

COLLABORATIVE PUBLIC MANAGEMENT: PROPOSAL TO EXPLORE PUBLIC MANAGERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a discussion about the main factors influencing public managers' attitudes towards inter-organizational collaboration and it presents a theoretical proposal for an empirically approach to the phenomenon. The primary contribution of the article is the introduction of a two dimensional concept of inter-organizational collaboration, which include both structural and managerial dimensions, that allows distinguishing among determinants of attitudes towards collaborative structures from those towards collaborative activities. The proposal and ideas presented here are especially salient for helping public management students and practitioners understand one set of complexities involved in the collaborative phenomenon that could be useful to consider when building, maintaining, and operating in multi-organizational networks. The article ends with methodological considerations which will make possible to apply the proposal and direction for future research for the many public management scholars who are currently studying organizational networks and collaborative arrangements in the public sector.

Keywords: Collaborative public management, Collaborative arrangements, Public managers, Public managers' attitudes.

GESTIÓN PÚBLICA COLABORATIVA: UNA PROPUESTA PARA EXPLORAR LAS ACTITUDES DE LOS GESTORES PÚBLICOS HACIA LA COLABORACIÓN INTERORGANIZACIONAL

RESUMEN

Este artículo ofrece una discusión sobre los principales factores que influyen en las actitudes de los gestores públicos hacia la colaboración interorganizacional y presenta una propuesta teórica para una aproximación empírica al fenómeno. La principal contribución de este artículo es la introducción de un concepto de dos dimensiones de la colaboración interorganizacional, que incluyen ambas dimensiones estructurales y de gestión que permite distinguir entre los determinantes de las actitudes hacia las estructuras de colaboración con respecto a aquellos hacia actividades de colaboración. La propuesta y las ideas que aquí se presentan son especialmente relevantes para ayudar a los estudiantes de administración pública y a los profesionales a comprender un conjunto de complejidades que son parte del fenómeno colaborativo que podría ser útil tener en cuenta a la hora de construir, mantener y operar en redes multiorganizacionales. El artículo termina con consideraciones metodológicas que harán posible aplicar la propuesta y la dirección para futuras investigaciones de los muchos académicos de la gestión pública que actualmente estudian redes de organizaciones y entornos colaborativos en el sector público.

Palabras clave: Gestión pública colaborativa, Arreglos colaborativos, Gestores públicos, Actitudes de los gestores públicos.

INTRODUCTION

“The era of networks has reached the public sector.”

Agranoff (2007:2)

Traditional organizational models of governmental administration based on hierarchical relations, functional definition of boundaries, and bureaucratic authority, have been considered less appropriate structures to deal with contemporary public problems. The current demands for flexibility and adaptability of governmental structures associated to the informational era (Agranoff & McGuire 2003a, Alter & Hage 1993, Castells 1996); the pressures arising from budget constraints and administrative reforms (Kettl 2009, Salamon 2002); and, finally, the increasing complexity of public services and public problems (Innes & Booher 2010, Kicker, Klijn & Koppenjan 1997, Rittler & Webber 1974), have encouraged a transformation towards opening and managing organizational boundaries (Kettl 2006).

In such context, many public administrations around the world have altered their structures by developing intergovernmental relationships, multi-organizational committees, partnerships, and collaborative alliances with nongovernmental and/or private actors in order to jointly provide public services and to implement public programs (Agranoff 2007, Milward 1996). These collaborative arrangements are commonly understood as a set of relatively stable relationships among actors representing their organizations, oriented to the achievement of some common goals and grounded in non-hierarchical relationships (Agranoff 2007; Klijn 2003). Given the absence of hierarchies, inter-organizational collaborations are expected to allow for flexibility and continuous adjustments to achieve organizational purposes in more efficient ways (Klijn 2003). They are also anticipating to increase governmental capacity and promote innovation by integrating a diversity of knowledge, transforming information into new learning, and developing additional competences among members (Alter & Hage 1993, Weber & Khademian 2008).

In the last three decades, the study of inter-organizational collaboration has constituted one of the most fruitful research areas in the field of public administration. Meanwhile some scholars have explored in the antecedents and consequences of the collaborative phenomenon within public administration (e.g. Bryson, Crosby & Stone 2006, Kettl 2006, O’Toole 1997, Provan & Milward 1995), others have been more interested in describing the structural and managerial dimensions of the phenomenon (e.g. Agranoff 2007, 2006, Agranoff & McGuire 2003a, Provan, Fish &

Sydow 2007). Despite the abundant literature in the area, there is a whole dimension that has not been fully examined: the role of public managers and the attitudinal dynamics underlying the processes of formation, reproduction, and transformation of collaborative arrangements among public organizations.

Explanations of the proliferation of interorganizational collaboration as a governmental reform have assumed passive compliance from public agents in creating collaborative relationships (Kettl 2009, Salamon 2002). But even when public managers may have been compelled to collaborate through legislative mandate; there are plausible individual resistances, misinterpretations, and bias so that the adoption and implementation of collaborative arrangements cannot be determined only by a mandate or statute (Gazley 2008, Kumar, Kant & Amburgey 2007). On the other hand, explanations based on economic and institutional approaches that incorporate agency perspective (Feiock 2013, 2007, Pfeffer & Salancik 1978) have restricted their attention to functional and instrumental rationalities and thus, they neglect socio-emotional, professional, and other attributes that can mediate in the creation and implementation of collaborative structures¹. Thus, the study of collaboration from the perspective of the public managers' attitudes remains mostly underdeveloped.

Public managers' attitudes matter in the study of collaboration because managers are who will actually interact in the collaborative networks, they are the ones who should perform complex and innovative tasks, and who should deal with context-specific uncertainties and conflicts (Bryson, Crosby & Stone 2006, Koontz & Thomas 2006, Meier & O'Toole 2003). Especially in organizational contexts with high administrative discretion and goal ambiguity as it happens in public administration; managers are those who in fact decide about whether or not to commit organizational time and resources to pursuing joint action, and so they can facilitate (or hinder) the enactment and the operation of collaboration (Gazley 2008, Nalbadian & Edwards 1983, Read & Leland 2011). Thus, managerial attitudes towards collaboration play a key role in the empirical analysis of public manager behavior and they become a crucial element elucidating success and/or failure in the adoption and the implementation of collaborative arrangements.

1 An important part of this literature has advanced by using network analysis, an approach that neglects the role of agent in the creation and maintenance of collective structures. Network researchers tend to adhere to what is called anti-categorical imperative i.e. reject all attempts to explain human behavior or social processes solely in terms of the categorical attributes of actors (Emirbayer & Goodwin 1994).

In this scenario, one empirical question arises: which are the factors affecting the development of positive or negative managerial attitudes towards collaborative arrangements? In this paper, I explore some ideas to address this question. To do this, I emphasize in two dimensions of collaboration and I propose a theoretical model involving organizational, group, and individual determinants of managerial attitudes towards collaboration.

The article is organized to first review previous empirical efforts to explain managerial attitudes towards collaboration. Then, I present a proposed theoretical model to study public managers' attitudes towards collaboration considering a conceptual framework and a set of potential hypotheses to study. Finally, I provide a discussion of issues of operationalization and methods to empirically test the proposed theoretical model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Regarding administrative reforms and innovations within public administration, some researchers have demonstrated that administrative changes depend not only on organizational resources but also on the willingness of administrators to take actions (Kumar, Kant & Amburgey 2007). Kearney, Felman and Scavo (2000) and Kearney and Scavo (2001), for example, show evidence of association between managers' attitudes towards principles of administrative reforms and actions taken to implement these principles.

Despite the potential relevance of attitudes on the effective implementation of administrative changes, a limited number of studies exploring the attitudes towards collaboration can be found in the social science literature. Moreover, research efforts on this area remain mostly descriptively oriented. For example, Read and Leland (2011) and Calavita and Caves (1994) have shown that managers' attitudes towards collaboration can vary under different institutional contexts (i.e. comparison public versus private managers). Sehested (2009) found that managers working under different structures of cooperation reported different values and mental models towards collaboration. Thomas (2003) found that different organizational actors (i.e. line manager, staff field, program specialist) are associated to different attitudes towards collaboration.

Beyond descriptions, attempts to explain the variation in the attitudes of public managers towards collaboration are even less common (Kumar, Kant & Amburgey 2007, Snaveley & Desai 2001). By analyzing survey data that measured attitudes of municipal officials in Bulgaria, Snaveley and Desai (2001) found that the officials' perception of non-profit sector

capabilities and of the organizational capacity of municipal government itself are two critical determinants of attitudes and willingness to collaborate in the provision of community services.

A second type of research is provided by Kumar, Kant, and Amburgey's (2007). They studied the attitudes of administrative professionals to participatory approaches in a case study in India. The authors analyzed survey data from more than 1,500 responses and they found that agents' resistance and negative attitudes towards the adoption of collaborative community-based program are influenced by the characteristics of managers (e.g. length in services and training), environmental pressures (e.g. media, citizen and interest group) and personality factors (e.g. fear and traditionalism).

Despite the novelty of these contributions, these studies have some limitations. First of all, they deal only with one side of the attitudes towards collaboration. Snively and Desai (2001) study willingness to collaborate and Kumar, Kant & Amburgey (2007) examines resistances to collaborate. The study of attitudes towards collaboration as two different phenomena fragments our understanding about the sources of managerial attitudes. A better approach would be one integrating dispersed current knowledge. One that does not consider resistances and willingness as different kind of phenomena, but as different degrees in a single continuum of attitudes towards collaboration (i.e. from negative to positive).

Second, these studies conceptualize collaboration as a single construct. Collaboration, however, involves structural and managerial dimensions and public managers can develop different attitudes towards each one. That means that managers can develop different attitudes towards structural features associated to collaboration (e.g. more or less formalized structure) or different attitudes towards managerial characteristics associated to collaborative activities (e.g. negotiation, facilitation, task complexity). Consequently, a better approach would be one attempting to identify a comprehensive set of sources of variations in attitudes, under a two-dimensional concept of collaboration.

Finally, previous studies have neglected questions about how organizational culture, professions, and experience can play a significant role in shaping the attitudes of public managers towards collaboration. Theoretical contributions from public management and organizational theories suggest that these features are likely to affect managers' attitudes. Thus, the proposal and ideas in this article are aimed to contribute to current knowledge by developing an integrative theoretical model to organize a whole set of influences affecting attitudes towards collaborative

structures and management.

ATTITUDES AND COLLABORATION

The core phenomenon in this article is the public managers' attitudes. Attitudes are commonly understood as mental predispositions that comprise cognitive, intentional and evaluative elements (Eagly & Chaiken 1993). Cognitive elements are referred to beliefs, expectations, cause and effect relationships, and perceptions relative to some focal object. Beyond cognition, attitudes imply intentional components such as goals and aspirations of individuals and evaluative elements which indicate an expression of favor or disfavor regarding a particular entity.

Attitudes as mental predispositions convey some inclinations to act in determinate ways, so that its study is relevant to empirical analysis in the public administration field. Managerial attitudes are expected to predispose managers to particular positions or opinions about collaboration which will influence to some extent their behavior.

Rainey (2009) indicates that attitudes of organizational members are interrelated with both organizational structures and organizational tasks. These factors affect people's motivation and, thus, stimulate certain attitudes towards them. Consequently, when studying managerial attitudes towards collaboration one can differentiate the attitudes towards collaborative structure from attitudes towards collaborative tasks or management.

Collaborative structure reflects a relatively stable set of patterns of exchange and communication, mostly developed in reciprocal terms, from which actors make joint decisions about rules on how to govern their actions and relationships (Thomson, Perry & Miller 2009). Structurally, collaborative arrangements are commonly described in contrast with hierarchical structures (O'Toole & Meier 1999) or market (Powell 2003, Williamson 1981). Instead, in hierarchical or competitive models, collaborative structures rest on voluntaristic efforts, mutually and shared norms to sustain relationships. Thus, collaborative structures are assumed more flexible, dynamic, and less formalized than bureaucratic arrangements but more socially constrained than markets.

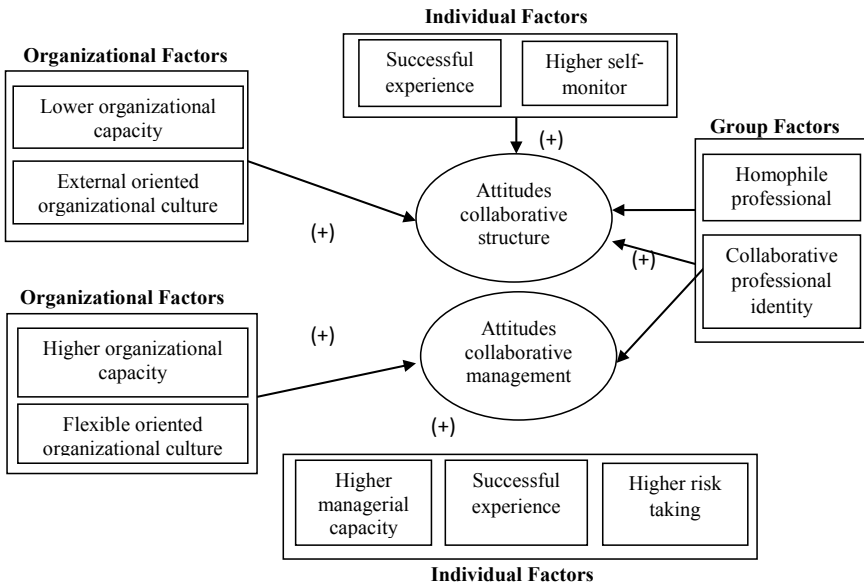
Managerially, the particularities of collaborative arrangements are associated with specific functions to achieve common goals in a context without bureaucratic authority. These functions are assumed more complex and ambiguous than the traditional set of managerial functions of Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting, (i.e. the classic POSDCORB) (Agranoff & McGuire 2001).

For example, collaborative public management implies the need to activate potential actors to collaborate, frame meanings around common goals of collaboration, mobilize resources to achieve these goals, and coordinate multiple efforts to achieve a general purpose (Agranoff & McGuire 2001). Collaborative public management implies political and technical functions which are more complex and dynamic than it was considered by traditional public management scholars (Rethemeyer & Hatmaker 2007). Unlike managerial activities inside an organization, collaborative management does not rest on command controls, public managers need to deal with varied commitments and organizational cultures, build trust and solve intra organizational conflicts (McGuire 2002, Provan & Lemaire 2012).

Consequently, inter-organizational collaboration implies both structural and managerial dimensions, and public managers can develop different attitudes towards each of one. The next section presents a theoretical proposal that incorporates these two dimensions to study of factors influencing attitudes discussed in the literature, and thus, it makes the differentiation among factors affecting the attitudes towards collaboration as structure and collaboration as managerial activity.

HOW CAN WE APPROACH THE PHENOMENON?

By taking into account the particularities associated to collaborative endeavors, this proposal studies what are the sources of variation in attitudes towards collaborative structure and collaborative management. Considering public management and organizational behavior literature addressing sources of attitudinal variation as well as previous studies in attitudes of collaboration, the proposed model identifies three categories of factors: organizational, group, and individual factors affecting attitudes towards two dimensions of collaboration: structural and managerial. Figure 1 depicts a theoretical model.

Figure 1: Model of managerial attitudes towards collaboration

Source: Own elaboration.

FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDES

The factors contributing to the attitudinal variation towards collaboration are organized into three categories: Organizational, Group, and Individual factors. The set of factors are described below. Hypotheses related to the directions of the influences of various factors are also discussed along with the theoretical justification of these factors.

The first category referred to Organizational Factors comprises two factors affecting managerial attitudes towards collaboration: Organizational Capacity and Organizational Culture.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Some studies have provided empirical evidence that higher organizational capacity is positively associated with positive attitudes towards collaborative activities (McGuire & Silva 2010, O'Toole & Meier 2004, Snavely & Desai 2001). The underlying logics on this association may be that public managers in those organizations with sufficient human, technological and financial resources feel that they are not putting at risk their own operations when engaging in collaborative activities (Gazley 2008). In this sense, managers may think that organizations with higher capacity

will empower them with the time, discretion, authority, and resources to deal with the activities of collaborative arrangements, and so, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards collaboration. Since, the studies focus on collaborative activities, the first hypothesis is exclusively addressing attitudes towards collaborative management.

H_{1a}: Higher organizational capacity is likely to be associated with positive attitudes towards collaborative management

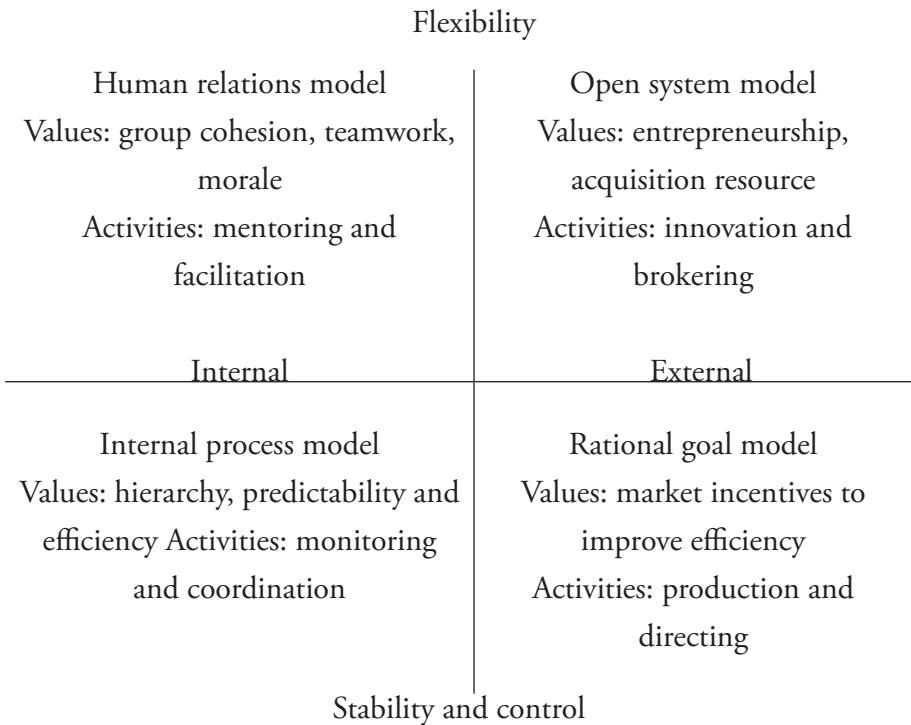
Regarding association between attitudes towards collaborative structures and organizational capacity, resources dependence theory provides some guides (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978). This theory claims that the level of organizational capacity will determine the degree of organizational dependence to external resources, and thus, the need to participate in the structure of collaboration. If we assume that managers will try to maintain organizational arrangements in operation; lower organizational capacity will be associated with positive managerial attitudes towards collaborative structure but not necessarily about collaborative management.

H_{1b}: Lower organizational capacity will be associated with positive attitudes towards collaborative structure.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational and public management scholars have agreed that organizational culture shapes attitudes and beliefs (Ban 1995, Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv & Sanders 1990, Schein 1992). Despite the unquestioned importance of organizational culture on the development of attitudes of organizational members, there is no much on theoretical and empirical research that will provide guidelines about the relations between collaborative attitudes and organizational culture. Visser (2002), for example, argues that variations in organizational cultural as well as on political culture of local governments can influence particular patterns of cooperation in urban regions. However, in his proposal there are neither references to attitudes of managers nor guidelines about which features of organizational culture can lead to more or less patterns of cooperation.

This proposal uses competing values model (Quinn & Rohrbaugh 1983) and its adaptation by Ban (1995) to hypothesize relations between types of organizational culture and managerial attitudes towards collaboration. Figure 2 shows four models arising for the combination of two dimensions control /flexibility and internal /external. Each quadrant is associated with a set of organizational values and managerial activities that the model emphasized (Ban 1995).

Figure 2: Competing values Model of managerial roles

Source: Adaptation of Ban (1995).

Applying this typology to the collaborative phenomenon, I suggest that the axis external/internal orientation can be seen as shaping preferences and resistances towards collaborative structures due to its relation with the organizational boundaries. Thus, an externally oriented culture may be more likely to foster positive attitudes towards collaboration than internally oriented organizational cultures. Conversely, managers who have socialized in an internally oriented culture may be more likely to develop resistance to work with outsiders in collaborative arrangements.

On the other hand, I suggest that the axis flexibility/control underlies preference and resistances for collaborative managerial styles. That means that a flexible oriented culture may be more likely to encourage collaborative management than a control oriented cultures. Conversely, managers who have been socialized in a culture of control where freedom of action is circumscribed by formal rules are more likely to resist the flexibility associated to collaborative management.

According to these arguments, I have constructed four hypotheses about managerial attitudes:

- H_{2a}: An externally and flexibly oriented organizational culture, (open system model), will be associated with positive attitude towards both collaborative management and structure.
- H_{2b}: An externally but control oriented organizational culture, (rational goal model), will be associated with positive attitudes towards collaborative structure but with negative attitudes towards collaborative management (or at least no association).
- H_{2c}: An internally and control oriented organizational culture, (internal process model), will be associated with negative attitudes towards both collaborative structure and management.
- H_{2d}: An internally and flexibly oriented organizational culture, (human relation model), will be associated with positive attitudes towards collaborative management but with negative attitudes towards collaborative structure (or at least no association).

The second category of factors affecting public managers' attitudes is referred to Group dimension. Group category of factors comprises the effects of profession identity on attitudes towards collaborative structure and management.

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

As results of selection, socialization and training, professions tend to promote certain beliefs and values (Filley, House & Kerr 1976). Some scholars have argued that these professional values and particular cognitive frameworks associated to professions, shape attitudes towards the solution of problems, organizational tasks and structures (Nalbandian & Edwards 1983).

This theoretical proposal considers two ways in which professional identities affect attitudes of managers towards collaboration. First, similar professions can build familiarity among managers by providing a sense of shared understanding and favoring collaboration (Doig & Hargrove 1990, Gazley 2008). In this regard, the effect of professional similarity works in a similar way as it does the phenomenon known as homophile to social network analysts: people who share similar attributes are more likely to establish relationships (Cross, Borgatti & Parker 2002, Robins, Lewis & Wang 2012). In this context, homophile reflects the propensity to the creation of ties among actors that share some attributes, and thus,

professional similarity may be one of these attributes. I hypothesize that professional similarities can encourage favorable attitudes to create or participate in *collaborative structures* with individuals from similar profession.

H_{3a}: Similarity on professional composition of collaborative arrangement will be associated with positive attitudes towards collaboration structure.

Second, certain professions embody beliefs and values that may favor collaborative and collective solutions. For example, professionals such as social workers, planners and public administrators are socialized with ideas of public interest, community development, public participation, and so they are expected to be more used to collaborative solutions than other professionals. Conversely, managers trained in business school are socialized with ideas of competitiveness and they may be suspicious about ideas of reciprocity and collaborative endeavors (Ferraro, Pfeffer & Sutton 2005)

H_{3b}: Managers from professions embodying community and collaborative values will be associated with positive attitudes towards both collaborative structure and management.

The last category of factors comprises individual characteristics that act as sources of attitudinal variation towards collaboration. Those are: managerial skills, previous sector-experience, and personal traits.

MANAGERIAL SKILLS

Previous researches have shown that skillful managers tend to develop more favorable attitudes to collaboration. For example, Kumar, Kant & Amburgey (2007) give evidence showing that managers with more years of education are less likely to resist the adoption of a collaborative approach. McGuire and Silva (2010) found that trained and professionalized emergency managers, made collaboration more likely. What is not so clear in these empirical studies is whether managerial capacity influences attitudes towards collaborative structure or exclusively towards collaborative management.

Since managerial capacity is related to the competences and skills of managers to deal with specific functions such as activation, framing, synthesizing, mobilizing resources (Agranoff & McGuire 2001), I argue that managerial capacity may only affect the attitudes towards collaborative management. When managers are able to perform the activities demanded

in collaborative setting, they may be more likely to develop positive attitudes towards collaborative management than under the lack of sufficient ability (Rainey 2009).

H₄: Skillful managers will be associated with positive attitudes towards collaborative management.

SECTOR-EXPERIENCE

Some scholars argue that successful previous interactions with non-profit organizations or personal experience as volunteer increase public managers' willingness to work collaboratively (Altman-Sauer, Henderson & Whitaker 2001, Gazley 2008, Kumar, Kant & Amburgey 2007, Kelman 2005). In the same logic, the absence or bad experiences can result in hesitation and negative attitudes towards collaboration (Snively & Desai 2001).

The underlying logic is that successful experiences remove uncertainties about other people's behavior and expectations, and thus, it allows for the establishment of ties with some partners and facilitates working cooperatively (Agranoff 2007, Kaufman 2011, Ostrom 1990). Thus, experience can affect attitudes towards both collaborative structure and collaborative management. Following, this argument I hypothesize that:

H₅: Successful previous experience of managers with sector-partners will be associated with positive attitudes towards both collaborative structure and collaborative management.

PERSONAL TRAITS

Some scholars have studied how certain personal traits influence individual predisposition to engage in collaboration (e.g. Kilduff & Tsai 2003, Kumar, Kant & Amburgey 2007). Despite the increasing scholars' interest in this area, there is not yet a clear distinction about which personal traits can be associated with positive or negative attitudes towards collaborative structure and which ones with attitudes towards collaborative management.

Regarding structural the dimension, theories of personality argue that some individuals struggle more seriously with some structural characteristics associated to collaboration. For instance, some individuals experience some stress under loose couple structures, high goal ambiguity and role ambiguity, and thus, they may be more inclined to develop negative attitudes. De Cremer, Snyder, and Dewitte (2001) and Kilduff and Tsai (2003) argue that the personal trait known as self-monitor can explain the emergence of social and organizational interactions. Self-monitoring is an individual propensity to scan social environments for clues concerning appropriated

expressions and behavior (Snyder 1987). Baron (1989) argues that high self-monitors rely on social clues from others to adjust their behavior, so that they are more likely to accept collaborative structures. Conversely, low self-monitors consistently demonstrate behaviors that express inner feelings and beliefs, and thus, they are more likely to resist consensual solutions and collaborative structures.

H_{6a}: Higher self-monitor manager will be associated with positive attitudes towards collaborative structure. In turn, low self-monitor managers will be associated with negative attitudes towards collaborative structure.

On the other hand, collaborative management comprises complex managerial tasks such as brokering, negotiating and also coordinating in contexts of high ambiguity. Some personalities may be more likely to engage with those activities and others more likely to show resistance. Huxham and Vangen (1998) argue that risk taking individuals are more likely to perform collaborative activities. Kumar, Kant & Amburgey (2007) give substantial evidence that suggest that traditional-oriented and lose aversion managers are more likely to develop negative attitudes and resistances to collaboration. Similarly, literature about entrepreneurship argues that risk takers are more likely to identify opportunities and engage in complex managerial tasks (Chen, Greene & Crick 1998). Thus, I hypothesize that risk-taking personal trait will be associated with attitudes towards collaborative management.

H_{6b}: Risk taking oriented managers will be associated with positive attitudes towards collaborative management.

These three categories of factors affecting public managers' attitudes in the way predicted by the set of hypotheses comprised the main ideas in this theoretical proposal. In the next section, I discuss some of the method's considerations that should be taken in to account when testing empirically the proposal.

CONSIDERATIONS IN TESTING THE PROPOSAL

When testing a theoretical proposal, the researcher should firstly define the area of potential interorganizational collaboration. For example, one can focus at local level and study inter-organizational collaboration among municipalities. Agranoff and McGuire (2003b) have provided empirical evidence that suggests that economic development at local level represents a policy area likely to engender collaborative arrangements. In their study, the degree of collaborative activity is a function of local managers'

perception and attitudes.

The proposed unit of analysis is the managers' reports of their attitudes towards collaboration. The reports from managers will provide empirical orientation of what factors shape their attitudes towards collaborative structures and management, for example, in the economic development area. In the next sub-sections, I present some considerations about the process of data collection and data analysis.

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT DATA COLLECTION METHODS

To collect data at individual level, a structured survey instrument is the most appropriated method. This method of data collection, however, is only appropriated under two assumptions. On the one hand, one needs to assume that managers are self-aware about their attitudes towards collaboration. On the other hand, one needs to assume that managers do not have strong incentives to falsify their responses. When both assumptions are considered to be moderately realistic, one can proceed with the design of the questionnaire.

The task of measuring attitudes is not a simple one. It is mainly because attitude is not directly observable. It is an abstract construct that lie in the mind of managers and that serves as analytical tool to give order and consistency to what people say. Thus, to measure attitudes we must rely on inferences of people's words (Henerson, Morris & Fitz-Gibbon 1987).

A tentative instrument should comprise a set of items to measure attitudes towards collaborative structure as well as towards collaborative management. For example, a 5-point Likert-type scale would be used (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree) to consider the variation in the responses of managers accounting for both positive and negative attitudes. According recommendations by Henerson, Morris & Fitz-Gibbon (1987), the instrument should consider multiple indicators to approach managers' attitudes, and also the measurement of attitudes by these items should be pre-tested to discard erratic items and thus ensure consistency of the instrument.

With the aim to open the discussion, in this article I include a proposal of tentative items to measure managers' attitudes which is built by considering previous studies in this topic. Table 1 deploys the tentative items to measure managers' attitudes towards collaborative structures and Table 2 towards collaborative management.

Table 1: Tentative Items to Measure Managers' Attitudes

Attitudes towards collaborative structures

(Adaptation Snavelly and Desai 2001)

- a. Municipal government should work closely with nonprofit organizations.
- b. Municipal authorities should explore ways to contract with nonprofit organization for delivering services.

(Adaptation Kumar, Kant & Amburgey 2007)

- a. There is nothing wrong in the present a system of managing local economic development policy
- b. I do not see any reason for involving other organizations in implementing local economic development policy.
- c. In my view, local development should stick to its traditional structure of working.

(ICMA 1997)

- d. Municipal government employees should be the only implementers of the local economic development policy.
 - e. It is acceptable that municipal government will work with non-profit organizations to provide municipal services.
 - f. A traditional administrative model with appropriate control is preferable to a less structured model.
-

*Source: Own elaboration.***Table 2: Tentative Items to Measure Managers' Attitudes**

Attitudes towards collaborative management

(Adaptation Kumar, Kant & Amburgey 2007)

- a. I think dialoguing with community organizations and other governmental organization will improve economic development in the municipality.

(ICMA 1997)

- b. Local government should "steer" but no necessarily "row the boat".
 - c. Empower community groups to make decision is a good way to manage local development affairs.
-

*Source: Own elaboration.***CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT DATA ANALYSIS**

Attitudes are abstracts constructs developed in the mind of people, and thus they are inherently unobservable (Henerson, Morris & Fitz-Gibbon 1987). However, in most previous studies, managers' attitudes are assumed as an observed phenomenon, and thus, some type of measurement error is ignored. One of the consequences of ignoring measurement error in the conceptualization of attitudes is that estimators of associations can result in inconsistent and inaccurate assessment of relationships among variables of interest (Bollen 1989). Thus, attitudes should be conceptualized taking

into account measurement errors by the definition of a latent variable.

This proposal recommends modeling attitudes as latent variable using Structural Equation Modeling, a method to control the effects of measurement error. The fundamental idea underlying structural equation modeling is to explain the variation and co-variation in a set of observed variables in terms of a set of unobserved factors (Bollen 1989). One tentative design can explore two measurement models of latent variables of attitudes towards: 1) collaborative structure; and 2) collaborative management building based on observed indicators (items-survey). Following the acceptance of this, the structural model should be built to estimate relationships among attitudes and predictors.

FINAL WORDS

Contemporary administrative reforms, innovation, and new governance structures have been incorporating the idea of inter-organizational collaboration. Beyond policy intentions, the effective implementation of these reforms required the willingness of those actors that are who actually take actions. To the date, however, we know little about what is the role of public managers in the implementation of inter-organizational collaboration and what are the factors that can influence a positive or negative attitude towards both collaborative structure and collaborative management.

This article attempts to contribute with this discussion by providing a theoretical proposal comprising ideas, concepts, hypotheses that can help to explore deeply in more active view of collaboration, one focused on individuals who really activate or block collaboration among organization. The aim of this article is to integrate what we currently know about attitudes and inter-organizational collaboration posing some theoretical propositions adjusted to the public managerial reality.

However, this article contributes only partially to the discussion. The challenge now is to apply theoretical proposals and thus increase the empirical research to discern what is going on in the setting of collective action between governmental and non-governmental actors; what the attitudes are and what determine these attitudes. This empirical information will be helpful to enhance the emergence, effectiveness, and stability of inter-organizational collaboration. Without empirical knowledge, theoretical development will be limited to just a set of ideas in the brains of academics.

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