ground between agencies during the policy formation process. To reiterate, Meyers et al. (2001) surmise that goals signify the ends of agency actions, and resources are the tools/means required to achieve those ends. If agencies can be influenced by an external factor (systematic or random) to act cooperatively to address shared problems, the agencies can move to step two of Weiss's process model of cooperation—seeking resources to institute cooperative efforts.

2.4 Resources to Institute Cooperation

Moving to the second step of Weiss's "Process Model of Cooperation" involves agencies identifying resources to support the cooperative process. According to Weiss (1987), if no initiative, energy, money, or adequate staff became available explicitly for cooperative activities, the process grinds to a halt (p.111). There are a myriad of resources that could be examined as operational mechanisms for cooperation; however, I only examine the following: agency initiative/energy, monetary resources and adequate staff. These factors have emerged from the literature as the most relevant mechanisms necessary for agencies to progress to the third step of Weiss's "Processes Model of Cooperation" (Draft, 2007; Dyer & Singh, 1998; Gnyawali & Madhavan, 2001; NISTTA, 1998; Shapira & Youtie, 1998; Weiss, 1987; Kochan & Mckersie, 1991; Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999; Hitt et al., 2000; Serrano, 200).

2.4.1 Agency Initiative

Network resources have been termed in various studies as asset flows (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Gnyawali & Madhavan, 2001). Gnyawali and Madhavan (2001) specifically define asset flows as resources that include "money, equipment, technology, and organizational skills that flow between connected firms in a network" (p.432). Gnyawali and Madhavan (2001) also raise the issue of resource adequacy. The authors do not go as far as to present a sweeping theoretical design that provides an accurate description of adequate network resources, but they do draw on Wasserman and Faust's (1994) concept of centrality. Fundamentally, centrality represents the degree to which a central actor occupies a strategic position in the cooperative by having an advantage of establishing multiple substantial relationships with multiple stakeholders and partners (Gnyawali & Madhavan, 2001). Thus, if an agency establishes itself centrally within the collective, it will more often than not have access to the mechanisms necessary to mount an efficient service delivery process (Draft, 2007). Although the concept of centrality does not provide an accurate adequacy formula, it does emphasize an agency's need to define resource adequacy, and then engage in assertive network building to enhance its access to resources.

2.4.2 Monetary Resources

Given the arguments presented in the literature thus far, it is easy to deduce that monetary resources are essential to agencies meeting the external requirements placed upon them by random and systematic influences. For example, a MEP implementation study conducted by The National Institute of Standards and Technology Administration (1998) states:

…the best way to ensure high-caliber nationwide assistance to smaller manufacturers is to commit to a stable amount of renewable federal funding... Federal funding of centers at a level equivalent to years five and six, e.g., one third, offers the best opportunity for broad economic benefit to the U.S. manufacturing sector. Complete independence from federal funding would likely result in the elimination of many MEP services to smaller manufacturers. This reduction in service and increase in fees would stimulate the eventual closure of many of the regional centers, limit the diversity of manufacturing sectors or geographic regions served, and undermine the mission of the remaining centers (p. 1).

Shapira and Youtie (1998) also argue that:

…the tightening of federal funds available to MEP centers could make it more difficult for centers to find the resources to develop shared tools, information systems, cross-training, exchange of best practices, and other specified mechanisms to promote industrial service partnerships (p. 26).

Multiple evaluations have established resources as the primary provocation for organizations entering into interagency cooperation. These evaluations assert that agencies engage in the interagency cooperation process to gain assets such as money, information, knowledge, and status /legitimacy/recognition (Padgett & Ansell, 1991; Patnayakuni et al., 2006). Oliver (1990) maintains that:

…six critical contingencies of relationship formation are proposed as generalizable determinants of inter-organizational relationships across organizations, settings, and linkages: necessity, asymmetry, reciprocity, efficiency, stability, and legitimacy. These contingencies are the causes that prompt or motivate organizations to establish IORs, that is, they explain the reasons why organizations choose to enter into relationships with one another (p. 242).

Weiss (1987) substantiates the previous study's account of why agencies cooperate. In her study of nine educational service agencies (ESAs) she found that while net cost-benefit was not the only reason ESAs joined cooperative endeavors, educational grants (monetary resources) certainly prompted some to join. Weiss goes further to explain that additional resources gained from economies of scale (increased capacity-experts, new equipment, and suppliers) liberated ESAs to expend revenues generated from local sources on local priorities. Weiss surmises that both financial benefits made it attractive for agencies to engage in and continue forward with cooperative practices.

2.4.3 Adequate Staff and Human Capital

According to research (Kochan & Mckersie, 1991; Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999; Hitt et al., 2000; Serrano, 2003), adequate staff and human capital is most often responsible for an organization attaining and sustaining exceptional performance when they are operating individually or within cooperative networks. Given this deduction, it is assumed that the more special knowledge and skills gained by a sufficient number of staff and managers (e.g., education based on university curriculum-codified knowledge and expertise gained through

training and experience- tacit knowledge), the more effective the agency will become in achieving its goals. Support for this position is provided by Reed et al., (2006) who point out how codified knowledge affects the performance of an agency. They offer the following:

Human capital, which has long been argued to be a critical source for differentiating performance among firms, involves both knowledge stocks (e.g., hiring of educated people) and knowledge flows (e.g., developing high levels of codified and tacit knowledge…) (p.870).

Hence, it is rational to hypothesize that the level of front-line staff and management education, along with experience, will influence an agencies policy implementation process. Nevertheless, to justify this concession, a review of the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) (Schacht, 2010-11) was conducted. The review of the handbook revealed that to a large degree, a college diploma is only one preferred requirement associated with more technical or specialized positions. The OOH also revealed that management, scientific, and technical consultants must possess "proven analytical and problem-solving abilities, excellent written and verbal communications skills, and experience in a particular specialty." Furthermore, a study of front-line supervisor contributions to organizational performance and effectiveness, based on data derived from the U.S. 2000 Merit Principle Survey, demonstrated that the level of "front-line supervisor skill (tacit knowledge) and competence (gained through codified knowledge based on theoretical underpinnings) are key elements in improving federal agency performance" (Brewer, 2005, p.520).

Again, the resources (initiative, money, and adequate staff) discussed here are not an exhaustive list of the resources necessary to institute the cooperation process. But these are the most relevant factors affecting the type of policy (R&D) and the community in which the legislation must be implemented. Regardless of the type of assets required to institute the cooperative process, according to Weiss (1987), an interagency cooperative situation devoid of them will hinder agencies from progressing to step 3- the capacity to mount the cooperation effort.

2.5 Capacity to Mount the Cooperation Effort

Thus far, I have discussed external influences, shared problems and resources within Weiss's model that are required to proceed to the third and final step, the capacity to mount the cooperation process. Chaskin (2001) provides an appropriate operational definition of capacity for this review:

Community capacity is the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the wellbeing of a given community. It may operate through informal social processes and or/organized efforts (p. 295).

Institutional capacity is fundamentally dependent upon the influence of external influences driving it (e.g., legal mandates, unexpected societal demands and monetary resources) and the degree/amount of diversity in delivery mechanisms (e.g., technology communication information systems, clear procedures, operational terminology, and professionalism) existing between possible partners (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Innes et al., 2003; Skelcherm, Smith & Mathur, 2004; Carmeli & Tishler, 2004). As Weiss (1987) describes it:

Depending on the nature of the activity, this could range from a trivial matter of reliance on existing mechanisms to a major undertaking of building new infrastructure. Unless a legal, workable way could be found not only to begin, but to sustain the cooperative program, the effort to cooperate went no further (p. 111).

Though there are many capacity issues to be considered when attempting to mount an interagency cooperation effort, the implementation logistics of most R &D diffusion initiatives dictate that the review focus on capacity issues to include adequate funding sources to initiate and sustain a cooperative structure, technology-communication and management information mechanisms, and the degree of personnel professionalism among personnel within the network. These mechanisms are central to the efficacy of interagency goal attainment. Thus, for purposes of this research, capacity is defined as the organization's ability to manipulate the aforementioned factors to realize a complex organization's objectives.

To reiterate, agencies build their organizational capacity by increasing their member capacity. Increasing member capacity equates to an agency establishing substantial network partnerships to enhance its core skills, attitudes, and innovations to more effectively deliver services (Foster-Fisherman & Tishler, 2004). However, if agency mechanisms are in such high variance as to thwart consensus building, the cooperative process will suffer (Rivkin & Siggelkow, 2003). Hence, it is anticipated that cross-referencing agencies' actions and mechanisms of which are highly dissimilar will yield one of two results; either (a) the diversity of agencies engaging in the cooperation initiative will serve to fill holes in each other's service delivery processes, or (b) too many differences and or disparities will impede the cooperation process.

2.5.1 Adequate Funding Source to Mount the Initiative

In order to establish interagency cooperation structures, funding must be identified to support the effort. Monetary support is most often needed to not only spark interest in interagency cooperation initiatives, but also to sustain and maintain efforts toward goal attainment. Therefore, adequate funding support is an essential factor in the achievement of interagency/network goals and objectives.

Shapira and Youtie (1998) argue that a narrowed and more strategic relationship seeking (reduced capacity) is on the horizon for MEP. Their study of MEP cooperation efforts suggest that this is due to anticipated reductions in federal NIST financial support. Reduced MEP funding will likely restrain the cooperative process, because costs associated with

establishing formal partnerships that are mutually beneficial are high. As a result, the targeted population will most likely suffer a reduction in services (Weiwel & Hunter, 1985; Shapira & Youtie, 1998). Shapira and Youtie (1998) further contend that without the federal subsidy provided through NIST, MEP centers will begin to over-rationalize partnerships and linkages. This, according to the authors, will lead to:

…a reversion to a situation where industrial services are poorly integrated, there is confusing duplication in services while gaps are not addressed, individual program missions are emphasized rather than the needs of SME's and industrial communities, and there is an heightened "turf" conflict between different programs (p.26).

In order to combat these circumstances, Shapira and Youtie (1998) propose that NIST should: specify more precisely what funds should be spent on (e.g., partnership building), and designate a specific program to establish partnerships. The recommendations proposed by Shapira and Youtie (1998) are in agreement with other research that calls for clarity in agency/legislative mandates. Clarity in rules and regulations provide service workers with more direction and confidence in completing their tasks. Additionally, clarity will assure that subsidy is expended in the most efficient manner, or at least in the way they were intended.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (1998) conducted a study to determine a regional manufacturing extension center's ability to generate revenue and increase operating efficiency. The sample for this study consisted of MEP centers in all fifty states (N=70). The findings revealed that the removal of federal funding from the regional MEP centers would "undermine their fundamental mission" (NISTTA, 1998). The NISTTA (1998) study found that, "in the absence of public funding, centers would likely move toward working with larger companies on more sizable projects using internal staff." Additionally, the evaluation concluded that "while these centers would try to expand their market over time, financial pressures would lead them to emphasize repeat business with existing customers rather than broad market penetration" (NISTTA, 1998). Furthermore, NISTTA concedes that federal funding helps defray costs associated with cooperative structures, and by doing so, enables regional MEP centers to provide assistance to "small firms that would otherwise find it difficult to secure needed services at a cost they can afford" (NISTTA, 1998).

Van de Ven and Walker (1984) examined factors in the interorganizational process that most affect the creation, growth, and decline among agencies associated with cooperative initiatives. The evaluation was a longitudinal analysis of 95 cooperative relationships between childcare and health care organizations in Texas. From this study, Van de Ven and Walker (1984) conclude that:

Perceptions of dependence on others for resources spur the development of inter-organizational relationships. Resource dependence is a powerful direct determinant of communications, resource transactions, and consensus (p.1).

Thus, insufficient funding sources are likely to decrease not only services provided to the targeted population, but decrease a coordinating agency's majority stake within the collective.

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that by losing a majority stake in an interagency initiative, a primary coordinating agency's centrality will be negatively affected.

2.5.2 Technology-Communications and Management Information Systems

Successful interagency cooperation requires that many players among agencies communicate efficiently, and according to research, this can only be accomplished by sustaining and utilizing a strong communication information system (Pickering & King, 1995; Fulk & DeSanctis, 1995; Barrett & Konsynski, 1982; Premkumar, 2000). Thus, the juxtaposition of goal clarity and efficient communication technology is central to an organization's goal achievement, as Premkumar states (2000):

What is unique about the current environment is the availability of a communications infrastructure to electronically transfer information, with minimal effort and time lag, resulting in easy availability of information…organizations seeks to reduce the uncertainty in their operations by improving the availability of appropriate information for decision making. Information asymmetry among the participating units leads to uncertainty, which in turn leads to inefficiency... (pp. 2-3).

Pickering and King (1995) add to this argument by discussing the significance of interoganizational computer-mediated communication (ICMC) in agencies. They suggest that:

…an increase in information diffusion via electronic distribution lists would improve problem solving for problems not well-structured or well aligned with the organization's problem solving structure…A different incentive for organizations to support ICMC infrastructure can be constructed from Granovetter's (1983) finding that weak ties serve as links between strong tie networks…employees' weak tie links to other strong tie networks provide access to organizationally-useful information. Such links can also facilitate mobilization of like organizations to respond to a common problem (p.481).

Pickering and King (1995) not only provide a rationale for the importance of ICMC in interagency cooperation, but they also provide logic for ICMC best community fit. The authors explain that in order for these technologies to be effective in assisting agency progression, an organization must reside in a community consisting of (a) a high level of professional occupations; this will attract professionals that constantly seek higher wages/challenges, and (b) organizations seeking to reduce cost and streamline operations; generally looking to outsource components to reduce fixed cost. According to Pickering and King (1995) an accessible ICMC under these conditions could serve as a catalyst prompting agencies to switch from hierarchical operating structures to more flexible and efficient network structures. They explain that this can happen in four ways:

1) Providing the means for notification and negotiation among organizations shopping for professional services and the members of the relevant occupational communities.

2) Providing occupational community professionals with access to essential information resources required to carry out the contracted-for tasks, whether those resources are located in the buying organization or some other information utility.

3) Providing a wide and supportive conduit through which task coordination and ongoing renegotiation of the work can occur.

4) Providing mechanisms whereby contracted-for information products are delivered to a buyer and compensation is delivered to the supplier through electronic funds transfer (Pickering & King, 1995, p. 485).

Aiken et al., (1975) support the above position in their study of coordinated services for mentally challenged individuals. They add the following:

Coordination of information has an internal and an external aspect. The external aspect concerns the degree to which information about service opportunities is available to those who are not yet in the system but who seek to make use of it…The second aspect of the coordination of information is an internal one. It involves the operation of service delivery systems themselves and questions of evaluations and feedback…given that services for retarded clients are interdependent, a high degree of information feedback, rather than central planning for each client is likely to be most effective (pp. 14-15).

This management of information is viewed as vital for interagency cooperation network effectiveness.

2.5.3 Personnel Professionalism

Maintaining and enhancing the effectiveness of interagency cooperation requires that firms cultivate and fully make use of their human resources (Kochan & McKersie, 1991). To do so, human resource departments must engage in activities that support the nurturing of a well-educated, highly assertive, and multi-trained labor force (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999). Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) refer to staff fitting these criteria as professionals, and attribute agency effectiveness to the level of professionalism existing within an organization. As discussed previously, interagency cooperation is more likely to flourish within a community that offers a plethora of professional occupations (Pickering & King, 1995). Bozeman and Straussman (1990) agree with this argument. They state:

A factor particularly important in studies of public management innovation is professionalism. Public managers who are "more professional" are more likely to innovate, and public organizations with higher levels of professional activity or a higher number of professionals are more likely to be innovative (p. 188).

However, Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) concede that a strong professional presence can also hamper the cooperation process. Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) suggest the following potentially damaging aspects of professionalism:

…a strong culture could make an agency impervious to external oversight and control, resistant to innovation or otherwise poorly adapted to imperatives of its

environment…Examples of such a problem include…the case of a public health agency in Kansas that became so focused on professional autonomy that the legislature ultimately intervened to assert authority over the agency (Maynard Moody et al., 1986, p. 18).

Again, Weiss (1987) explains that the factors relative to agency capacity can include a wide range of mechanisms, but they must be perceived as legal and legitimate for cooperation to occur. If they are not perceived this way, according to Weiss, organizations will most often abandon the idea of network partnerships. Conversely, she explains that if all components of the model are in place, agencies are more likely to take part in interagency cooperation. The research of Ansell and Gash (2007); Futrell (2003); and Imperial (2005) confirm this perspective.

3. Summary of the Literature

In this review, I have discussed each segment of Weiss's (1987) "Process Model of Cooperation," offering additional literature that supports or contradicts her model. Weiss's model includes the concepts of external random and systematic demands that influence agencies to seek cooperation, the idea of a shared problem being addressed through cooperation, and the need for resources and capacity to support and sustain the cooperation endeavor. Weiss, however, found that even when all components were in place, some agencies still did not participate in the interagency cooperation process, and other literature supports this finding (Imperial, 2005; Ansell & Gash, 2007, Lindsay, 2008). Thus, it is still unknown to what extent these factors must be present for interagency cooperation to occur.

Though the Weiss (1987) model and additional research does not provide for a conclusive causal process, they are still helpful in identifying the possible impediments of interagency cooperation faced by organizations. Given these findings, one could argue that insight into impediments to and influences on cooperation is critical, as it is operationally advantageous for principles and implementers to better understand how and why agencies respond to cooperation the way they do. This has been the researcher's goal in this literature review. That is, it seems that this information would be useful to determine what influence patterns apply to promote cooperation. Hence, the review provides an information cannon that can be used to investigate encouraging factors to interagency cooperation. The collection of information contained in this review of literature is not all-inclusive. Numerous investigations covering interagency cooperation will have been generated by the time this article is published.

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