

Expanding the Utility of Cross-Sectoral Collaboration in Policy Studies: Present and Future

MADELEINE W. MCNAMARA

Old Dominion University

JOHN C. MORRIS

Auburn University

Across many disciplines, scholars develop and test theoretical frameworks to describe and explain collaborative processes. Much of the focus in the policy sciences links collaboration to policy implementation. Collaboration theory is not only applicable to other stages of the policy process but could serve to enhance the repertoire of relevant policy theories. This article applies collaboration theory to a common five-stage model of the policy process (agenda setting, formulation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation). We examine the state of the policy model literature and offer opportunities for the inclusion of cross-sectoral collaboration theories to create mutual benefit. While the necessity of time and resources may create fundamental challenges in wholeheartedly linking the collaboration literature to the command-and-control processes of public policy, small but important linkages can be made through the local service network level. The power of cross-sector collaboration can be channeled through the engagement of grassroots collaboratives, street-level bureaucrats, stakeholders, and citizens throughout various stages of the policy process. We present some current examples, including linkages to the COVID-19 pandemic, to highlight how cross-sectoral collaboration relates to policy dilemmas.

Keywords: Public Policy, Policy Process, Mandated Collaboration, Voluntary Collaboration, Agenda Setting, Formulation, Adoption, Policy Implementation, Policy Evaluation, Deliberative Democracy, COVID-19, Collaborative Federalism.

Ampliación de la utilidad de la colaboración intersectorial en Estudios de Políticas: Presente y Futuro

En muchas disciplinas, los académicos desarrollan y prueban marcos teóricos para describir y explicar procesos colaborativos. Gran parte

del enfoque en las ciencias de las políticas vincula la colaboración con la implementación de políticas. La teoría de la colaboración no solo es aplicable a otras etapas del proceso político, sino que podría servir para mejorar el repertorio de teorías políticas relevantes. Este artículo aplica la teoría de la colaboración a un modelo común de cinco etapas del proceso de políticas (establecimiento de la agenda, formulación, adopción, implementación y evaluación). Examinamos el estado de la literatura sobre modelos de políticas y ofrecemos oportunidades para la inclusión de teorías de colaboración intersectorial para generar un beneficio mutuo. Si bien la necesidad de tiempo y recursos puede crear desafíos fundamentales para vincular de todo corazón la literatura de colaboración con los procesos de comando y control de las políticas públicas, se pueden establecer vínculos pequeños pero importantes a través del nivel de la red de servicios local. El poder de la colaboración intersectorial se puede canalizar a través de la participación de colaboradores de base, burócratas a nivel de calle, partes interesadas y ciudadanos a lo largo de las diversas etapas del proceso de políticas. Presentamos algunos ejemplos actuales, incluidos los vínculos con la pandemia de COVID-19, para resaltar cómo la colaboración intersectorial se relaciona con los dilemas de políticas.

Palabras clave: Política pública, Proceso de políticas, Colaboración obligatoria, Colaboración voluntaria, Establecimiento de agenda, Formulación, Adopción, Implementación de políticas, Evaluación de políticas, Democracia deliberativa, COVID-19, Federalismo colaborativo.

擴大跨部門合作的效用在政策研究：現在和未來

在許多學科中，學者開發和測試理論框架來描述和解釋協作過程。政策科學的大部分重點將合作與政策實施聯繫起來。協作理論不僅適用於政策過程的其他階段，而且可以用於增強相關政策理論的全部內容。本文將協作理論應用於政策過程的常見五階段模型（議程設置、制定、採納、實施和評估）。我們研究了政策模型文獻的狀態，並提供了納入跨部門合作理論以創造互惠互利的機會。雖然時間和資源的必要性可能會在全心全意將協作文獻與公共政策的命令和控製過程聯繫起來時產生根本性挑戰，但可以通過本地服務網絡級別建立小而重要的聯繫。跨部門合作的力量可以通過草根合作組織、街頭官僚、利益相關者和公民在政策過程的各個階

段的參與來發揮作用。我們提供了一些當前的例子，包括與 COVID-19 大流行的聯繫，以強調跨部門合作如何與政策困境相關。

關鍵詞：公共政策、政策過程、授權合作、自願合作、議程設置、制定、採用、政策實施、政策評估、協商民主、COVID-19、合作聯邦制。

The publication of Barbara Gray's 1985 article on collaboration, followed by her book (*Collaborating*) four years later (Gray 1989), spawned a deluge of scholarship the purpose of which was to develop and test theory regarding voluntary relationships in the policy arena. Some 35 years later, scholarship on collaboration may be found across the social sciences, and in other disciplines as well. Collaboration has indeed become an integral concept in the academic literature.

The policy sciences have also seen a growth in the amount of attention paid to collaboration. To date, however, most of this research tends to be focused on policy implementation, but comparatively little has been published regarding collaboration in other stages of the policy process. From the standpoint of scholars of collaboration, much of the literature's empirical work also focuses on implementation processes. Moreover, at least in the policy sciences, the bulk of the empirical studies employing collaboration as an element of interest are focused on the realm of environmental policy and questions of collective action in the natural resources arena.

While this work is certainly interesting and important, it is our contention that collaboration theory is also applicable to other stages of the policy process. Indeed, to make such connections not only enhances our knowledge of the policy process but serves to build our repertoire of relevant policy theories. Gray's (1985, 1989) focus is clearly on the role of voluntary collaboration as a means to enhance policy implementation. By harnessing the resources of volunteers, implementation could be enhanced through a range of mechanisms. Although her attention is on implementation, it is largely left to the reader to make the leap—Gray views collaboration through the lens of organization theory, even if the larger contextual frame is implementation. More recent literature keeps the frame of implementation but shifts collaboration to a focus on network relationships. We contend that a narrow focus on implementation misses an opportunity to enhance theoretical and practical richness by extending our conceptions of collaboration in other stages of the policy process. In developing new possibilities for the application of collaboration, we create potential opportunities to further develop collaboration theory which can then be used to further extend its practical application to the policy sciences.

The present article explores the current state of knowledge (and application) of collaboration theory in the policy sciences. Through the application of a common five-stage model of the policy process (agenda setting, formulation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation), we examine the state of the literature, and identify several opportunities for the inclusion of cross-sectoral collaboration theories across the spectrum of policy studies. We address each policy stage in turn. We then present some examples about how cross-sectoral collaboration might relate to current policy dilemmas, before concluding with some thoughts about the utility of linkages between the literatures on collaboration and the policy sciences.

Agenda Setting

The agenda-setting process represents both opportunities and challenges for collaborative action. The collaboration literature tends to treat collaborative activity as an action-oriented enterprise, with a focus on tangible outputs and outcomes (see Sabatier *et al.* 2005; Morris *et al.* 2013; Reed 2015). Indeed, voluntary collaboration (Gray 1989) relies on a sense of accomplishment of measurable goals to motivate participants. Resource sharing is typically structured around implementation activities in pursuit of outputs and outcomes.

Agenda setting also requires resources, but the outputs and outcomes are not as clear, at least on a macro scale. One area of convergence is between the policy network and collaboration literatures. Following Gray's (1989) initial definition of collaboration as an organizational process, a spate of work in the 1990s and 2000s began to view collaboration through a lens of network theory (see O'Toole 1995; Mandell and Keast 2007; deLeon and Varda 2009). Policy networks are long-established elements of the agenda-setting process and serve to tie policy makers together through common interests and information sharing. In the abstract, policy networks share elements in common with collaboration, and one may reasonably argue that collaborative efforts can include policy networks (or parts of networks). However, we contend that, while collaborations can include policy networks, policy networks are not, in and of themselves, collaborations. Following Gray's (1985) discussion of collaboration, collaborations have clear, agreed-upon goals, forge collective decisions regarding shared resources, and exhibit high levels of social capital—traits that are not prerequisites of policy networks.

Still, collaborations have a role to play in agenda setting. In their study of grassroots environmental groups, Morris and others (2013) note that grassroots environmental collaborations can serve to coalesce interests in the community and help to garner support for policy initiatives. Similarly to an interest group, collaborations can also mobilize their members in support of, or opposition to, policy initiatives and serve as an information source for problem definition and the development of policy alternatives. However, little research to date, either in the policy literature or the collaboration literature, has sought to explore the spe-

cific role of collaboration at the agenda-setting stage. Understanding the role of collaborations in agenda setting, and efforts to better define the similarities and differences between policy networks and collaborative groups, can offer an interesting and theoretically fruitful line of inquiry.

Formulation

Hudson, Hunter, and Peckham (2019) suggest that collaboration is lacking in policy making, particularly in terms of policy design. Their argument is constructed around a model of policy making that rejects a “siloe” approach to policy design in favor of interorganizational partnering (Hudson, Hunter, and Peckham 2019, 3) and engagement with a range of stakeholders. They suggest that “policy design requires continuous collaboration with a range of stakeholders at multiple political, policy-making, managerial and administrative levels as well as the engagement of local “downstream” implementation actors” (Hudson, Hunter, and Peckham 2019, 4). Their larger point is well taken, even though their conceptualization of “collaboration” is likely different than that found in the broader collaboration literature.

The implications for governance (see Kekez, Howlett, and Ramesh 2018) in terms of the inclusion of collaborative processes in policy formulation are profound, although the ability to apply the term “collaboration” to this setting depends entirely on the operative definition of the term. Collaboration has been used to describe a wide range of interactions, and the lack of conceptual clarity in the collaboration literature (see McNamara 2012; Morris and Miller-Stevens 2016) is both liberating and constraining. It is liberating in the sense that one can apply the term to a given interaction, and one would not necessarily be wrong to describe that interaction as “collaboration.” It is constraining in that if collaboration is everything, it is nothing. When applied to policy formulation, the interactions described generally are not congruent with Gray’s (1989) definition; rather, they tend to be cooperative or consultative. This should not suggest that these interactions are pointless, but instead that the lack of conceptual clarity in this space limits our ability to move much beyond atheoretical description.

The lack of conceptual clarity is not as much a limitation within the policy sciences as it is a limitation in the collaboration literature (see Morris and Miller-Stevens 2016). Collaborative policy design may be aspirational, but it is not clear whether collaborative policy design is preferable to cooperative (or coordinative) policy design. Likewise, because policy design occurs in different ways in different settings, it may be the case that collaborative policy design is more likely (or, perhaps, more likely to be successful) in settings with different characteristics. Lacking any theoretical guidance, policy scholars must revert to a form of “bare-foot empiricism” when applying collaboration to the formulation stage.

Adoption

Policy adoption is limited in its linkages to collaboration by the democratic process and the interests of elected officials. As adoption focuses on the decision making of government actors, elected officials have significant power to determine the acceptable course of action among policy alternatives (Lindblom and Woodhouse 1993). Therefore, an elected official's individual and political interests influence the trajectory of the remainder of the policy process through their decision making and policy preferences. An emphasis on continuity and stability, supported by incremental decision making and bounded rationality, further supports a rigidity within the process that may stunt opportunities for collaboration.

While collaboration may be an unlikely tool to reduce political constraints, it can be used to improve the state of knowledge for elected officials during the decision-making process. In other words, opportunities for collaboration exist through a desire to balance knowledge and power. Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) describe this process of discussion and analysis as reasoned persuasion in the determination of a policy choice. Collaboration can help elected officials identify and leverage common ground in their decision-making process. Their abilities to manage these differences in the early stages of the policy process can improve implementation (Hudson, Hunter and Peckham 2019).

Linkages with collaboration may help address inherent inequalities based on access to influence decision makers in the policy process. Establishing linkages between elected officials and street-level professionals with specialized knowledge to inform policy selections could reduce these inequalities through informed discussions. A collaborative manager plays a significant role in establishing the group (McNamara, Leavitt, and Morris 2010; Bryson, Crosby, and Stone 2006) and facilitating interactions to generate stability between organizations (Morris and Burns 1997). The responsibilities of elected officials could be similarly oriented toward legitimizing the collaborative process to enhance understanding prior to making policy decisions.

The engagement of street-level specialists within the decision-making process can help elected officials best understand the complexities of the policy problem while allowing for a more equitable and diverse exchange of ideas. To the extent that street-level bureaucrats have discretion during policy implementation, they can also serve as an important source of information during the adoption phase. Hudson and others (2019, 4) describe these “downstream implementation actors” as service recipients, frontline staff, and service agency employees at the local level. Tapping into this already identified position would increase the flow of information to the politician making the decision. In effect, this creates a continuous feedback loop from service delivery collaborators.

The benefit of linking the collaboration literature with the policy adoption phase has to do with minimizing information gaps. The end state could offer in-

sight into how to draw information not just from traditional policy actors that provide information at the formulation stage but also from bureaucrats and stakeholders involved in service delivery during implementation. Focusing on these vertical and horizontal connections allows policy actors to identify common ground with an emphasis on sufficiency rather than total agreement (Ansell, Sorensen, and Torfing 2017).

Implementation

The importance of partnerships in the achievement of policy and program goals is well documented in the public policy and collaboration literatures. Administrators often rely on cross-sector collaboration to enhance public goods and services as complex problems and resource stresses challenge the abilities of single organizations to address public needs. Discussions regarding this type of relationship are prominent among public administration practitioners and scholars as nuances are explored in areas such as collaborative management, organizational processes, service delivery outcomes, and distinctions from other types of interactions. In other words, the topic of collaboration has expanded within public administration theory and practice. However, this scale and scope of collaboration interest is not mirrored in the implementation literature.

Partnerships within the multiorganizational implementation literature are primarily viewed as formalized interactions based on policy mandate, agency rule making, or organizational procedures. Emphasis is placed on the extent to which policies identify interorganizational partners (Hall and O'Toole 2004), policy characteristics that induce or constrain interdependence (May 1995; O'Toole 1995), or the structures used in multiorganizational implementation (see, e.g., Hall and O'Toole 2004; Mandell 1994). "Structural signatures" for collaboration networks are identified (deLeon and Varda 2009, 661) but maintain a more formal focus on relationships. This emphasis on organized efforts does not address fully the complete picture in which nuanced, or even informal, relationships are used to improve policy implementation. Linkages between policy implementation and collaboration may help expand the range of interactions considered within network settings.

When thinking about implementation action at the level of service delivery, the collaboration literature can be beneficial when considering sustaining horizontal relationships across hierarchical structures through middle level personnel that have the discretion to enter horizontal arrangements and allocate organizational resources to collective efforts (McNamara and Morris 2021). If implementation action occurs at the service delivery level through the discretion of cumulative decision making as Lipsky (1980) suggests, then relationships outside the hierarchical structure play a significant role in developing and sustaining relationships. Connecting the implementation literature's street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980)

with the collaboration literature's manager may help facilitate conditions that support the implementation process. Decisions are made constantly at the lower levels of an organization to create public policy in a cumulative way. It is through this discretionary judgment that the policy implementation literature already acknowledges an opportunity to move beyond command-and-control authority inherent in bureaucratic organizations. In collaborative arrangements, stakeholders work together to make program decisions and set collective goals through the development of shared norms and interests (Thomson and Perry 2006). Through this process, organizational boundaries are blurred (Keast, Brown, and Mandell 2007).

As cross-sector arrangements become increasingly prevalent, implementation success may have a lot to do with how well organizations connect across boundaries in addition to policy specificity or the acknowledgement of environmental conditions at the local level (McNamara 2016). The power lies in connecting the people that already have discretionary judgment within their organizations. In collaboration, public managers facilitate connections across organizations to connect people across organizations to improve service delivery networks. Some basic elements of collaboration may not fit easily into the more formal, hierarchical approach of network theory. However, engaging service delivery networks at the street-level creates a "sweet spot" for the intersection of policy implementation and collaboration. The policy literature could better capitalize on the power of connection by engaging street-level bureaucrats in cross-sector collaboration.

If policy implementation can be improved by connecting middle-level actors across different organizations, the position of the person who has legitimacy to support these connections becomes paramount. Certainly, the burden of this responsibility falls on government employees to transcend highly centralized and hierarchical structures to create and sustain horizontal linkages between organizations. Public administrators and policy implementors must understand how to work within and across stovepipe specializations to address complex problems. The demands of managing cross-sector arrangements are addressed empirically in the collaboration literature (McGuire 2006; McNamara and Morris 2021). Linkages between hierarchical and collaborative management are necessary, and part of making those linkages require public managers to understand the nuances of different arrangements (McNamara 2016). Policy implementors within service delivery networks are public administrators, but the nuances and challenges associated with managing these complex network arrangements are not addressed in the policy implementation literature and would be helpful.

Practically speaking, multiorganizational implementation does occur outside the boundaries of operational authority. Therefore, multiorganizational arrangements should not be treated as a mere extension of hierarchical organizations that only abide by specifications in policy mandates. An emphasis on formal interactions assumes that relationships between organizations can be predetermined, centrally controlled, and monitored to meet policy goals by focusing on formally

initiated interactions as the sole source for action. This approach fails to consider that legislators are limited in their abilities to foresee and specify the interactions required in complex implementation settings (O'Toole and Montjoy 1984).

The collaboration literature acknowledges the importance of formal and information relationships in cross-sector arrangements (McNamara 2012; 2016). Formalized interactions are often initiated through grant contracts and create important accountability mechanisms for the distribution of financial resources among organizations that operate outside command-and-control authorities. Informal interactions are an important aspect of partnerships working across organizational boundaries to achieve collective goals or align resources. Understanding the missions and interests of partnering organizations helps personnel informally develop and sustain relationships. Linkages to the collaboration literature may help policy theorists apply the different ways in which arrangements are initiated during policy implementation.

Evaluation

There are different ways to think about utilization and the process of evaluation to determine if intended goals are met based on consideration for the importance placed on values, the responsibilities of the evaluator, and the inclusion of stakeholders. When conducting evaluation in the constructivist paradigm through the deliberative democratic view, the values of all actors are considered important in the construction of reality. The role of the evaluator and the process used to engage participants are driven by value choices and a desire to be better informed through the constructions of stakeholders.

The policy evaluation and collaboration literatures most naturally link through the constructivist paradigm and the deliberative democratic view where values are acknowledged in determining effectiveness. The role of values takes on significant importance when considering that evaluation creates opportunity to inject new information into the policy process. Linking themes from the policy evaluation and collaboration literatures may therefore be helpful in better understanding the complexities of the role of the evaluator and the power of stakeholder inclusion.

The facilitation skills of the collaborative manager may help expand the role of the policy evaluator beyond the authoritative expert in the constructivist paradigm. Both positions must find ways to include relevant stakeholders in the process. According to the deliberative democratic view, evaluation is value-laden with emphasis on inclusion, dialogue, and deliberation (House and Howe 1999). Stakeholder inclusion is important and determined by the evaluator based on evaluation context and typical perspective criteria. Complexity arises as conflicting value claims change, evaluators are placed in the role as authoritarian expert to define the parameters for stakeholder legitimacy, the worth of value claims, and

the establishment of evaluation criteria. The deliberative democratic view assumes that appropriate decisions among potentially competing democratic values can be made by evaluators who operate outside all channels of political accountability. Through their authoritarian position, the evaluator can limit morally questionable and extreme value claims within the dialectic to control the focus of the evaluation and who is included in the study (House and Howe 1999). Both collaborative managers and policy evaluators require an element of legitimacy. In addition to an appreciation for the potential of mutual exchange, the convener must be seen as a legitimate figure to facilitate trust with and between participants (Gray 1985).

The purposeful way collaborative managers facilitate stakeholder inclusion may help the policy evaluator balance competing values throughout the dialectic process. In the deliberative democratic view, the evaluator attempts to equalize value claims by legitimate stakeholders through neutralizing power imbalances. The representation of all legitimate value claims prevents the most powerful stakeholders from distorting the dialogical process. Therefore, major decisions are based on stakeholders' abilities to persuade the evaluator in the legitimacy of their value claims. In the hermeneutic dialectic, topics are placed on the agenda for negotiation when agreements among stakeholders are not secured. The cyclical nature of the dialectic process creates multiple opportunities for stakeholders to persuade one another (Guba and Lincoln 1989). Stakeholder value claims are not weighted equally, and evaluators use impartial and reflective deliberation to make unbiased judgments to determine legitimate value claims (House and Howe 1999). For this process to work, citizens must be willing and able to articulate their values claims and present evidence (deLeon 1992). As public deliberation explores the problems most pressing for administrators, inquiry improves.

Stakeholder inclusion is also important in collaborative management and policy evaluation. The collaborative manager also encourages the framing of values, norms, and rules to help mold the perceptions of participants (Agranoff and McGuire 2001) while scanning the environment to determine the appropriate sense of timing (Honig 2006). Through the process participants from different organizations with unique missions and cultures build consensus for a shared vision. Group discussions allow opportunities to learn from other participants in order to find common ground and increase knowledge of other perspectives to develop creative solutions and shared agreement on goals and objectives (McNamara and Morris 2012). Notably missing from the literature are efforts to comprehend why collaboration fails. Empirically speaking, not all collaborations are successful, yet there is little in the way of guidance to recognize the underlying causes for failure. Continued exploration of why some collaborative efforts succeed while others fail is needed.

Influence within the group and resources shared with the group may not be equal, but the opportunity to participate freely within the group is shared through a governance structure that provides equality to each participant's voice (Mc-

Namara and Morris 2012). Creating a governance structure that operates outside hierarchical structures promotes inclusivity within the group. The collaborative manager facilitates relationships and provides opportunities for participants to identify solutions in ways that are productive individually and collectively.

In anchoring the themes of stakeholder inclusion and deliberative dialogue to the collaboration literature, the evaluator can move beyond the role of the authoritarian expert toward the role of collaborative evaluator. Collaborative managers bring equal partners together to identify resolutions to complex problems through a participative approach that emphasizes shared power (McNamara 2012). There is a predetermined nature to the arrangement in the sense that collaborative managers match problems with participants who have the resources and expertise to provide solutions for the identified problem (McGuire 2006) while facilitating understanding of the benefits of a mutually beneficial relationship through persuasion and strategic problem solving (McNamara and Morris 2012; McGuire 2006).

Some Examples

The COVID-19 pandemic provides a vivid context for thinking about how cross-sector collaboration may relate to the practice of policy studies. In the U.S. context of federalism, the national, state, and local government share implementation responsibility across a range of policy arenas. Certainly, the national government can be directive (see Kettl 2020), but much of the substance of policy implementation takes place via a form of shared governance in which resources are also shared. During 2020 there were examples of collaborative efforts among U.S. states to address the pandemic, such as the sharing of information, protective equipment, and regional agreements among states to determine when to relax restrictions (see “Seven States to Coordinate” 2020). A similar approach was initiated by several states in the western part of the nation. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that, despite the best intentions of these governors, states ultimately relaxed restrictions based on the conditions within their states, rather than as part of a collective decision process.

At the same time, the relationships between most states and the national government were not only not collaborative, they were often combative. The “transactional federalism” (Bowling, Fisk, and Morris 2020) practiced by the Trump administration valued fealty to the president above all else. Shared goals and shared decision making were largely nonexistent. While the United States has practiced different conceptions of federalism at different points in its history, Wright (2003) notes that the period between the 1980s and the beginning of the twenty-first century was marked by growth in intergovernmental networks and collaborative approaches to policy implementation. The first decade of the new century saw a change in approach in federalism that was marked by partisan-

ship (Bulman-Pozen 2014), fragmentation (Bowling and Pickerill 2013), claims of overreach, and opportunism (see Conlan 2006; Burke 2014). This trend turned sharply upward in the four years following the Obama administration, resulting in transactional federalism (Bowling, Fisk, and Morris 2020). In many ways, this new form of federalism was the opposite of collaborative (or even cooperative) approaches to federalism, in that relationships were seen as a competitive exchange. This was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the federal government sought to trade basic medical supplies, testing kits, ventilators, and other necessities for support for the president (see Rupar 2020). Likewise, the president suggested that states that made policy changes on issues such as payroll taxes, sanctuary city status, and other policies might receive more favorable treatment from his administration (Sheth 2020). The president's intergovernmental management style was, in effect, to reward political allies and to punish political foes. The president also made several claims that asserted executive (or federal) control over long-standing areas of state responsibility (see Craig and Dennis 2020).

A second policy arena in which we can detect evidence of collaboration is in efforts to address global warming. International efforts have been focused on participation by large numbers of nations. Participants work together to develop emissions targets (goals), and pledge resources to meet those goals. Information and technical expertise are shared between participants. Not all nations are participants, but collaboration theory does not require that all stakeholders must participate in any collaborative effort. Collaboration may be more successful if all major stakeholders participate (see Morris *et al.* 2013), but collaboration can work without the participation of major stakeholders. At a smaller level, efforts such as The Climate Pledge in the United States can provide tangible benefits by engaging with stakeholders in collaborative efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

Collaboration may be particularly useful at the local level. Morris and others (2013, 2014) conclude that a connection to "place" serves to motivate collaborative participants, even among industries not generally known for collaborative activity. Grassroots environmental collaborative groups exhibit activity in all stages of the policy process: agenda setting (problem definition); policy formulation (goal setting); adoption (decision making); implementation (project work); and evaluation (achievement of outputs and outcomes). Scale may also be an important factor, in that voluntary collaboration efforts are collections of like-minded people who seek to make a difference in their community. Indeed, if Morris and others (2013) are correct, voluntary collaboration may be ideally suited to localized problems, and the application of collaboration to larger (or more geographically dispersed) policy problems may limit the utility of collaboration.

Another challenge to collaboration models in the policy sciences is that voluntary collaboration is often cross-sectoral, but *public* policy infers a governmental process. Many nations have a long history of cross-sectoral implementation, but public policy makers are less sanguine about relinquishing their policy author-

ity to non governmental actors. Leveraging resources from nongovernmental entities at implementation is often regarded as an indicator of “good” public policy; however, allowing unofficial policy participants to engage in adoption decisions, for example, may be a “bridge too far” for many, and raises important questions regarding governance.

We would be remiss if we did not also raise the issue of hyper-partisanship in American policy making. Voluntary collaboration is built on mutual respect, shared decision making, an equal voice in the process, and respect for all participants. These are generally not the first thoughts that come to mind when describing American policy making in the twenty-first century. Indeed, the agenda denial so prevalent in the U.S. Senate in the past decade, coupled with more recent efforts to restrict voter participation in many states, are anathema to collaboration. Successful collaboration requires the ability to agree on a common goal, a feat that seems nearly impossible in our current political environment.

Conclusion

This article explores linkages between cross-sector collaboration and the policy cycle. In general, cross-sector collaboration takes time and resources to develop long-standing relationships based on trust and high levels of commitment as stakeholders make group decisions based on collective goals (Keast, Brown, and Mandell 2007; McNamara 2012). The necessity of time and resources may create fundamental challenges in wholeheartedly linking the collaboration literature to the command-and-control processes in policy and policy making.

However, the collaboration literature acknowledges that resolutions to complex problems can be achieved in small increments that accumulate into something bigger with time (Morris *et al.* 2013). Through small but important linkages, there are ways to couple the two literatures by focusing on the stages of the policy cycle that make the most sense for cross-sector collaboration. The lens for applicability is also impacted by the level of analysis for application. At the local, service network level, the power of cross-sector collaboration can be channeled through the engagement of grassroots collaboratives, street-level bureaucrats, stakeholders, and citizens throughout the various stages of the policy process. While the linkages between collaboration and implementation are the most obvious and best represented in both literatures, small connections in other policy stages may also be valuable.

Much can still be done in the cross-sector collaboration and public policy literatures to create mutual benefit. Conceptual clarity for interaction terms is paramount. The collaboration literature makes important distinctions between interaction terms (see e.g., Keast, Brown, and Mandell 2007; McNamara 2012, 2016). There is continued room for growth and distinction among interaction terms. Distinctions are overwhelmingly ignored in the public policy literature but need to be

included in future discussion in order to situate properly a full range of interactions and their potential uses.

About the Authors

Madeleine Wright McNamara is an adjunct assistant professor in the School of Public Service at Old Dominion University. She served previously as a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of New Orleans and as the Waterways Management Coordinator for the U.S. Coast Guard's Eighth District in New Orleans. Her research interests include collaboration, public policy, and interorganizational theory. Her work appears in journals such as *Public Works Management & Policy*, *International Journal of Public Administration*, *Politics & Policy*, and the *Journal for Nonprofit Management*, among others. In addition, she authored chapters in *Speaking Green with a Southern Accent: Environmental Management and Innovation in the South* (2010), and *Advancing Collaboration Theory: Models, Typologies, and Evidence* (2016, Routledge).

John C. Morris is a Professor of Political Science at Auburn University. He is the author/co-author/editor of 12 books and more than 100 journal articles, book chapters, and reports. His work has appeared in journals such as *Policy Studies Journal*, *Public Administration Review*, *Politics & Policy*, *The Journal of Politics*, and the *American Review of Public Administration*, among others. His research interests include state comparative policy, governance and collaboration, and environmental policy.

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