1. Collaboration: what does it really mean?

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INTRODUCTION

Collaboration is an important yet contested concept in public management. Collaboration is widely argued to be the best approach for generating more fruitful outcomes than can be achieved independently. Purported benefits range from innovative and creative solutions to wicked problems and enhancing democratic engagement and equity to minimizing risk, achieving more effective outcomes, and doing more with less through resource sharing and eliminating redundancies. In short, collaboration is thought to be the smart thing to do and the right thing to do.

Recognizing the limitations of current inter-organizational arrays (Williams, 2016), there has been a frequent search for typologies that will be more useful to research on collaborative practices (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Mandell & Keast, 2007). Building from previous work (Keast, 2015, 2016d; Stout, Bartels, & Love, 2019), this chapter contributes to the development of “typologies of different kinds of CGRs [Collaborative Governance Regimes]” (Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012, p. 22). More specifically, we seek to generate a typology that precisely defines *collaboration* and differentiates it from similar and related terms. Without such clarification, there is a continuing risk of conceptually messy and weak foundations for both research and practice.

Toward this end, this chapter seeks to unpack the full and precise meaning of collaboration by adding an analysis of power dynamics in varied ways of working together. As have others (see for example, Popp, Milward, MacKean, Casebeer, & Lindstrom, 2014), we argue that how power is held and wielded fundamentally alters how we work together and determines whether genuine collaboration is achieved. Therefore, we will use varied forms of power to clearly define collaboration and differentiate it from similar terms. We review literature in a broad array of disciplines (e.g., business, public administration and policy, planning and geography, community development, sociology, social work, and education) to get a clear sense of how the term *collaboration* is being used and to differentiate its characteristics from coordination and cooperation, in particular. In other words, what exactly does it mean to *collaborate*?

A basic complicating factor is linguistic in nature: collaboration is used as an action (verb) or as an entity or structure (noun), while its variants are used as descriptors of either (adverbs and adjectives) (Lewis, Ross, & Holden, 2012). As a verb, *collaboration* is often used interchangeably with *cooperation* and *coordination* to depict interaction between organizations, and these are sometimes subsumed within each other. For example, Alter and Hage (1993) conceptualize collaboration as a sub-set of cooperation, while government documents frequently use coordination and collaboration to describe similar interactions (see for example, Wanna, Phillimore, Fenna, & Harwood, 2009). Collaboration as a noun is often equated with inter-organizational entities or structures formed to facilitate interaction such as networks, alliances, partnerships, or joint ventures (Cropper, Ebers, Huxham, & Ring, 2008). Taken together, these applications serve to confound or subsume the meaning of collaboration, as

suggested by Todeva and Knoke (2005) and others (see for example, Keast, 2015; Morris & Miller-Stevens, 2016; Williams, 2016).

Complicating matters further, the many structural names for working together (nouns and adjectives) do not necessitate the specific relational dynamics within them (verbs and adverbs), despite these dimensions being inherent to any form of social interaction. For example, while conglomerates, amalgamations, and mergers may infer *consolidation*, and rivalry and exchange may infer *competition*, other organizational arrangements are decidedly more complicated. While alliances, coalitions, and networks may often reflect *coordination*, they may also include elements of collaboration, cooperation, and competition. While partnerships and joint ventures may often display *cooperation*, they may also include elements of competition, collaboration, and coordination. To understand which type of structural arrangement might foster the act of collaboration most effectively, we must first clearly define and differentiate collaboration from both similar and substantially different behaviors (e.g., coordination and cooperation, versus consolidation and competition).

Collaboration's etymology clearly suggests working together: to "co-labor." This meaning stems from the late Latin *collaborare*, signifying "to labor with or together" (Lewis & Short, 1879, p. 365). The verb collaborate was introduced into English in the mid-1800s, and with the French ending "tion" was subsequently used also as a noun. Since then, the term collaboration has been adopted by public management and many other practice disciplines (e.g., business, engineering/construction, international relations/development, social work, community development, education, etc.), each contributing their own interpretation. This transference across sectors has led to muddled meanings (Morris & Miller-Stevens, 2016; Todeva & Knoke, 2005). A review of recent selections across these disciplines produced the following observations. Business scholars take a distinctive instrumental approach; collaboration is undertaken to access beneficial resources and leverage strategic relationships (Davis, 2016; Loosemore & Richard, 2015). Governance scholars (public management, administration, and policy) also describe a dominant instrumental and resource sharing purpose, but for solving public problems and producing public value (de Loë, Murray, & Simpson, 2015; Hafer, 2017; Hsieh & Liou, 2016; Ulibarra, 2018; Vangen, 2017). It is also clear that these scholars assume government oversees coordinating procedures and activities. Planning, social work, and community development scholars seem to have the strongest understanding of collaboration as originally defined. In these disciplines, collaboration is described as a process method used in joint deliberation, decision-making, and action (Southby & Gamsu, 2018; Ulibarra, 2018). The emphasis is on participative, egalitarian relationships and facilitated micro-processes and interpersonal relations. Therefore, *collaboration* is a prominent example of a stretched term—one whose meaning has expanded to the degree that it has lost specificity in comparison with related, yet substantively different meanings.

In the field of public management—our primary concern herein—unpacking the meaning and practice of collaboration is a challenge that has been taken up by collaborative governance and network governance scholars, who tend to argue *network* structures that seek to govern inquiry, deliberation, decision-making, and action *collaboratively* are the most promising combination for fruitful outcomes—the "collaborative advantage" (Huxham, 1996). The literature's dual emphasis on both structure and process does provide important insights to the study and practice of collaboration. In many ways, macro-level governance structures are shaped by micro-level interactions in a scaffolding process, and in turn, the characteristics of micro-interactions are constrained by macro-level structures (Cohen, 2008). Thus,

attitudes, intentions, and behaviors shape structure, and structure perpetuates the originating dispositions. However, as has been argued by others (see for example, Ansell, 2011; Stout & Love, 2015), on their own, structural properties and various procedural approaches to working together are not sufficient to generate genuine collaboration and must be shored up and facilitated by many micro-level attitudes, behaviors, and interactions of collaborators (Keast, 2016b). Thus, a more careful definition is necessary to functionally, as opposed to structurally, differentiate collaboration.

The in-depth analysis of the collaborative governance literature provided by Stout and Love (2019) demonstrates that empirical studies have not identified the particular relational dynamics that differentiate collaboration from other approaches to working together because in practice, many actors display behaviors that are not actually *collaborative*. Lumping those behaviors into the definition of “collaboration” simply because they are found in a “governance network” has muddied the waters, rather than clarifying them (Stout et al., 2019). Indeed, studies find that many governance networks are not fully collaborative, as hierarchy and/or competition can dominate their operations (Davies, 2009; Innes & Booher, 2010; Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998; Mandell & Keast, 2007). Therefore, many argue that substantial changes to relational dynamics are required to achieve genuine collaboration (Gray, 1989; Innes & Booher, 2010; Keast, Mandell, Brown, & Woolcock, 2004; Stout et al., 2019; Stout & Love, 2017).

In sum, for those studying and practicing public governance, management, and administration, “collaboration remains an elusive concept” (Chen, 2008, p. 349). One of the most important barriers to collaborative success is that of “process breakdowns due to protracted human relations processes” (Agranoff, 2008, p. 345). What exact relational attitudes and behaviors support collaborative functions such as “interactive processing” and “mutual engagement and mutual adjustment” (Agranoff, 2008, p. 344)? What particular type of culture “builds collaborative community” (Agranoff, 2008, p. 343)? To answer such questions, “we must turn our attention to the dispositions that prefigure interpersonal dynamics along with organizational process designs that either hinder or foster collaboration” (Stout et al., 2019, p. 99). A more detailed and nuanced unpacking of collaboration’s distinctive characteristics that takes greater account of these micro-level practices in action (Grove, Dainty, Thompson, & Thorpe, 2018) will enable evaluations of which particular relational dynamics lead to the most democratic and best instrumental outcomes.

In the following sections, we clarify the meanings of varied ways of working together to differentiate collaboration from consolidation, coordination, competition, cooperation, and clientelism. We begin by defining each of the most used approaches to working together, explaining its purpose, how it is ensured, the principal form of power used, the associated governance approach, and the typical relational and behavioral characteristics. With this definition in hand, we offer a concrete public management example to illustrate. We use guidance from a recently proposed governance typology (see Stout & Love, 2016), along with a power typology to clarify these differences. With this extended typology of ways of working together in hand, we synthesize and summarize the differentiating characteristics of collaboration and offer conclusions about why these meanings matter for future research and practice.

VARIED WAYS OF WORKING TOGETHER

While several typologies of inter-organizational arrangements have been developed and have provided important insights into different ways of working together, they have not yet fully clarified relational nuances that meaningfully influence collaborative processes and outcomes. Some typologies focus on cataloging the formalized institutional structures (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994), while others seek to differentiate based on a mix of behavioral and structural defining features (Himmelmann, 1994; Mashek & Nanfito, 2015; McNamara, 2012). One such typology, the “Five Cs” (Keast, 2015), considers the characteristics of competition, cooperation, coordination, collaboration, and consolidation along a continuum from least to most intensive interactions, in that order. Somewhat like nesting Matryoshka dolls, each term builds upon and extends the shared dimensions and functional logic of the previous term—especially among the middle three. Indeed, the behavioral similarities at the center of this relational continuum of coordination, collaboration, and cooperation—the “Three Cs” as previously conceptualized (Brown & Keast, 2003; Keast, 2016b)—has led to a tendency to use the terms interchangeably, despite growing agreement that collaboration exhibits distinctive characteristics (Gray, 1989; Himmelmann, 1994; Morris & Miller-Stevens, 2016; Wood & Gray, 1991). Herein, we will add an additional “C” into the spectrum—clientelism—to better accommodate a comprehensive analysis of power dynamics in varied ways of relating and working together.

Taking a fresh look at the similarities and differences, we find that collaboration is more analogous to how Stout and Love (2016) conceptualize the Integrative Governance position as sitting apart from the spectrum of other approaches to governance (i.e., Holographic, Hierarchical, Atomistic, and Fragmented). This linkage to the Governance Arc highlights the issue of power dynamics in varied ways of working together and the transformative effects of collaboration. Ostensibly, the value produced by collaboration is generated by the removal of hierarchical command and control structures as well as the strategic self-interested behavior of market actors (Huxham, 1996; Powell, 1990)—both of which generate asymmetrical power relations. Further, one of the driving forces identified in collaborative dynamics is how power is held and exercised (Crosby & Bryson, 2007). When actors bring power dynamics grounded in their relative social, economic, and organizational status in other contexts into collaborative action (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999), the fundamental characteristics of collaboration are undermined to one degree or another. Different ways of working together tend to exhibit particular forms of power: cooperative power can be used to further self-interest, while coordinative power often draws on force, coercion, and the ability to control the discourse, process, and solutions (Dewulf & Elbers, 2018). By contrast, collaborators exercise shared power (Gray, 1994).

Huxham and Vangen (2005) argue that *power-over* is orientated toward one’s own gain, *power-to* is oriented toward mutual gain, and *power-for* is oriented toward altruistic gain. More commonly, power typologies differentiate *power-over*, *power-within*, *power-to*, and *power-with* (Follett, 2003c; Gaventa, 2006; Ledwith, 2011; Purdy, 2012). *Power-over* is the typical way power is understood in modern society, wherein one can control or influence others. *Power-to* is described as agency, or the ability to act as one chooses. *Power-with* is understood as solidarity, wherein one acts in egalitarian mutuality with others. *Power-within* is the sense of self-efficacy and authentic identity that is enabled and strengthened among those most empowered: those in control of *power-over*, those most benefitted in *power-to*, and all participants in *power-with*. All forms of power can be wielded in ways that are perceived to

legitimate, depending upon the expectations of participants. Yet, differing power dynamics produce attitudinal and relational micro-processes and behaviors that affect both processes and outcomes.

Reconsidering the “Five Cs” (Keast, 2015, 2016c) using the lenses of the Governance Arc (Stout & Love, 2016) and these nuanced forms of power, we reconfigure the varied ways of working together on a spectrum of ideal-types that differentiate collaboration (*power-with*) from coordination and consolidation, which move along the arc in the direction of control and unification (*power-over*), while cooperation and competition move along the arc in the direction of independent operations and fragmentation (*power-to*) (see Figure 1.1). At the center, *power-for* reflects a charitable or public service form of clientelism (see Figure 1.1). Each of these forms of power can produce negative outcomes for some. Because only *power-with* builds *power-within* among all participants, we believe this repositioning helps clarify precisely where the positive overlaps with coordination and cooperation end and the unique and advantageous features of collaboration stand apart.

Figure 1.1 Arc of working together

The following sub-sections will unpack our hypothesis in detail. Each will define the term, consider it in relation to the Governance Typology (Stout & Love, 2016) and forms of power, and provide an example of how it usually works.

Consolidation

Positioned at the bottom left in Figure 1.1, *consolidation* means “the process of becoming or being made stronger and more certain” (Cambridge University Press, 2019). For example, the amalgamation of two or more smaller entities into a new entity or the absorption of one

entity by another creates strength through the combination of assets, liabilities, and finances (Chalmers & Davis, 2001) and efficiencies through the reduction of redundant personnel or processes (Harman, 1993). As per classic theories of bureaucracy, the focus and control possible within a single administrative macro-structure allows for resources to be better deployed to meet goals, and reduces the time and effort directed toward turf protection between entities. Consolidation works best when actors are willing to give up authority as opposed to a hostile takeover, nonetheless, consolidation typically relies on *power-over* directives from a central authority. While consolidation rarely denotes equal power, there is nonetheless a possibility that a more even distribution may evolve over time, especially if organizations are of equivalent size and influence (Tienari & Vaara, 2012). Consolidation is most similar to Holographic Governance (Stout & Love, 2016) because mergers require a unifying vision or mission. Even if voluntary, *power-over* demands homogenization that Follett (1998) describes as “imitation” (37) or “the crowd trying to preserve itself as it is...” (Follett, 2013, p. 128)—a characteristic that hinders creative innovation and limits *power-to* and *power-within* for most participants.

Examples of consolidation in government include the structural reconfiguration of several departments into a mega-department (Chalmers & Davis, 2001; Mannheim, 2019) or the merger of smaller local government municipalities into larger jurisdictions, such as has been witnessed in Europe (Fox & Gurley-Calvez, 2006), the United States (Nelson & Stenberg, 2018), and Australia. For example, in 2016 the New South Wales state government created 19 newly amalgamated local councils in order to deliver more effective services with greater efficiency (Dollery, 2016). In each case, those with less power experience some degree of disempowerment as authority is centralized.

Coordination

Moving toward center in Figure 1.1, *coordination* means “to make separate things work together” (Cambridge University Press, 2019) and is applied especially when there is a need to more efficiently align resources or orchestrate functions in an ordered manner to meet pre-determined goals (Dunsire, 1978; Mulford & Rogers, 1982). While much less structured and stringent than consolidation, coordination typically relies on *power-over* relational dynamics that center a lead organization or individual with the authority to direct others. These hierarchical tendencies (Painter, 1987) align coordination with Hierarchical Governance (Stout & Love, 2016), in which orders are often “hardly distinguishable from coercion” (Follett, 2013, p. 200). While not as constraining as consolidation, *power-to* and *power-within* for most participants are hindered by centralized mandates, formal objectives, rules and procedures, or compelling incentives to establish goals and methods, ensure expected behavior, resolve conflict (Dunsire, 1978), or even mandate involvement (Bachmann, 2001). Furthermore, since coordination requires actions to flow in a sequential manner (i.e., B requires A to do their part in order to progress) (Thompson, 1967), participants are dependent on others and this *power-over* dynamic is distributed throughout the system.

Coordination can be seen in distinct public and nonprofit agencies joined up in a coalition led by one agency in particular (Mulford & Rogers, 1982). For example, a coalition of government and nonprofit organizations that work in similar service arenas might be tasked with implementing varied aspects of a whole government policy. Generally, such efforts are coordinated by the lead government agency in what has been called a “meta-governance” role (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009). Alternatively, we see coordination in “one-stop shops” where

multiple services are clustered in one location, with one agency playing a central coordinating role in service management. Therefore, the coordinator holds some type of authority over other members to direct their behavior.

Competition

At the bottom right of Figure 1.1, *competition* means “an activity done by a number of people or organizations, each of which is trying to do better than all the others” (Cambridge University Press, 2019). Thus, the primary relationship is a rivalry between two or more independent parties (Bish, 1978, p. 23). However, competition is also used in exchange, which brings independent actors into single or serial transactions under conditions of self-interest, each party exercising *power-to* and avoiding *power-over* to the greatest degree possible. In these transactions, *power-within* is generated only amongst “the winners.” As Thompson and Sanders (1998) suggest, such an adversarial mentality can readily lead to conflict, defensive positions, and ultimately disjointed or conflictual relationships. In *Fragmented Governance* (Stout & Love, 2016), pluralist competition is taken to its greatest extreme and individualist anarchism emerges as the only viable political and economic form—governance by none. With this elimination of macro-structures and reliance on purely transactional micro-processes, mutually desirable outcomes are a matter of coincidence rather than intent.

Competition can be seen in the growth of government policies applying market principles and policies that expose public sector services to competitive forces and contracting out to reduce service costs and increase efficiencies (Productivity Commission, 2017). Competition is also evident in departments and non-government bodies trying to limit what they share with those who in other circumstances would be rivals for clients, scarce resources, or funding (Smyth, Malbon, & Carey, 2017). In such cases, win–lose outcomes predominate.

Cooperation

Moving to the left in Figure 1.1, *cooperation* refers to when one “helps willingly when asked” (Cambridge University Press, 2019). In cooperative relationships, each entity remains separate, retaining its own autonomy, resources, and authority (Ciglar, 2001; Mulford & Rogers, 1982; Winer & Ray, 1994) and voluntarily engages in mutually beneficial exchanges. Thompson (1967) explains that in such pooled interdependence, only small mutual adjustments are made. Thus, cooperation still reflects *power-to* relational dynamics, as behaviors relate to individual rather than collective goals (Mandell, 2002). This willingness to independently work toward limited shared purposes aligns cooperation with Atomistic Governance (Stout & Love, 2016), in which pluralist actors are expected to maintain a high degree of liberty and self-sufficiency while operating under shared rules. Actors take a strategic stance toward getting what they want, with encounters being characterized by protective behavior and negotiated bargaining. While moderated, these *power-to* behaviors can still result in compromises in which all parties lose something (Follett, 2003a), including both *power-over* and *power-within*.

Cooperation can be seen in interagency meetings where members come together to share basic information so that each can go about their business more effectively. For example, in cooperative federalism initiatives such as the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), inter-governmental agreements are reached and statements of cooperation are developed that

support local autonomy, while also acting as a precursor to joint actions (Wanna et al., 2009, p. 11).

Clientelism

Referring to the center of the arc in Figure 1.1, Huxham and Vangen (2005) argue that *power-for* is oriented toward altruistic gain, wherein power is transferred from one person to another and includes some form of “user involvement” (p. 176). While not a perfect fit, we associate *power-for* with clientelism because it involves asymmetric relationships between empowered actors or “patrons” and their clients. Clientelism is a method of contingent exchange that features implicit or explicit quid pro quo agreements (Hicken, 2011)—even if it is only the enjoyable feeling of altruism, charity, or service. Furthermore, in many public and nonprofit agencies, service to a client is contingent upon the recipient acting in accordance with the agency’s expectations. For example, when we obey the law, we receive police protection; when we follow the rules, we receive public education, welfare assistance, and the like.

The positive view on this relational dynamic is well-illustrated in Ostrom’s conception of co-production, wherein public servants rely on citizens to achieve their aims and all benefit from the relationship (Alford, 2014). Unfortunately, exercising *power-for* another person can also diminish their *power-within* and their own *power-to* because it does not necessarily foster development. At its worst, clientelist advocacy, service, and charity keep clients “poor and dependent” (Hicken, 2011, p. 289). As the oft-cited adage illustrates, giving someone a fish to eat does not empower them, while teaching them to fish does. The risk of disempowering “help” is a growing critique in the social justice and community development literature (Pearson, 1999; Toomey, 2009).

Collaboration

At its most basic, collaboration occurs when “two or more people work together to create or achieve the same thing” (Cambridge University Press, 2019). However, as currently understood, the “thing” is not pre-determined, that is, it emerges out of repeated interactions and relational processes (routines, artifacts, communications) to form the synergies capable of co-creating something new (Mandell, 2002) or co-create a new whole from existing parts (Innes & Booher, 2010). Such efforts are best achieved through structural arrangements that enable horizontal authority and flexibility in response to ongoing change. Such “structured nonhierarchical social interaction” (Thayer, 1981, p. A38) is neither hierarchical nor competitive (Powell, 1990). This is precisely why network governance has become linked to collaborative governance (Keast, 2016a).

While important, form is insufficient to ensure the functional differences of collaboration. A “relational disposition” and a “cooperative style of relating” within a “participatory mode of association” (Stout & Love, 2017) are also required to ensure effective collaboration. Specifically, participants must have a disposition that acknowledges interconnection and interdependence (Innes & Booher, 2010) or reciprocal interdependence (Thompson, 1967). These assumptions are the ethical foundation for a commitment to mutuality (or generalized reciprocity) (Huxham & Vangen, 2005), trusting and respectful interpersonal relations (Mandell, 2002), and communicative capacity (Bartels, 2015). Furthermore, a transparent, facilitated integrative process must be employed to ensure shared engagement in and responsibility for

inquiry, dialogue, constructive conflict, deliberation, consensus-oriented decisions, action, and evaluative reflection (Flynn, 2019; Gray, 1989; Keast, Koliba, & Voets, 2019). These participative practices build mutual understanding and shared language and identity, which further strengthen interpersonal relationships, a sense of *power-within*, and a commitment to shared purpose. This type of cohesion is necessary for sustained synergistic efforts (Larson, Rottinghaus, & Borgen, 2002). Thus, the relational process itself is the connective tissue that establishes and sustains collaboration.

To fully engage in this emergent and co-creative process, collaborators must hold a *power-with* orientation so that no member wields *power-over* others and no member's exercise of *power-to* infringes upon the same ability of any other member. It has been well-argued that attempts to work together are most productive when they are egalitarian and authentically participatory (King, Feltey, & Susel, 1998). Collaborators "collectively make decisions about their future and mutually authorize each other to act on behalf of the collectivity" (Gray, 1994, p. 288). However, this does not mean that interactions are necessarily pleasant or easy (Young, 1996). The process of integration anticipates and enables constructive conflict through disintegration of *a priori* positions, collaborative discovery of facts and values, revaluation of desires and methods through dialogue, and creative, integrative determinations and action (Follett, 2003a). Through meaningful engagement, a sense of collective responsibility and experientially founded commitment to what has been decided results.

This openness to difference and disagreement requires attention to informal interpersonal relations—relating to one another as whole human beings, rather than as means to ends. Sharing meals, stories, and personal perspectives enhances mutual understanding, trust, and respect, all of which are necessary to resolve conflict constructively, as well as to challenge the status quo and risk innovation or go above and beyond to help a colleague (Grove et al., 2018; Keast et al., 2004; Vandeventer & Mandell, 2011). These relational characteristics are the foundation for humanistic, *power-with* relations—and they require deliberate efforts to build and strengthen.

As described, collaboration is inherent to Integrative Governance (Stout & Love, 2016, 2019), which assumes "reality is in the relating, in the activity-between" (Follett, 2013, p. 54). This approach assumes the entirety of social, political, and economic life is a deeply nesting, broadly inclusive web of networks formed through collaborative human relationship. Positional authority is relinquished and transferred to the collaborative process itself to foster dynamic, situation-specific decisions and action. The administrative role is transformed into a function of self-organizing coordination and facilitation *that anyone can perform*.

This type of collaboration was at the heart of the Goodna Service Integration Project (SIP), which brought together government and non-government service providers to address a community crisis. SIP drew on a combination of shared language, inter-professional learning and decision-making, coupled with reflective practice aided by a professional facilitator to change both the local governance regime and the way that services were delivered in that region (Keast et al., 2004; Woolcock & Boorman, 2003). Collaboration was also evident in the Sacramento Water Forum project, which overcame 30 years of deeply contested interactions through the deliberate deployment of a suite of relational strategies and facilitative processes to forge mutual agreements that led to innovative solutions (Innes & Booher, 2010).

DIFFERENTIATING COLLABORATION

Numerous articles have been written on collaboration, especially since the mid-1980s. Within this literature, much attention has been directed toward isolating key elements shaping collaborative governance and practice (see for example Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsy, 2001; Wood & Gray, 1991). For example, through extensive empirical work, Thomson and Perry (2006) isolated five dimensions of collaboration that include: social processes that build and nurture the mutuality and collective norms necessary for collaboration to take place and be sustained, governance and administrative structures that enable implementation of collaborative efforts, and mechanisms that both build and nurture interpersonal relationships and constructively address the agency/autonomy conflicts inherent in collective efforts. More recently, Mayer and Kenter (2016) identified nine elements appearing as common to many studies—communication, consensus decision-making, diverse stakeholders, goals, leadership, shared resources, shared vision, social capital, and trust. However, none of these conceptualizations directly address forms of power and how they affect relational micro-processes in the act of collaborating as defined herein. In this section, we seek to highlight the specific relational practices and power dynamics that are unique to collaboration, as opposed to those also found in other ways of working together.

There is growing agreement in the literature as well as in practice that collaboration represents a “higher-order level” of working together (Thomson & Perry, 2006, p. 23); one that demands *integrative processes*, which “implies interaction leading to an improved synthesis” (Stever, 1988, p. 82). To further explain this argument, Stout and Love (2017) draw upon Mary Follett’s theory of *integrative process* (Stout & Love, 2015) to offer a theoretical definition of collaboration as a specific method of integration. Herein, we argue that just as Integrative Governance incorporates and transforms aspects of the other approaches to governance (Stout & Love, 2019), collaboration offers a way for actors who are motivated to work cooperatively and to coordinate their activities, but, in a *particular manner* that is more relational than transactive, and more egalitarian and self-organizing than managed. Thus, in many instances, *what we do* may look very similar (e.g., consolidate, coordinate, engage with clients, cooperate, and compete), but *why* we do it and *how* we do it differ substantively.

Collaboration goes further in regard to relational process, which gives collaboration its distinctive edge over the hierarchical authority relations of the state (and many nonprofit agencies), or the transactional contractual relations that characterize the market (Powell, 1990, p. 336). Furthermore, it is the strength of the relationship between members and their level of acknowledged interdependence that differentiates collaboration from other ways of working together (Huxham & Beech, 2003; Keast et al., 2004). In coordination and cooperation, a transactional exchange relationship is generally more prominent, whereas in collaboration, interpersonal relationships transform transactions into humanistic exchanges and encounters, allowing synergies to emerge and innovations to occur. These differing attitudes and styles and strengths of communicating, interacting, and organizing action are each framed by differing worldviews and philosophical commitments (Stout & Love, 2016, 2019). The collaborative way of behaving and interacting with others has a culture that values ongoing relationships and mutuality “in which cooperative behavior is prized over competition” (Marlowe, Jastroch, Nousala, & Kirova, 2011, p. 2).

These studies confirm that while understanding the structural aspects of collaboration has merit, it is the micro-processes of collaboration—the informal relational mechanisms and

their power dynamics—that offer the greatest insights into the *doing* of collaboration. These self-organizing, everyday interactions and processual routines become the structure that brings people together, facilitates agreements, and organizes and mobilizes the actions argued to be the central and definitive features of collaboration and its advantages. As Cissna and Anderson (1998) point out, in the study of relational interactions we must “identify the attitudes with which [actors] approach each other, the ways they talk and act, the consequences of their meeting, and the context within which they meet” (p. 64).

Identifying and illuminating these micro-processes enables practitioners and researchers to appreciate rather than discount these activities as over-processual or wasted effort. Rather, these attitudes and interactions are the manifestations of *power-with*—the key characteristic that differentiates collaboration from other ways of working together. The notion of “public encounters” (Bartels, 2015) is instructive on this point because it addresses the inherent power dynamics of government authority that continue to trouble egalitarian relationships between public administrators and the residents they serve. To garner the benefits of collaboration, interaction must nurture “stable personal relationships and constructive communication,” which requires that we not only “explicate the psychological, social, and communicative dynamics of ... encounters” (Bartels, 2013, p. 473), but that we acknowledge the importance of how power is held and wielded in these interactions. We argue that none of the differentiating relational characteristics are possible without a shared understanding of and commitment to *power-with*.

As shown in Figure 1.2, consolidation and coordination are collectivist approaches that tend to rely on *power-over* structures and procedures to achieve desired goals, while competition and cooperation are individualist approaches that tend to rely on *power-to* in the pursuit of goals. *Power-over* and *power-to* both operate in an instrumental and transactional manner: *power-over* is uni-directional, while *power-to* can be either uni- or bi-directional. Both forms of power generate *power-within* asymmetrically and hinder the type of *power-with* that is requisite to effective collaboration. The notion of *power-for* is located at the center of the arc, as it is associated with clientelism, wherein one actor holds *power-over* but acts on behalf of another actor (*power-to*) for whom they are advocating or to whom they are transferring power.

Rather than seeing collaborative *power-with* or shared power as sitting between *power-for* and *power-to* (see Huxham & Vangen, 2005), we place it off the arc spectrum altogether because it requires a relational approach that has the unique ability to *transform* behaviors found in these other ways of working together, while also achieving the ends each approach seeks. In other words, collaboration can transform how we consolidate and coordinate, it can equalize patron–client relationships, and it can transform how we cooperate and compete. While *power-with* is multi-directional, it is a mutual *relationship* and shared commitment to not only what is produced, but to the people and process co-creating it. As such, *power-with* is the only form of power that generates *power-within* amongst *all* participants—it is, indeed, “*collaborative empowerment*” (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, p. 177).

Specifically, on the bottom left side of the arc, consolidation seeks to achieve resource integration through vertical integration or operational takeovers, or mergers enabled by command and control mechanisms or through transactional takeovers. Collaboration assembles a new whole or network that remains responsive to emergent change within and beyond the system through ongoing *assemblage*. Coordination seeks to integrate functions in an effective manner through pre-established goals, authoritative direction, and formalized procedures and rules.

Figure 1.2 *The transformational advantage of collaboration*

Collaboration achieves integrated functions through its participatory, self-organizing *integrative process* and the commitment to shared purpose it generates.

At the center of the arc, the service-oriented clientelism and advocacy of *power-for* is transformed into its mutualistic form—*solidarity*. Collaborators stand with one another as equals in not only the pursuit of shared goals, but in support of one another’s independent endeavors as well.

On the bottom right side of the arc, competition seeks to achieve self-interest in the face of rival exchange partners and relies on strategic negotiations to win over others who lose. Collaboration invites and embraces *constructive conflict*, finding it to be advantageous to determining better purposes and ways to achieve them in a win–win fashion. Cooperation seeks to align action through negotiation and instrumental transactions that prioritize one’s own advantage. Collaboration not only achieves aligned action but pushes beyond to generate and achieve both shared and emergent goals through egalitarian *mutualism*.

In sum, being grounded in *power-with*, collaboration is a generative and coactive power (Follett, 1924) that invites and transforms *power-to* and *power-for* into mutualistic relational efforts that embrace difference as a creative opportunity, and transform *power-over* into self-organizing integration, thereby building *power-within* for all participants, as opposed to only some. As described herein (also see Keast, 2016b; Stout et al., 2019), collaboration has a culture and particular micro-processes that differentiate it from other ways of working together, as shown in Table 1.1. Clientelism is omitted from this analysis, as it generally functions as a dysfunctional compromise between *power-over* and *power-to* methods, without transforming the meanings in either.

Table 1.1 Differentiating collaboration

	Consolidation/ Coordination	Collaboration	Cooperation/ Competition
Organizing Approach	<i>Rigidly structured</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchically pre-determined goals • Formal procedures • Avoids risk • Conservative • Ordered transactions 	<i>Emergent</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processual, generative, adaptive interaction toward evolving proximal and end goals • Embraces risk • Transformational • Self-organizing engagements 	<i>Flexibly arranged</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategically pre-determined goals or spontaneous opportunity • Pluralist processes • Minimizes risk • Marginal change • Responsive transactions
Interaction Type	<i>Collectivist</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumed group embeddedness • Group over individual interests • <i>Power-over</i>, rule-enforced behavior due to mistrust • Positional engagement 	<i>Relational</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumed interconnectedness and interdependence • Individual and group interests • <i>Power-with</i>, mutuality, trust, and respect • Transparent, inclusive, and participative 	<i>Individualist</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumed atomistic independence • Individual over group interests • <i>Power-to</i>, opportunistic self-interest and suspicion • Merit-based engagement
Decision-Making Approach	<i>Directive</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Command and control • Authoritative orders and decisions 	<i>Integrative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowered self-organizing • Facilitated method of integration (used in inquiry, dialogue, constructive conflict, deliberation, consensus-oriented decisions, and evaluative reflection) 	<i>Negotiated</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic positioning • Bargaining and compromise

Focusing explanation on the less familiar characteristics of collaboration, emergent structures are self-organizing, processual, generative, and adaptive to support relationality and the method of integration. Each collaborator values and/or exercises facilitative leadership (evoking new ideas, interacting, integrating, and enabling emergent change) (Follett, 2003b). Each collaborator is open to allowing the evolving will of the group to guide decisions, actions, and goals. Each collaborator is ready to learn, develop new ideas and methods, take risks, and act according to collective agreements, including those that demand transformational change.

A relational disposition assumes that all beings, things, and places are interconnected and that those engaging in collective efforts are interdependent and should therefore act according to mutuality and *power-with*. Therefore, collaborators view working together as a path to progress for both themselves and the group. Deeper interpersonal relations are evident as collaborators engage with one another as whole human beings who trust and respect one another. *Power-with* is evident in a transparent, inclusive, and participative culture; as a result, a shared identity forms that is open-ended and inclusive.

Integrative process is evident when participative practices are used consistently, enough time is given to execute the method of integration completely, and results are honored and legitimized. Furthermore, as Purdy (2012) notes, there is a growing imperative for those responsible for the design and management of shared working arrangements to understand the various sources and uses of power that can be applied. To identify and rectify power imbalances to match the needs of the participants, relational processes must be transformed to ensure genuine *power-with*. Understanding both the sources and uses of power is an important

antecedent to effective facilitation and management (Huxham & Beech, 2008), as it provides relational parameters for process design and engagement. Collaborators engage in active listening and consensus-seeking within facilitated dialogue and deliberation. Collaborators value one another's expertise and differences that emerge during discovery, definition, deliberation, and determination, meeting them with creative integration, or constructive conflict. Shared goals and actions emerge from the synergy collaborators co-create. Decisions emerge from consensus or modified voting procedures without evidence of domination or compromise. Resulting actions are based on complex integrative practices, indicated by changes to individual member actions and innovative joint actions. Finally, collaborators engage in evaluative reflection with one another in regard to both process and outcomes, as well as interpersonal behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

We have argued that the varying power dynamics and relational dispositions and micro-processes found in varied ways of working together reflect underlying philosophical commitments that have causal implications for both process and outcomes. Further, it is often the case that organizational members from hierarchical and competitive settings carry forward matching attitudinal dispositions and relational styles, thereby hindering the collaborative dynamics of the group (also see Keast & Mandell, 2013; Mandell & Keast, 2007; Stout et al., 2019; Stout & Love, 2019). The *power-over* tendencies of coordination and consolidation on the one hand and the pluralist *power-to* tendencies of cooperation and competition on the other are counter to the collaborative goal to achieve integration (Bardach, 1998), as is the disempowering use of *power-for*, wherein integration may remain forced to one degree or another. Inter-organizational working—particularly across sectors—is rife with power dynamics; however, micro-processes that emphasize *power-with* approaches and outcomes establish a pathway for genuine collaboration and its advantages. To garner these benefits, we must pursue the specific emergent, relational, and integrative practices described herein.

Toward this end, training in relational skills and the method of integration are likely necessary, as the collaborative worldview and approach to exercising power is contrary to what we typically find in public management contexts—both in terms of organizational settings and academic preparation. We must learn how to: nurture and value relationships; establish appropriate terms of engagement; facilitate and participate in dialogue, deliberation, and consensus-oriented decision-making; engage in constructive conflict resolution and transformation; and participate in self-reflective dialogue and evaluation without fear. In other words, we must learn to trust the process, ourselves, and one another.

In terms of research, ostensibly, the degree to which interactions within a given group reflect collaborative characteristics should correlate with the extent to which improved outcomes are achieved. Future research on attempts to collaborate should focus on process and outcomes evaluation to determine whether the relational micro-processes indicated herein are evident. Such process tracing provides a useful method to rigorously track and uncover the power dynamics in relationally driven actions and outcomes. The more nuanced clarifications offered provide a more robust foundation for beginning this empirical work.

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