

## **ABSTRACT**

BAXTER, FIONA MARGARET. *Organizational Leadership and Management in Interorganizational Partnerships: Varieties of Networking in the Era of New Governance.* (Under the direction of James H. Svara, Ph.D.)

The challenges of administering in today's networked world are considerable. Setting coherent goals and striving for intraorganizational collaboration to achieve specific objectives is challenging within a single public agency, assuming it is at least structurally capable of unified action. These tasks become even more difficult in the era of new governance where public managers must engage in interorganizational arrangements where they may find themselves sharing the formal authority that they have traditionally wielded by themselves with their partners. So, why do public administrators decide to work together and, when such efforts are undertaken, what are the institutional constraints that influence behavior? This question is the focus of this research.

This researcher contends that by using rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism, it is possible to move beyond description to explain why organizations come together to accomplish a shared goal and how preferences and institutional arrangements affect outcomes. Based on a review of the literature, an integrated model of institutionalism for interorganizational collaboration will be developed. This model will then be evaluated using research findings from one partnership between three community colleges reputed to be effectively engaged in addressing issues of workforce development in Central Florida. Of interest to this study is to demonstrate the usefulness of an integrated model of institutional theory for understanding and explaining interorganizational collaboration.

Findings suggest that actors are initially driven to collaborate by decisions that can be explained by rational choice institutionalism. However, as the collaboration process unfolds, participants may have mixed preferences or shift between exogenous and endogenous preferences depending on circumstances (Mouritzen and Svara 2003; Heikkila and Isett 2004). The analysis of this study supports, in part, that participants' self-interest is an important incentive for participants to decide to collaborate. However, findings also indicate that as partners work together regularly and learn more about one another, the attainment of shared goals is important to keeping actors working together. An unanticipated finding of this analysis is that the leadership role of the community college presidents emerged as critical to not only launching but also sustaining the collaboration.

**ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN  
INTERORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS:  
VARIETIES OF NETWORKING IN THE ERA OF NEW GOVERNANCE**

By  
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## **BIOGRAPHY**

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to understand the challenges and opportunities public administrators face when trying to collaborate in ongoing relationships with other public organizations. This research will examine one interorganizational arrangement between three community colleges reputed to be extensively engaged in enhancing economic development in Central Florida. This researcher contends that by using rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism as an integrated approach, it is possible to move beyond description toward explanation regarding the preferences and institutional arrangements that facilitate interorganizational collaboration. Several specific questions guide this research:

1. Why do organizations come together to pursue a common goal?
2. How are members recruited?
3. How are goals defined and established?
4. How are roles and responsibilities conferred?
5. What are the preferences and institutional arrangements that influence behavior?
6. What are the roles of public managers in such settings?
7. What are the conclusions?

To consider these questions, this study will examine one interorganizational collaboration between three community colleges as they work together to significantly increase the number of trained information technology workers. Early in their existence, community colleges discovered the power of leveraging their resources with other organizations. Today, many

community colleges have elevated collaboration to a key operational strategy (Buettner, Morrison, and Wasicek 2002).

It is anticipated that the extent of collaboration between the three community colleges will be related to attitudes about the value of partnerships and collaboration, commitment to the overall goals of the efforts, and the nature of internal leadership and management. Using the single case study method, a triangulation of research methods will be used to understand how rules, norms, shared strategies, and institutional arrangements shape human behavior in interorganizational collaborative settings. Research findings will then be used to develop a framework to assist public managers as they partner with other organizations.

### **Basis of the Study**

A growing body of multi-disciplinary research suggests that we live in an increasingly networked world that demands new forms of organizing other than traditional, hierarchical bureaucracies or firms. Due to the complexity of the issues to be addressed, institutions, whether public or private, no longer have the information, skills, resources, or many of the other necessary ingredients to function independently. Instead, public administrators must function in a “hollow state” with a core of public management surrounded by an array of cross-institutional, primarily extragovernmental ties (Kettl 2000; O’Toole and Meier, 1999; Milward & Provan, 2000; Milward, 1996; O’Toole, 2000; Agranoff & McGuire 1998).

Today’s public managers may inhabit vertical hierarchies as organizational homes, yet must manage programs and agendas that span other units (O’Toole 2000: 26). As a result, public

policy can emerge from many sources both inside and outside of government, and the implementation of policy can involve diverse sets of organizational actors. This situation necessitates new strategies for effective management and accountability that integrate new horizontal systems into traditional, vertical ones (Kettl 2000). These conditions have been labeled the “new governance.”

Although collaboration research is emerging as a distinct field of study, as a field it remains largely unexplored. While the literature is vast, multi-disciplinary, and rich with case research, it lacks cohesion across disciplines. According to Mandell and Steelman (2003), the terms partnership, collaboration, and interorganizational networks are used interchangeably to describe a variety of horizontal types of engagements. Multiple conceptualizations of collaboration may give the field its richness but result in a lack of rigorous empirical inquiry. It is often difficult to know whether that which a researcher measures as collaboration, really is collaboration. Furthermore, it remains unclear whether interorganizational approaches to complex problem solving are more efficient and effective than traditional forms of governance.

Forms of governance spanning two or more organizations or agencies stand in sharp contrast to the traditional Weberian model of rule-governed behavior, impersonality, and fixed chain of command. Today’s boundary-spanning efforts may be normatively governed, personalized, fluid, and not highly institutionalized. While, historically, authority has been viewed as the “glue” of effective governance, today trust, power, and communication are critical additional factors that determine the success or failure of collaborative efforts.

Two theoretical frameworks, while seemingly different, shed equal light on how trust and collaboration emerge. While rational choice theorists focus attention on competition and incentives in the absence of shared goals, the sociological perspective emphasizes shared values and norms embedded in institutions that guide and constrain individual action. This research contends that by using an integrated approach to institutionalism, it is possible to develop a richer understanding of interorganizational arrangements. For purposes of this research, the term interorganizational collaboration is defined as a stable membership of organizations working together to accomplish a long-term, complex goal or set of goals, delegating autonomy and resources to the collaboration, and whose efforts are highly visible to the community (Mandell and Steelman 2003; Cigler 1999).

### **The Present Study**

With the future economic growth of the nation depending on people working smarter, not just harder, and with lifelong learning necessary for continued employment, community colleges must view everything they do as part of workforce development (The Knowledge Net 2000). Gilliland (1995), President of Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, Nebraska states, “In this age of specialization, we need to team up with others who possess special talents, skills, or resources while contributing our capabilities and resources. When these ingredients are mixed in a carefully orchestrated and sensitive way, greater synergy can be accomplished than by any one organization operating independently” (43).

Information gathered from public administrators from Valencia, Seminole, and Lake-Sumter Community Colleges, all located along the “high-tech” corridor of Central Florida, and all

directly involved in an information technology (IT) initiative that is the focus of this study, provide both important insights into divergent reasons for collaboration and an opportunity to examine potential challenges that such interorganizational arrangements between public organizations may afford. In addition, first-hand information elicited from participants will identify how such efforts are coordinated and how leadership and management practices influence outcomes.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study uses a single case study approach for understanding participants' forming and sustaining collaboration between three public organizations governed by rules and regulations of the State of Florida. Correlation, explanation, or comparisons in other arenas are not the intent of this study and may not be valid.

### **Organization of the Study**

The following steps will be taken to answer the research questions posed in this study:

1. This current chapter introduces the problem, states the purpose of the research, and provides the context for the study.
2. Chapter Two considers the term "new governance," discusses social dilemmas at the heart of collaboration, and reviews current literature regarding one form of collaboration—interorganizational networks. Next, reasons for collaboration, the preferences and institutional arrangements that influence collaborative efforts, and how trust and power influence participants' behaviors in such settings are reviewed. Third, the roles and necessary skills for public managers working in collaborative settings are considered.

3. Chapter Three examines the literature on institutional theory and considers two strands of that theory: rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism. The major tenets of both theories are compared and contrasted to provide important insights to understand the range of effect that institutions can have on social dilemmas at the heart of collaboration. Particular consideration is given to the way in which institutional arrangements help solve social dilemmas.
4. Chapter Four reviews case studies on community colleges working collaboratively to enhance economic development, describes the three community colleges under study, and presents an overview of the IT Initiative that is the focus of this research.
5. Chapter Five outlines the analytical framework for this study, offers an explanation of the research techniques used in answering the research questions, and provides the rationale for using these approaches.
6. Chapter Six presents and interprets the qualitative research data.
7. Chapter Seven presents the findings of the research and sets forth recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

In Chapter One it was suggested that to address society's myriad, complex issues, including workforce development, new ways of organizing are required that span interorganizational boundaries. Such arrangements stand in sharp contrast to traditional notions of hierarchy that have dominated the field of public administration since its inception. This research seeks to understand the preferences and institutional arrangements that facilitate interorganizational collaboration in order to assist public managers in determining when to engage in collaboration and to develop successful collaboration when it is undertaken.

This chapter begins by considering the era of "new governance" that has resulted in the reconfiguration of existing structures for public service delivery and reviews the literature on collaboration and interorganizational networks. Next, reasons for collaboration are reviewed and the preferences and institutional arrangements that facilitate interorganizational collaboration considered. Third, two contextual factors—trust and relative power of members—are discussed. Finally, the role of public managers in interorganizational collaboration is reviewed.

The first goal of any research is conceptual clarity. Yet, a maze of terms and models represents a critical problem for understanding how to manage in an "Era of Collaboration" (Agranoff and McGuire 2003). A review of the literature reveals that, in spite of the apparent salience of interorganizational collaborative management in the public sector, a knowledge base equivalent to—or even close to—the more familiar paradigm of bureaucratic

management does not yet exist (Agranoff and McGuire 2003: 23). Indeed, the terms governance, collaboration, and interorganizational networks are used interchangeably in the literature (Mandell and Steelman 2003). This review of the literature will begin by considering each of these terms in an attempt to gain conceptual clarity regarding the IT Initiative that is the focus of this study.

### **New Governance**

Today's public administrators are being called upon to identify innovative solutions to complex social issues that are beyond the scope and capacity of a single organization to solve (Mandell 2001). Consequently, the "old chestnuts" that have traditionally guided our thinking about public service are being reconsidered (Peters 2001). Indeed, there has been a "significant repositioning of the field of public administration" that has resulted in a move away from traditional notions of administration "toward theories of cooperation, networking, governance and institution building, and maintenance" (Frederickson 1999).

Governance is a term that the field of public administration has embraced to distance itself from the negative images and criticisms surrounding "government" and "bureaucracy" and to describe new ways of interacting. Milward and Provan (2000) describe governance as a more inclusive term than government, "concerned with creating the conditions for ordered rule and collective action, often including agents in the private and nonprofit sectors as well as within the public sector" (360). According to Frederickson (1997), governance is a generally accepted metaphor for describing the patterns of interaction of multiple-organizational systems or networks that are linked together to engage in public activities.

Proponents of “new” governance advocate the reconfiguration of existing structures for delivering public services; the application to the public sector of various private sector management techniques; and a greater use of non-state actors (public or private) to discharge public services along with quasi-market arrangements where appropriate. Such efforts result in “interlaced webs of tension” where controls are loose, power is diffused, and centers of decision-making are plural (Frederickson 1999).

While the traditional bureaucratic model continues to serve as the keystone for democratic accountability and the intellectual foundation of public administration, collaboration between and among public and private sector organizations defines the agenda for governance in the twenty-first century. Clearly, the State will not become impotent in this era of new governance. However its capacity for direct control has been replaced with a capacity for influence, and today, steering is regarded as a key concept (Rhodes 1997: a and b). While steering affords opportunities to be “more freewheeling, more political, more inclined to take risks, and more creative and empowered” (Frederickson 1997: 86), today’s public administrators may find themselves needing to share the formal authority that they have traditionally wielded by themselves.

Understanding the role of public administrators in launching and sustaining effective interorganizational collaboration is, therefore, timely in this era of new governance. As O’Toole (1997a) points out, “There is still plenty of work to be done to adapt what we think we know to the emerging networked world” (47).

## **Collaboration**

According to Thomson (1998), the literature on collaboration is vast, multidisciplinary, and lacks cohesion and fertilization across disciplines (24). Perspectives applicable to the field of public administration come from a variety of disciplines and theoretical traditions:

interorganizational relations from sociology; regimes from urban scholars; federalism and intergovernmental relations from political scientists and public administrationists; strategic alliances from business management; and multi-organizational networks from scholars in public management (Agranoff and McGuire 2003: 23).

Collaboration has been defined as:

“Any joint activity by two or more agencies that is intended to increase public value by working together rather than separately” (Bardach 1998: 8).

“A process in which autonomous actors interact through formal and informal negotiation, jointly creating rules and structures governing their relationships and ways to act or decide on the issues that brought them together; it is a process involving shared norms and mutually beneficial interactions” (Thomson 1998: 83).

Collaboration is characterized by complex combinations of vertical and horizontal activity that allows participants to see different aspects of a problem and explore constructively their differences and search for solutions that go beyond what they can accomplish alone (Gray 1989: 5). Such arrangements are a unique institutional form, consisting of processes that differ from the spontaneous coordination of markets or the conscious management of hierarchy (Powell 1990). According to Gray and Wood (1991), in order to understand

collaboration, it is necessary to examine three areas: antecedents to collaboration, the process of collaboration, and the outcomes of that process (13).

Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence (1998) present a broad definition of collaboration which allows the researcher to capture as much of the institutional role of collaboration as possible. The authors describe collaboration as “a cooperative relationship among organizations that relies on neither market nor hierarchical mechanisms of control” (2). This definition distinguishes collaboration from other forms of organizational activity in three ways. First, it is an interorganizational phenomenon that requires a theoretical perspective and a methodological approach that is sensitive to this interorganizational level of analysis (Scott 1995). Second, the definition limits collaborative relationships to those that are not mediated by market mechanisms and, therefore, involve a wider and more fundamental range of issues that highlight the importance of local institutional conditions. Third, collaboration is distinct from hierarchical relations and involves the negotiation of roles and responsibilities in a context where no legitimate authority is sufficient to manage the situation (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998: 2-3).

Thomson (1998) suggests that collaboration fits conceptually into three broad frameworks: a process framework adapted from Ring and Van de Ven (1994), an aggregative framework, and an integrative framework.<sup>1</sup> As a process, collaboration occurs over time as organizations interact formally and informally and continues if expectations regarding reciprocity are met. However, if commitments are not executed in a reciprocal manner, then participants will initiate corrective measures either through renegotiation, by reducing their commitments

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<sup>1</sup> The latter two frameworks are adapted from March and Olsen (1989).

(voice), or by exit (Ring and Van de Ven 1994: 99). An aggregative tradition views institutions as instruments for aggregating private preferences into collective choices (March and Olsen 1989). That is, collaboration involves bargaining based on rational, self-interested, maximizing behavior. Organizations enter collaborative arrangements to achieve their own goals, negotiating among competing interests and brokering coalitions among competing value systems, expectations, and self-interested motivations. If collaboration threatens their self-interests, organizations will not hesitate to exit rather than to exercise voice. Viewed as an integrative process, collaboration involves a process of governance through negotiation that involves adaptive behavior, repeated interaction, and the development of norms such as trust and reciprocity. Negotiation still occurs, but it focuses less on maximizing self-interests and more on forging commonalities than differences (Thomson 1998: 72-76).

To collaborate, organizations must enter into intense linkages that involve increased resource commitments, a sharing of tasks and decision rules, and establishing and maintaining common goals. According to Agranoff and McGuire (2003) operating collaboratively requires the following contextual factors:

1. Empowerment based on information rather than authority
2. Organizational representatives shedding some of their ideology to reach mutual understanding
3. Groupware—comprised of social capital and shared learning (180).

Substantial interest and investment in collaboration is based on the assumption that collaboration enhances the capacity of people and organizations to achieve goals.

Collaboration can work to expand the potential solution set for all participants who, by

seeing different aspects of a problem, can constructively explore their differences, pool their resources, and search for solutions beyond their own limited vision of possibility (Gray 1989: 5). Such efforts foster creativity and comprehensive, practical, and transformative thinking that can change the way that problems are solved. Organizations that are considered truly collaborative are able to foster a feeling of shared destiny and can direct their efforts toward networking people, money, and facilities (Cigler 1999).

Researchers have recently described collaboration as occupying a continuum, from loosely formed partnerships with a narrow focus and great independence to more structured and interdependent collaboration encompassing broad system changes to accomplish a common policy goal (Mandell 2001: 280; Cigler 1999). For example, looking at collaborative actions in small, rural communities, Cigler (1999) describes a continuum of partnerships including networking, cooperation, coordination, and collaborative action. According to Cigler, the fourth type of partnership—the collaborative—has the following characteristics:

- Strong linkages among members
- A specific purpose, often long term and complex
- Stable membership
- Formal process and structural patterns (usually expressed in writing)
- Delegation of considerable autonomy to the collaboration by each member
- Significant resource commitment by all members
- Highly visible efforts to others in the community or region.

A review of the literature reveals that one form of collaboration that is readily cited is the interorganizational network. Networks are often considered the signature form of collaboration in the information age and the norm for public management (Agranoff and

McGuire 1999). However, despite a growing body of knowledge, they are not well understood, particularly when it comes to managing conflict; dealing with issues of power, influence, and control; developing new modes of leadership; and building trust (Mandell 2001).

### **Interorganizational Networks**

Efforts are underway to clearly define interorganizational networks. However, the abundance of definitions poses a significant problem for researchers working to define the boundaries of the interorganizational network. Mandell and Steelman (2003) point out that, “the absence of a common lingua franca prohibits reliable communication, greater understanding, and thus collective learning about these institutional arrangements” (198).

The interorganizational network is currently defined as:

“Public policy making and administrative structures involving multiple nodes (agencies and organizations) with multiple linkages . . . through which public goods are planned, designed, produced, and delivered” (McGuire 2002: 571).

“Structures of interdependence involving multiple organizations or parts thereof, where one unit is not merely the formal subordinate of the others in some larger hierarchical arrangement” (O’Toole 1997a: 45).

Interorganizational networks are conceived in terms of a cluster of organizations, a purposeful whole, rather than as many organizations performing unrelated tasks (Mandell 2001). Interorganizational networks are typically intersectoral, intergovernmental, and based functionally in a specific policy or policy area (Agranoff and McGuire 1999). Membership may be comprised of organizations from both the private and public sector or from the public

sector alone. It is important to note that, while collaboration efforts in the private sector may benefit a particular agency or organization, collaboration in the public sector involves disparate organizations working toward a common goal and not merely to enhance the performance of one among them (Mandell and Steelman 2003: 200-201) and that while such institutional arrangements are heralded for their rapid adaptation to changing conditions, flexibility of adjustment, and the capacity for innovation, they can be stifled by incomplete knowledge or goal conflicts (Agranoff and McGuire 1999).

Recently, interorganizational networks have been described as continuums of collaborative efforts (Mandell and Steelman 2003), ranging from loose linkages with a narrow focus to lasting arrangements that are more structured (Cigler 1999; Mandell 2001). Building on the joint work of Cigler (1999) and Mandell (1999), Mandell and Steelman (2003) offer the term “interorganizational institutional innovations” to differentiate the different types of interorganizational arrangements, such as collaborations, found in the public sector. The authors define five different types of arrangements, presented in Table 2.1. Contextual factors that may influence the preferences and institutional arrangements include: relative power of members; imposition of rules/regulations; impact of political/cultural context; type of issue; culture of members; commitment of members; and perceptions and values of members (Mandell and Steelman 2003; Mandell 2002-03).

Mandell and Steelman (2003) point out that the differences between some of the arrangements presented in Table 2.1 can be subtle. For instance, coalitions and network structures may appear to be similar. However, coalitions disband after problems are solved.

Network structures, on the other hand, have an indefinite life span since by the very nature of the arrangement the problem or problems are continually redefined. Indeed, arrangements may overlap or develop into another type over time either up or down the continuum as participants change, problem definitions shift, and situations evolve (204).

Research by Mandell and Steelman (2003) raises important questions regarding how organizations may enter into one form of collaboration that develops into a more formalized arrangement over time. Implicit in this idea is that, under certain circumstances, interorganizational collaboration may precede the formation of broader, more open networks that demand more long-term relationships and commitments.

Table 2.1 Interorganizational Institutional Innovations

Definition	Arrangements
Intermittent coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies and procedures of two or more organizations are adjusted mutually to accomplish some objective</li> <li>• Low levels of interaction</li> <li>• Commitment to each other is at arm's length</li> <li>• Resource sharing is relatively small</li> <li>• Low risk</li> </ul>
Temporary task force or ad hoc activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occurs to accomplish a purpose or purposes</li> <li>• Differs from intermittent coordination in the specific focus and tasks to be accomplished</li> <li>• Work is set up to work on a specific and limited purpose and will disband when that purpose is accomplished</li> <li>• Resource sharing is limited in scope and committed to a limited goal or set of goals</li> </ul>
Permanent and/or regular coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two or more organizations enter into a formal agreement to engage in limited activity to achieve a purpose or purposes</li> <li>• Permanent and/or regular coordination</li> <li>• Commitment of resources beyond information sharing</li> <li>• Generally involves common goals</li> <li>• Membership is delineated strictly and restricted</li> <li>• More formal requirements on activities and relationships</li> <li>• Resource sharing requires some degree of commitment in terms of time, staff, facilities, etc.</li> <li>• Risk is kept at a minimum</li> </ul>
Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interdependent and strategic action(s) taken</li> <li>• Purposes are narrow in scope and specific and all actions occur within the participant organizations themselves or involve the sequential or simultaneous activity of the participant organizations</li> <li>• Involves a long-term commitment</li> <li>• Membership is relatively stable</li> <li>• Usually formal agreements dominate the relationships</li> <li>• Each member commits significant amounts of resources to the collaboration</li> </ul>
Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad mission and strategically interdependent action</li> <li>• Broad tasks that reach beyond the simultaneous actions of independently operating organizations</li> <li>• Strong commitment to overriding goals</li> <li>• Members commit significant resources over a long time period</li> <li>• A high degree of risk is involved</li> </ul>

Adapted from Mandell and Steelman (2003).

## Discussion

Conceptual clarity remains a primary objective for this research. However, this review of the literature reveals variability in terminology that raises critical questions regarding what, if anything at all, the concepts of new governance, collaboration, and interorganizational networks hold in common. Furthermore, there is a conceptual weakness in the use of a single continuum for understanding collaboration as this provides no real agreement on how to define interorganizational collaboration. It is also interesting that current research does not specifically address differing capabilities or levels of commitment between and among partners. The next step in this research is to, therefore, classify interorganizational collaboration. From this review of the literature, it seems that there are two characteristics that are important in classifying these activities:

1. The degree to which the organizations are involved, i.e. level of commitment
2. The range of organizations involved.

Table 2.2 Types of Collaboration

<i>Range of organizations involved</i>	<i>Level of Commitment</i>		
	<i>Minimal, short-term commitment and risk</i>	<i>Moderate, limited-term commitment and risk</i>	<i>Strong, long-term commitment to overriding goals/high risk</i>
<i>One sector/few organizations</i>	Temporary task force/ad hoc committee	Partnership	Alliance
<i>Two or more sectors or many organizations</i>	Coordinating association <sup>2</sup>	Coalition	Network

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Mandell and Steelman's (2003) third type

The interaction of these two characteristics can be used to identify six different types of collaboration that form a typology. This typology will be used in this dissertation to provide a standard terminology for approaches that have been labeled using a variety of terms in the literature. A *temporary task force/ad hoc committee* is comprised of a few organizations from either the public or the private sector that come together for a limited time, commit limited resources, and face a low level of risk by participating. A *partnership* involves a limited number of organizations from one sector who make a moderate, limited-term commitment and face a moderate level of risk. An *alliance* is comprised of a few organizations from either the public or private sector that make a strong, long-term commitment to an overriding goal. Participation in an alliance involves a high level of risk.

A *coordinating association* involves organizations from two or more sectors or many organizations that come together for a limited time, commit limited resources, and face a low level of risk. A *coalition* is comprised of a multiple organizations from two or more sectors that make a moderate, limited-term commitment and face a moderate level of risk. A *network* is comprised of many organizations from two or more sectors that make a strong, long-term commitment to an overriding goal and whose risk for participating is high.

Table 2.2 presents a framework for defining different types of collaboration. This framework will be used to clearly define any type of collaborative endeavor. For purposes of illustration, it will be applied to the IT Initiative that is the focus of this study. An important next step in this research is to consider reasons why organizations come together to accomplish a common goal and to determine the preferences and institutional arrangements that facilitate collaboration.

## **Reasons for Collaboration**

Although many public organizations may not have given high priority to working together in the past, collaboration is becoming common in this era of new governance. Reasons for the influx of collaborative efforts in the public sector and beyond include: growing demands for more effective government services (Page 2003: 311); a need to manage uncertain environments and satisfy resource needs (Alter and Hage 1993; Gulati and Garguilo 1999: 1440; Agranoff and McGuire 2003); demand for greater efficiency; a willingness to bridge nontraditional organizational boundaries (Alter and Hage 1993; Agranoff and McGuire 2003); and the complexity of the issue(s) to be addressed (Agranoff and McGuire 2003). A related factor is the view that government should not operate programs but take on more of a developmental or steering role by promoting, regulating, and encouraging various types of nongovernmental activity and operations (Agranoff 2003).

Clearly, collaboration does not just happen (Agranoff and McGuire 2003: 3). It occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain emerge in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structure to act or decide on issues related to that domain (Wood and Gray 1991: 146). Influencing members to participate necessitates securing the support of participants who can build legitimacy, as well as influence rules, procedures, values, and norms that result in a shared purpose (Mandell and Steelman 2003). Such perspectives rely heavily on resource dependence theory (e.g. Thompson 1967) and transaction cost analysis (e.g. Williamson 1975).

Interorganizational collaborative efforts may be voluntary, imposed, or regulated by a third party (Whetten 1977). Nelson (2001) also identifies the imposed and voluntary origins. Sources of motivation are sometimes external, sometimes internal, and sometimes mutual. While external and internal motivations view collaboration as a policy instrument to carry out a predefined goal, networks based on mutual motivation are initiated to address common problems or opportunities. External motivations often come to public organizations through legislation, while internal motivations may arise when an organization determines that its mission would be served by initiating collaboration with other organizations. Mutual motivation arises when a number of organizations perceive the benefits of collaboration at roughly the same time, and leadership is not clearly the province of one of the participants (Luke 1998; Nelson 2001). Mutual collaboration may also occur as an effort to move beyond prior conflicts that previously affected interests (Nelson 2001). For example, Dodge and Montgomery (1995) found that communities with shared circumstances will lay aside economic competition among themselves in order to become stronger competitors with other regions.

According to Nelson (2001), reasons to collaborate are driven by expectations about achievements and the motivations of upper management, which are, in effect, the organizations' motivations. She states that "individuals who represent organizations in a network have motivations that parallel those of organizations, but they differ in important respects." If an organization has made a commitment to collaborate, staff members will be assigned to participate as part of their regular duties and may or may not buy into the project. Independent initiative or buy-in is, therefore, a "microversion of mutual motivation because

the individual perceives the interdependence of the situation and the value of participation” (91).<sup>3</sup>

Halpert (1982) describes two types of variables that provide incentives for organizations to work together: interpretive and contextual. Interpretive variables involve the attitudes, values, and perceptions of the participating actors. Contextual variables consider such factors as size, technology, centrality, complexity, standardization, economy, demographics, and resources. Drawing on institutional theory and the work of DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Powers (2001) outlines four sets of forces influencing which organizations join an interorganizational relationship: coercive, normative, mimetic, and cognitive. Coercive influences involve power and dependence on another organization for critical resources. Such relationships may be mandated through formal authority. Normative influences involve socially embedded ties that may occur through previous alliances or referrals by a third party. Mimetic influences involve an organization copying what seems to have worked for another organization. Cognitive influences recognize “the role of reputation and perceived trustworthiness” of another organization and may choose to join networks because of this prominence or prestige (9-10).

There are a number of deterrents and obstacles to collaboration, indicating that collaboration should not be entered into lightly. Collaboration involves a number of associated costs such as managing the complexity of the linkages and loss of autonomy (Provan 1984: 49).

Imperfect information regarding the competencies, needs, and reliability of potential partners

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<sup>3</sup> Nelson and Weschler (1996) propose a new dimension of administrative ethics, in which an enlightened citizen-administrator makes commitments to community sustainability and democratic processes. Such a person would seek out those collaborative stewardship projects that would benefit the community.

can pose vivid challenges when significant exchange, sharing, or co-development is at stake (Gulati and Gargiulo 1999). Participants may face considerable moral hazards because of the unpredictability of partners' actions and the possibility of opportunistic behavior or free riding. For example, in a study of collaboration efforts of state agencies, Dawes (1996) found that some agencies chose to avoid collaboration efforts due to fears regarding external influences over decision-making and due to "we'd rather do it ourselves" attitudes. In a study of cities, participants stated that it is sometimes necessary to induce or sell an idea to participants before partners will commit to work together (Agranoff and McGuire 2003: 178). Kickert et. al. (1997) suggest that network managers should induce partners to make a formal or informal agreement to counter such situations. However, as Nelson (2001) points out, commanding a commitment is a risky business if participation in the collaboration is voluntary.

Clearly, factors leading to interorganizational collaboration may vary widely. At one extreme, a single organizing force or a precipitating event may lead to the creation of the effort. At the other extreme, formation occurs when a range of participants have the common realization that they, and the organizations they represent, are only a small piece of the total picture and that their independent efforts alone will not solve a particular issue, goal, dilemma, or problem (Mandell 2001). Once an interorganizational collaboration is launched, participants face a number of challenges and opportunities as they work together. A number of preferences and institutional relationships may facilitate collaboration and are considered in the next section of this literature review.

## **Preferences and Institutional Arrangements for Collaboration**

This review of the literature has revealed that organizations come together for a plethora of reasons and that collective action contains a social dilemma. That is, a situation arises in which actions that are individually rational may lead to outcomes that leave all participants worse off than feasible alternatives (Ostrom 1998: 1). In public organizations, participants face dilemmas in negotiating the dual roles of collaboration. On the one hand, they are accountable to the public and to their legislative mandates and, on the other they must be trustworthy and accountable to other participants (Nelson 2001). So what are the individual and organizational preferences and institutional arrangements that have implications for successful collaboration?

Clearly, a number of diverse pre-conditions, forces, and motivating factors may serve to facilitate collaboration across organizational boundaries. Repeated interaction serves as one of the main predictors of whether or not actors will choose to continue to collaborate. For example, in a study of intersectoral partnerships to stimulate rural development, Radin et. al. (1996), found that a previous history of working together made a difference in whether organizations decided to collaborate in future activities. Using the Prisoner's Dilemmas game, Axelrod (1984) demonstrates that continuing interaction and making the future more important than the past is what makes cooperation based on reciprocity possible. According to Mandell and Steelman (2003), previous relationships will determine the extent to which various members have a mutual understanding of one another and whether they rely or trust each other in the arrangement (210).

To facilitate collaboration, institutionalized rules and resources are used in the negotiation of at least three aspects of the collaborative process: the definition of the issue or problem that the collaboration is intended to address; the membership of the collaboration; and the practices utilized in response to the problem (Phillips, Hardy, and Lawrence 1998). First, how the issue is defined and understood influences the potential outcome of the collaboration and the roles of participants. Second, who is included in the collaboration is critical to the outcome of the collaboration. “Depending on how the issue is defined, on the existing institutionalized collaborative practices, and on the political activity of potential participants, certain groups will be included and certain groups will be excluded” (8). Third, the ways in which participants interact and negotiate and the degree of conflict and cooperation will produce a wide range of alternative responses (Phillips, Hardy, and Lawrence 1998).

A critical factor affecting the dynamics of collaboration involves the range of institutional fields in which participants are located (Phillips, Hardy, and Lawrence 1998: 7). Different institutional settings impose different patterns of cost, and some kinds of transactions are organized more economically via one institutional form or another (Coase 1937). Size of group, heterogeneity of participants, dependence on the benefits received, discount rates, the type and predictability of transformation processes involved, the nesting of organizational levels, monitoring techniques, information available to participants (Ostrom 1998: 2), the political/cultural context, type of issue being addressed, culture of members (Mandell and Steelman 2003), and a shared commitment to the target population (Thomson 1999) impact transaction costs and, therefore, the likelihood of improving collaborative performance.

According to Agranoff (2003), networks are held together by purpose, social capital, mutual respect or trust, and the obligation to be concerned with others' interests.

According to North (1990), how well institutions solve coordination and production problems is a function of the motivation of the players involved, the complexity of the environment, and the ability of the players to decipher and order the environment. In situations of social dilemmas, personalities and individual differences of transacting parties can also impact processes and outcomes (Neale and Northcraft 1991). During collaboration, people incur transaction costs to overcome imperfect information and uncertain environments (Ostrom 1998; Williamson 1975).

During collaboration, reciprocal arrangements arise, enhanced by rules and values. The norm of reciprocity prescribes that "people should help those who have helped them" (Komorita et. Al. 1991: 495). Participants make mutual commitments clear and assign authority to act so that benefits and costs are distributed equitably (Ostrom 1998:10).

Lindblom (1965) outlines a series of steps that take place to facilitate reciprocity. First, an idea is simply put forward to induce a response from others. Next, a series of special cases of negotiation can take place. Parties may exchange points of view or the possible objective consequences of various forms of action (partisan discussion) or may be provoked by conditional threats and promises (bargaining). Parties may make conditional promises to one another (bargained compensation) or induce responses by calling in an existing obligation or acknowledge a new one (reciprocity). In this manner, mutual adjustment takes place among partners.

By encouraging the development of norms of reciprocity, civility, and mutual trust, a process of institutionalization is created that helps to reduce uncertainty and increase cooperative behavior. Bettenhausen and Murnighan (1985) present a model for understanding how norms impact behavior in interorganizational settings:

- Members of ad hoc groups initially base their actions and their understanding of others' actions on the norms they held as members of different groups in similar situations;
- Norms form early, often before a group's members adequately understand their task;
- As group members interact, their shared experiences form the basis for expectations about future interactions;
- Challenges to the groups' evolving patterns of behaviors can reveal the members' subjective interpretations of their interactions.

Mattessich and Monsey (1992) group nineteen factors related to successful collaboration into six categories: factors related to the environment; issues of membership; matters of process and structure; communications; purpose; and resources. In terms of the environment, a history of collaboration in the community, perception that participating organizations are perceived as community leaders, and a favorable social and political climate are keys to success. In terms of membership, mutual respect, understanding, trust, power asymmetries, and an appropriate cross-section of members are identified as important criteria for successful collaboration. In terms of process and structure, members need clearly defined roles and responsibilities as well as a working environment that is flexible and adaptable to multiple layers of decision-making. In the area of communications, open and frequent communication and established formal and informal communication links are central to efficiency. With respect to purpose or activities, participants must have a shared vision and

believe they serve a unique purpose. Lastly, in terms of resources, Mattessich and Monsey find that sufficient funds and a skilled convener are important factors related to successful collaboration.

Ring and Perry (1985) present three conditions for ensuring the survival of an interorganizational network: compatibility, resources, and sociopolitical environment.

Participants must be compatible if they are to achieve collaborative goals while, at the same time, accomplishing their own organizational goals. In addition, they must also be able to attain the resources needed to succeed. Finally, the social and political environment in which the network exists determines whether participants can work together efficiently and effectively.

Kanter (1994, 1995), in studying interorganizational relationships over a number of years, has identified eight characteristics of successful relationships:

- *Individual excellence*—the partners are individually strong and are able to contribute something of value to the relationship.
- *Importance*—the relationship is a part of major strategic objectives. The partners have long-term goals and reasons to want to succeed. They have adequate resources, management attention, and sponsorship.
- *Interdependence*—the partners cannot accomplish alone what they can do together. They have reciprocal skills and assets and need one another.
- *Investment*—the partners make an investment in one another to demonstrate commitment. Resources are allocated.
- *Information*—communication is open and shared regarding such things as goals and objectives, technical data, changing situations, conflicts, and trouble spots.

- *Integration*—partners develop linkages between many levels of the organizations and find shared ways of operating and communicating, thereby learning from one another.
  - *Institutionalization*—the collaboration is no longer dependent on certain individuals and has a life of its own.
  - *Integrity*—partners trust one another and interact in honorable ways with one another.
- (Adapted from Kanter 1994: 100).

A number of factors can make interorganizational collaboration ineffective. In addition to the free-rider problem, personality conflicts, lack of resources, lack of human capital, and a lack of trust leading to disagreements over decisions can lead to resentment, and, in turn, have a negative impact on the collaboration process (Nelson 2001). Khator and Brunson (2001) identify turf protectiveness, assumption of authority by one person or group, and nonconductive culture as having the potential to “undermine the nonhierarchical character of the network and dwarf the true spirit of collaboration.” However, probably the greatest cost of developing interorganizational linkages is loss of operating autonomy (Provan 1984: 494).

Trust and the relative power of members are clearly significant factors that influence the preferences and institutional arrangements for collaboration. Each of these factors may serve to facilitate or conversely impede the collaboration process and, therefore, are considered separately in the next section of this research.

## **Trust**

Trust has long been discussed in connection with the study of new governance, collaboration, and interorganizational networks. Research shows that a prior disposition to collaborate and

having established relationships grounded in trust may, in fact, encourage collaboration (Agranoff 2003) as it will take less time for participants to negotiate (Agranoff 2003; Ring and Van de Ven 1994). Ostrom (1998) defines trust as “the expectations individuals have about one another’s behavior [that] affects [their] choice, when an action must be taken before the actions of others are known” (12).

Yamagishi and Yamagishi (1994), distinguish between two types of trust. General trust refers to the expectation that people, in general, will not act opportunistically even when they have the opportunity to do so. Knowledge-based trust, by contrast, refers to the expectation that familiar people—i.e., people with whom an individual has interacted in the past—will not act opportunistically (Shapiro, Sheppard, and Cheraskin, 1992). Trust by this definition is independent of contractual provisions or controls in an exchange; it is a personal trait that influences commitment decisions in the sense that it affects an individual’s assessment of the benevolence of other actors (Yamagishi and Yamagishi, 1994). Powers (2001) proposes that the distinction between interorganizational and interpersonal trust lies in the impact on the trust when specific personnel leave their positions at the organization. If the trust is maintained, it is a form of interorganizational trust. However, if the trust is diminished, it must have relied on the specific person, making it interpersonal trust.

To some degree, partners bring pre-existing, trust-based relationships with them into collaborative settings (Agranoff 2003). Through repeated interactions, partners may form “pockets of trust” that afford opportunities to capitalize on effective management strategies (Mandell 2001: 281). As partners interact, they develop norms of reciprocity, civility, and

mutual trust and a process of institutionalization is created that helps to reduce uncertainty and increase cooperative behavior (O'Toole 1997b). It is also possible, of course, that pre-existing relationships can lead to distrust.

Trust partly hinges on sharing resources, resolving uncertainty, determining how to fairly share workload through a process of mutual learning, and ensuring equal credit for accomplishments (Nelson 2001). Trust is sustained by non-encroachment on partners' domains which may necessitate pulling away from controversial topics and issues. However, as partners work together and share information regarding each of their respective organizations, relationships can be cemented in a very subtle way. (Agranoff 2003).

Ostrom (1998) outlines five ways that trust can be increased over time:

1. By providing subjects with an opportunity to see one another
2. Allowing subjects to choose whether to enter or exit a social dilemma game
3. Sharing costs equally to voluntarily contribute to a public good
4. Providing opportunities for distinct punishments of those who are not reciprocators
5. Providing opportunities for face-to-face communication (12).

Occasionally trust will not be readily extended. A negative history of working relationships may be an obstacle. Personnel may feel threatened and the time and effort that must be expended to integrate the function into one's own home organization may become problematic (Williamson 1981: 559). As a result, uncertain environments and the bounded rationality of decision makers may increase transaction costs.

In addition to trust, the relative power of members is an additional important factor for sustaining interorganizational collaboration. While collaborative management implies coequal, interdependent, patterned, and ostensibly equally weighted relationships, the level and power of influence that various players possess can influence behavior (Agranoff and McGuire 2003: 184-185).

### **Relative Power of Members**

According to Agranoff and McGuire (2003), “power concerns should be at the core of any general theory of public management in collaborative settings because we must know whether power moves hinder the kind of synergistic creativity that reciprocal relationships are purported to produce” (185). The authors define power as “the ability to compel action by players under circumstances where all persons have dual responsibilities to both home organizations and the joint efforts” (184). According to Benson (1975), interorganizational power relations cannot be understood without attention to the larger pattern of societal dominance (233). Dominant members will be those with greater authority, resources, and discursive legitimacy; the rules and resources that are most influential in the structuring of collaboration will be those drawn from the institutional fields of dominant members (Phillips, Hardy, and Lawrence 1998: 10).

Both formal and informal power are important concepts when seeking to understand interaction between and among participants in collaborative settings. Formal authority is “the recognized, legitimate right to make a decision” (Phillips, Hardy, and Lawrence 1998: 219). According to Mandell (2001), informal power, based on interpersonal relations, can

actually be more important than formal power (281). Since participants remain relatively autonomous, they must be convinced to act even though there may be no legitimate authority to demand collaboration.

Power can be portrayed neutrally, or at least dualistically, as a property that either prevents or facilitates action (Agranoff and McGuire 2003: 185). From this perspective, the primary effects of interorganizational power lie in the control of resources, including the flow of resources to other agencies (Benson 1975; Phillips, Hardy, and Lawrence 1998). This view is consistent with resource-dependency theory which holds that power is derived from control over strategic interdependencies (Aldrich 1976; Aldrich and Pfeffer 1976). When control of critical resources is diffused among partners, collaboration will involve greater levels of negotiation, compromise, pooling of resources, and shared participation.

Mandell and Steelman (2003) identify two dominant ways in which power dynamics are revealed in interorganizational network settings. First, participants will draw from different power bases. For example, there is a difference in the status of a government agency that takes the lead in setting up an interorganizational arrangement and that of a community group that is invited to sit at the table. Second, once an organization commits to participate, members must follow through on the commitments they have made to other members as well as those organizations or groups they represent. These conflicts are manifested visibly (problems in management) and invisibly (problems related to turf, resource allocations, etc.) (Mandell and Steelman 2003). Nelson (2001) cautions that participants who have power should carefully weigh its use and those without such power may seek guarantees of restraint

as the degree of coercion or potential for coercion shapes the tone and long-term viability of the collaboration.

Trust and power differentials, therefore, have the potential to facilitate or undermine collaborative efforts and should be included in any framework for understanding and explaining interorganizational collaboration. Managing in this era of new governance requires a set of managerial skills that are very different from those of traditional hierarchical bureaucracies. As discussed in the next section, a number of skills are needed to forge lasting partnerships between and among players whose efforts may or may not be grounded in trust and who may bring different levels of capabilities and resources to the collaboration.

### **Skills for Public Managers**

Interorganizational collaboration requires a long-term commitment and shared vision for addressing a common goal that cannot be achieved without sharing resources and expertise. Partners must be prepared to transcend politics and enter into true professional, and even personal, trust relationships (Gilliland 1995: 44). With no one person in charge, all action is mutually interdependent, and actions are based on notions of social capital rather than contractual relationships (Mandell 2001; Agranoff and McGuire 1999). Separate missions, competing legal mandates, distinct constituencies, and competition for resources are potential obstacles to effective coordination of the activities of diverse organizations (Jennings and Ewalt 1998). This situation requires new skills for public managers that are currently being addressed in the literature.

McGuire (2002) sets forth four classes of behaviors undertaken by network “managers”: activation, framing, mobilization, and synthesizing. *Activation* refers to a set of behaviors employed for identifying and incorporating the persons and resources needed to achieve program goals. *Framing* is the behaviors used to arrange and integrate a network structure by facilitating agreement on participants’ roles, operating rules, and network values. *Mobilization* refers to managers building support for the role and scope of the project to be undertaken. Managers must also *synthesize* behaviors between and among all participants. By facilitating interaction and reducing uncertainty, favorable conditions for collaboration are created. According to Klijn et. al. (1995), managers can effect change in networks by changing: (1) the relations between actors, (2) the distribution of resources, (3) interaction rules and, (4) norms, values and perceptions.

Once partners enter into a collaborative arrangement, public managers may still operate in a hierarchy with limited formal authority and may be forced to draw from a variety of skills: diplomacy, negotiating experience, and leadership skills. Managers must be able to synthesize players who may have conflicting goals, different perceptions, and dissimilar values into a coherent purpose and achieve collaboration while preventing, minimizing, or removing blockages to that cooperation (Agranoff and McGuire 2003: 177-78).

Public managers must be able to identify and recruit appropriate and necessary participants and resources, facilitate common purpose by framing tasks, rules, and values (Agranoff and McGuire 2003; O’Toole 1997a), make commitments on behalf of their organizations, demonstrate leadership in devising new options, (Kickert and Koppenjan 1997), alter

membership to encourage cooperation (O’Toole 1997a), and build critical linkages while simultaneously managing the internal functions of their own organizations (Kettl 1996). According to Mandell (1990: 37) the core issue facing managers in interorganizational networks is how to meet an overriding goal (or set of goals) while at the same time allowing for each organization to meet its own organizational goals.

Lasker, Weiss, and Miller (2001) offer a practical framework for managers working to strengthen collaborative arrangements. By combining the individual resources, skills, and knowledge of the participating organizations, the authors state that it is possible for public managers to operationalize “synergy.” Synergy is more than an exchange of resources. Rather, it is the element that combines the perspectives, resources, and skills of a group of people and organizations in order to gain advantage over single agents in addressing issues. The result is a holistic approach to problem solving. The determinants of partnership synergy are outlined in Table 2.3 and provide a basis for measuring the effectiveness of a network so that those involved in the collaboration can assess whether goals are being accomplished.

Table 2.3 Determinants of Partnership Synergy

Resources	Money Space, equipment, goods Skills and expertise Information Connections to people, organizations, groups Endorsements Convening power
Partner characteristics	Heterogeneity Level of involvement

Table 2.3 (continued)

Relationships among partners	Trust Respect Conflict Power differentials
Partnership characteristics	Leadership Administration and management Governance Efficiency
External environment	Community characteristics Public and organizational policies

Lasker, Weiss, and Miller (2001)

A review of the literature reveals that collaboration depends on one or a small number of “champions.” These individuals orchestrate a vision, follow through on a work plan, communicate regularly with key members, and schedule meetings to facilitate collaboration. In political arenas, such individuals have been called policy entrepreneurs. Ordinarily this individual is someone who holds an administrative position in one key organization, can command resources, build trust among participants, empower members, and has the professional or technical respect of the participants. This individual may or may not be the convener or chairperson (Agranoff 2003).

### **Discussion**

Approaches to managing new boundaries that encompass all the actors in the collaboration cannot be steered through traditional management methods or through contractual arrangements. A framework for interorganizational collaboration should, therefore, include new capacities necessary for managing conflict, power, influence and control, and trust

(Mandell 2001). Prior research has identified a number of endogenous and exogenous factors that should be considered when seeking to understand how preferences and different institutional settings are organized via one institutional form or another. Endogenous factors include the imposition of rules/regulations, commitment of members, perceptions and values of members, trust, and leadership. Exogenous factors are the relative power of members, impact of the political/cultural context, type of issue being addressed, and history of relationships. Each of these terms is defined in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 Definitions of Endogenous and Exogenous Factors Influencing Interorganizational Collaboration

<b>Endogenous Factors</b>	
<i>Imposition of rules/regulations</i>	Rules and regulations imposed by third-party organizations or by the participants themselves serve to shape the behaviors and decision-making of the participants. Institutionalized rules and resources are used in the negotiation of at least three aspects of the collaborative process: the definition of the issue or problem that the collaboration is intended to address; the membership of the collaboration; and the practices utilized in response to the problem (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998).
<i>Commitment of members</i>	While participants may enter into a collaborative arrangement for a variety of reasons, the degree to which these divergent reasons mesh will greatly affect what partners accomplish (Mandell 2002-03).
<i>Perceptions and values of members</i>	Members carry different backgrounds that shape their perceptions of the problem and what needs to be done. The degree to which these perceptions can be reshaped by the actions within the collaboration are, therefore, critical (Mandell 2002-03).
<i>Trust</i>	Established relationships grounded in trust may, in fact, encourage collaboration (Ring and Van de Ven 1994; Agranoff 2003) as it will take less time to negotiate, limiting transaction costs (Ring and Van de Ven 1994). History of distrust will increase transaction costs as partners must learn to work together and build trust. Over time, as partners interact with one another, transactions costs can be lowered as participants communicate on a regular basis and learn from one another.
<i>Leadership</i>	During the collaboration process, a “champion” may emerge. This individual has the energy and commitment to sustain the effort. In political arenas, such individuals have been called policy entrepreneurs. This individual may or may not be the convener or chairperson (Agranoff 2003).
<b>Exogenous Factors</b>	
<i>Relative power of members</i>	Some members may be in a position to exert more influence and/or control over others. Ways in which participants interact and negotiate and the degree of conflict and cooperation will produce a wide range of alternative responses (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998).
<i>Impact of political/cultural context</i>	The political context includes the laws and entities that govern the organizations involved. The cultural context refers to the values, attitudes and beliefs of members based on their own individual backgrounds and the organizational entities they represent, facilitating or impeding collaboration (Mandell 2002-03).
<i>Type of issue</i>	Reasons for participation and how the issue is defined and understood influence the membership of the collaboration, the potential outcome of the collaboration, and the roles of participants (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998).
<i>History of Relationships</i>	To some degree, partners bring pre-existing, trust-based relationships with them into collaborative settings (Agranoff 2003). Relationships grounded in trust can serve to minimize transaction costs.

Based on certain expectations that have been identified in previous studies, this research will present and “test” a model that can be used to consider the preferences and institutional arrangements for interorganizational collaboration. Using institutional theory it will be possible to expand on the conceptual frameworks presented in the literature, thus providing explanations guided by a more complex model. According to Lawrence, Hardy, and Phillips (1999), collaboration “is a strategic and deliberate form of interorganizational connection and, consequently, one that might be employed by institutional entrepreneurs” (2).

This researcher contends that, by using the two seemingly divergent frameworks of rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism, it is possible to explain why actors decide to collaborate and how characteristics of the interorganizational collaboration shape public management strategies (Heikkila and Isett 2004). Building on the work of Heikkila and Isett 2004, Lawrence, Hardy, and Phillips (1999), and Svara and Mouritzen (2001), this research will develop and ‘test’ an integrated model of institutionalism for interorganizational collaboration. Findings from this research will then be used to consider the usefulness of an integrated model of institutionalism for explaining interorganizational collaboration.

### **CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: INSTITUTIONALISM**

Since the inception of the field of public administration, scholars have sought to understand under what circumstances and through what mechanisms leaders choose administrative institutional structures. Three basic questions have guided their research:

1. How do we understand the nature of human beings as political actors?
2. How do we understand the political settings within which modern political actors most typically operate—organizations, institutions, and normative orders?
3. How do we understand change and development, that is, how are political institutions identified, established, sustained, and transformed? (Olsen 2001).

Today, analysts, using a broad range of theoretical lenses, have converged on the importance of understanding one institutional arrangement that is gaining popularity in the public sector and beyond—interorganizational collaboration. Galaskiewicz (1985) explains that “there is no one theory of interorganizational relations” (198). Theoretical frameworks that have been used to examine interorganizational relationships include: transaction cost economics and new institutionalism (Thompson 1993; Horn 1995; Oliver 1990; Ring and Van de Ven 1994); game theory (Parkhe 1993; Stoker 1991); industrial economics (Porter 1985); resource dependence theory (Pfeiffer and Salancik 1978; interorganizational theory (O’Toole 1997a; Alter and Hage 1993); and evolutionary theory (Aldrich 1979).

This research is guided by institutional theory because it provides a rich, complex view of organizations. According to Heikkila and Isett (2004), the formation and sustaining stages of interorganizational collaboration cannot be understood without understanding institutional context. While historically the theoretical development of institutional theory has largely

ignored the role of collaboration in the production and structuring of institutional fields (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998: 11), this research will examine theoretical and conceptual discussions regarding institutional theory in order to understand interorganizational collaboration.

The first section of this chapter presents a brief overview of the roots and history of institutional theory. Next, two spectrums of this theory, rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism, are presented. It is suggested that these seemingly divergent perspectives are actually part of a continuum of perspectives that may provide important insights regarding the constraints and opportunities that guide behavior in interorganizational collaborative settings.

### **The Roots and History of Institutional Theory**

According to Scott (1987), “the beginning of wisdom in approaching institutional theory is to recognize at the outset that there is not one but several variants [of the theory]” (493). The field has solid roots in at least three social sciences—economics, sociology, and political science—and is grounded in three separate branches of scholarship: rational choice, sociological institutionalism, and historical institutionalism. While early institutional theory research focused on taken-for-granted rules, myths, and beliefs as shared social reality and on the processes by which organizations tend to become instilled with value and social meaning (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Selznick 1949, 1957), more recent treatments have elaborated the

nature and variety of these institutional processes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1977, 1988).

According to DiMaggio and Powell:

The new institutionalism in organization theory and sociology comprises a rejection of rational-actor models, an interest in institutions as independent variables, a turn toward cognitive and cultural explanations, and an interest in properties of supraindividual units of analysis that cannot be reduced to situations or direct consequences of individuals' attributes or motives (1991:8).

The “new” institutionalism represents a shift in focus from the logic of consequences and rational calculation of expected utility and prior preferences to alternative forms of behavioral logics. It traces the emergence of distinctive forms, processes, strategies, outlooks, and competencies as they emerge from patterns of organizational interaction and adaption. Such patterns must be understood as responses to both internal and external environments (Selznick 1996).

The basic tenet of institutional theory holds that the organization of political life makes a difference. Scott provides the following definition of institution:

Institutions consist of cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behavior. Institutions are transported by various carriers—cultures, structures, and routines—and they operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction (1995: 33).

Institutionalist theories propose a “complex duality” between actors and their environments (Hay & Wincott 1998: 956): actors alter and respond to their environment by taking calculated action, but they do so according to beliefs and practices which have been formed by these very environments.

According to Scott (1995), institutions gain legitimacy based on three pillars: regulative, normative, and cognitive. The regulative pillar involves rules, laws, and sanctions. The normative pillar involves social obligations, norms, and values. The cognitive pillar involves symbols, beliefs, and social identities. Regulative legitimacy comes from following the rules; normative legitimacy is developed through complying with internalized morals; and cognitive legitimacy evolves from doing things the way they have always been done. As an organization is institutionalized it “tends to take on a special character to achieve a distinctive competence or, perhaps, a trained or built-in capacity” (Selznick 1996: 271). Institutionalism operates to produce common understandings about what is appropriate and, fundamentally, meaningful behavior” (Zucker 1983: 5). However, as Zucker (1988) points out, social dilemmas are fragile because self-interest, a tendency toward disorganization, and partial institutionalization all conspire against such resolutions (25-26).

Although a range of different schools of thought are evident within the “new” institutional theory, for purposes of this study it is useful to make a distinction between an economic (rational choice) and sociological variant. What distinguishes these two basic variants is the underlying model of human behavior (Blom-Hansen 1997: 674).

## **Rational Choice Institutionalism**

The major tenets of rational choice theory hold that humans are purposive and goal-oriented and, when making decisions, draw from a set of hierarchically ordered preferences.

Individuals constantly engage in calculations of the costs and benefits of different action choices, reflecting utility-maximizing calculations (Coleman 1990). An actor maximizes self-interest to the point that it runs up against the interests of others at which point it is self-interested to be less selfish.

Historically, rational choice theory has paid little or no attention to institutions. However, extensive empirical evidence and theoretical development in multiple disciplines has stimulated a need to expand the range of rational choice models to be used as a foundation for the study of social dilemmas and collective action. More recently, rational choice institutionalism has advanced this body of knowledge by considering efficient modes of organizing.

The basic tenet of rational choice institutionalism views individuals as rational beings in pursuit of self-interest by means of “a logic of consequentiality.” That is, individuals make decisions on the basis of abstract rationality—a “logic of consequences” (March & Olsen 1998)—to which they select the course of action most likely to maximize their interests. In this view, institutions become constraints on individual action (North 1990; E. Ostrom 1986).

Rational choice institutionalists view institutions as rules constraining action in repetitive interdependent relationships. While rules may be crafted with pen and ink, they mostly occur

as “problem-solving individuals interact trying to figure out how to do a better job in the future than they have done in the past” (E. Ostrom 1999). Rules may be formal or informal (Mandell and Steelman 2003) and may serve to restrict the kinds of innovations that can be achieved, or, conversely, can provide the support needed to accomplish goals. While formal rules are those requirements laid down by members of the collaboration or a third party to provide a framework within which members are able to take action (Mandell 1990; Mandell and Steelman 2003), informal rules are “norms and unwritten behaviors that are reinforced and developed through a mutual socialization process among participants” (Mandell and Steelman 2003: 212). “In either case, the formality behind them cannot be ignored” (Mandell and Steelman 2003: 212).

E. Ostrom (1986) has set forth seven classes of rules to consider when studying institutions:

1. *Entry and exit rules*: Who belongs to this action situation? Is entry bounded? If so, how? Is a new participant allowed to join? Is there a fee? If someone leaves, must certain rights be forfeited?
2. *Position rules*: How are roles and responsibilities assigned and changed over time?
3. *Scope rules*: How do members/others understand and define their authorized (or forbidden) functional domains?
4. *Authority rules*: What understandings do members have regarding mandatory, authorized, or forbidden actions? What choices do they have related to the actions they can take?
5. *Aggregation rules*: What understandings exist concerning the rules affecting the shared goal? Do certain actions require prior permission from, or agreement from others?
6. *Information rules*: What information must be held in secret, and what information must be made public?
7. *Payoff rules*: How large are the sanctions that can be imposed for breaking any of the rules identified above? How is conformance to rules monitored? Who is responsible for

sanctioning nonconformance? How reliably are sanctions imposed? Are any positive rewards offered? (52-53).

A review of the literature reveals that questions remain regarding whether rational choice institutionalism can adequately explain how and why individuals and organizations voluntarily adhere to collective working rules instead of seeking to maximize their own resources. While thin models of rational choice have been unsuccessful in explaining or predicting behavior in one-shot or finitely repeated social dilemmas in which the theoretical prediction is that no one will cooperate, models of complete rationality have been highly successful in predicting marginal behavior in competitive situations in which selective pressures screen out those who do not maximize external values, such as profits in a competitive market. For example, field research shows that individuals systematically engage in collective action to provide local goods without an external authority to offer inducements or impose sanctions (Ostrom 1998). According to Ostrom (1998) such findings suggest that, “we need to formulate a behavioral theory of boundedly rational and moral behavior” (2).

In collaborative settings, people incur transaction costs to overcome imperfect information and uncertain environments (Ostrom 1998; Williamson 1975). According to Williamson (1975), transaction costs can be minimized through the use of different organization forms or governance structures. Depending on the attributes of transactions, costs incurred may include prerequisites for negotiating, monitoring, searching for alternatives, bargaining, and decision making (Eggersston 1990). Different institutional settings impose different patterns of costs, and some kinds of transactions are organized more economically via one

institutional form or another (Coase 1937). Institutions can facilitate the attainment of positive outcomes that transaction costs might otherwise prevent by aligning the individual incentives so as to be consistent with collective ends (Ingram and Clay 2000). For example, size of group, heterogeneity of participants, their dependence on the benefits received, their discount rates, the type and predictability of transformation processes involved, the nesting of organizational levels, and other information available to participants all impact transaction costs (Ostrom 1998:2).

Each collaborative action contains a social dilemma to be resolved. That is, a situation arises in which actions that are individually rational may lead to outcomes that leave all participants worse off than feasible alternatives (Ostrom 1998: 1). A number of metaphorical stories are regularly used to explain two-person and multiple-person social dilemmas: Prisoner's Dilemma, Assurance Game, the Problem of Providing Public Goods, and the Tragedy of the Commons.

The Prisoner's Dilemma remains the most popular example for explaining two-person social dilemmas. In this classical example, two prisoners are separately given the choice between testifying against each other or keeping silent. What defines the Prisoner's Dilemma is the relative value of four outcomes. The best possible outcome is defecting while one's partner cooperates (designated DC). The next best outcome is mutual cooperation (CC) followed by mutual defection (DD), with the worst outcome being the case on which one cooperates while one's partner defects (CD). Thus  $DC > CC > DD > CD$ .

If the strategic dilemma is altered, however, and mutual cooperation leads to a better outcome than unilateral defection ( $CC > DC > DD > CD$ ), the situation is known as an Assurance Game (Sen 1969). In this situation, a person is willing to cooperate to achieve a larger payoff as long as that person is assured that the partner will cooperate as well. The French philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, presented the following illustration. Two hunters can either jointly hunt a stag (an adult deer and rather larger meal) or individually hunt a rabbit (tasty, but substantially less filling). Hunting stags is quite challenging and requires mutual cooperation. If either hunts a stag alone, the chance of success is minimal. Hunting stags is most beneficial for society but requires a lot of trust among its members. The key issue of the Assurance Game is whether parties can trust each other and how this assurance can be maintained. While this game has received less attention than the Prisoner's Dilemma Game, it has been argued that it is a more accurate model for explaining many social dilemma situations (Oliver 1990). While political and economic theory make extensive use of the Prisoner's Dilemma to model public goods problems and collective action generally, this approach leaves no room for the development of conditions of building trust in sustaining interorganizational collaboration that involves n-person social dilemmas.

In real-world situations of interorganizational collaboration, multiple persons are involved in several interactions over time, changing both the dynamics and potential outcomes set forth in classic two-person social dilemmas. In contrast to two-person dilemmas, n-person games involve situations where individual actions are not necessarily revealed to others and anonymity becomes possible. The costs one imposes on others from defecting is, therefore, diffused throughout the group, and one may have little or no direct control over the outcomes

others receive (Dawes 1980). Indeed, costs may be incurred by one individual, several individuals, or the group as a whole.

For example, in “The Problem of Providing Public Goods” (Olson 1965), the individual is faced with an immediate cost that generates a benefit that is shared by all. A public good is one that must be provided to all group members if it is provided to any member (Olson 1965). The temptation for the actor is to enjoy the public good without contributing to its creation or maintenance. Those who do so are termed “free riders” (Olson 1965). The real dilemma, much of the time, is that individuals cannot make “enough of a difference” to compensate them for the cost of contributing (Maxwell and Oliver 1993: 55).

In repeated game situations actors may engage in forms of retribution. In “tit-for-tat,” for example, players can achieve the benefits of the Pareto-optimal outcomes by playing the cooperative (dominated) alternative in the first play of the game and thereafter mimicking the other player’s previous choice. If an opponent fails to cooperate in period four, his tit-for-tat partner will fail to cooperate in period five (Axelrod 1984). In this situation, an individual must be willing to punish a player who defected in the last round by defecting in the current round. In “grim trigger” an individual must be willing to cooperate initially but then punish everyone for the rest of the game if any defection is noticed in the current round (Dixit and Skeath 1999). According to Axelrod (1984), the likelihood of another encounter encourages cooperation.

While a great deal of emphasis has been placed on the Prisoners' Dilemma for solving social dilemmas, this tool has been criticized for its emphasis on individualistic free-riding (Runge 1984). Clearly every social encounter is not a Prisoners' Dilemma. Repeated games seem to capture an important aspect of our social lives, the fact that we are not all strangers. Indeed, Ostrom (1990) provides evidence of a much more complex world than one in which individuals rush to an inefficient Nash equilibrium. While the Assurance Game provides important insights into the issue of trust for successful collaboration, it does not adequately explain how institutional arrangements affect economic progress by lowering transaction costs, the role of group leaders in facilitating collaboration and guiding outcomes, or how individual norms and values guide collaborative behaviors.

Rational choice theory has been criticized for its narrow, hedonistic viewpoint and that it does not readily recognize divergent viewpoints. Opponents of rational choice contend that actors are portrayed as static individuals and that no other values apart from self interest are considered. North (1990) argues that, in order to understand institutional change and economic performance, it is necessary to go beyond rational actor models and acknowledge the range of human motivations and limitations of information processing. For various reasons, individuals in collaborative settings may surrender wealth maximization goals for other values and ideologies. Of particular note is the distinction between public and private organizations where a broader set of forces is at work in the public sector.

In contrast to rational choice institutionalism, sociological models of institutionalism emphasize the importance of norms and values in linking individuals to the larger purposes

of public administration or the organization of which they are a part. The institution in this approach embodies higher purposes and norms to which individuals are committed by choice rather than compulsion as a result of mutual adjustment.

### **Sociological Institutionalism**

Sociological institutionalism, as the term suggests, has been more influential in disciplines such as sociology and organizational theory. Sociological institutionalism is not a single tradition but has two closely related but distinct variants—normative and cognitive.

Normative institutionalists view institutions as the values and norms that are internalized by social actors and the means by which individuals' identities are shaped (March and Olsen, 1984, 1989; Scott 1995). Cognitive institutionalists regard institutions as the cognitive frames through which we understand social reality. Cognitive institutionalists take an interpretive approach to the study of organizations, seeking to understand how collective cognitions develop. In doing so, they turn their attention to the ways in which shared meaning systems develop, are regularized, and become “taken-for-granted” (Scott 1995).

To sociological institutionalists, institutions constitute actors and adopt features that seem legitimate to the cultural context. Sociological institutionalism defines institutions broadly to include, “not just procedural rules, procedures or norms, but also the symbol systems, cognitive scripts, and moral templates that provide the ‘frames of meaning’ guiding human action” (Hall and Taylor 1996: 947).

The basic tenet of sociological institutionalism holds that individuals will make conscious choices but will operate within the parameters set by institutional norms as interpreted by the individual. Expectations about how individuals should relate to one another are affected by values regarding power and rules that are widely held in a society. Individuals are said to follow a ‘logic of appropriateness’—a blend of moral obligation, normative expectation, and cognitive elements (March & Olsen 1989) that are institutionally defined. In this view, actors select courses of action according to their perceptions of “what is feasible, legitimate, possible, and desirable” in particular institutional environments (Hay and Wincott 1998: 956). Standards of behavior are acquired through involvement with one or more institutions and institutions are the major repositories of social action (Peters 2001).

However, moral obligation should not be interpreted as an external constraint. Rather, by making stable patterns of collection possible, organizations are free to “contrive new patterns of acting in each situation they encounter” (Astely and Van de Ven 1983: 263) signifying a voluntary opportunity to facilitate interaction and accomplish collective goals. “Institutions do not just constrain options; they establish the very criteria by which people discover their preferences” (DiMaggio and Powell 1991:11). In this view, institutions become prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimensions of social life (Blom-Hansen 1997) and are the frames through which meaning is made and the means by which individuals’ identities are shaped (March and Olsen, 1984, 1989; Scott 1995).

The next section of this research compares rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism to consider how these two seemingly divergent perspectives may be

integrated into a theoretical framework for gaining important insights into reasons why organizations decide to work together and how preferences and institutional arrangements influence such efforts.

### **Rational Choice and Sociological Institutionalism: A Comparison**

Various scholars have compared and contrasted the different approaches to institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Hall & Taylor 1996; Heikkila and Isett 2004). A fundamental distinction between rational choice and sociological institutionalism is that one views institutions as factors that are endogenous to actors while the other considers how exogenous variables affect collective outcomes (Heikkila and Isett 2004). Sociological institutionalism rejects the neo-classical arguments of utility maximization, equilibrium states, over-reliance on efficiency explanations, and exogenous preferences.

At the organizational level, sociological institutionalists take a holistic approach, proposing a “complex duality” between organizations and their environments rather than the methodological individualism of a rationalist approach. Cognitive institutionalism takes a constructionist approach to social reality, in contrast to the realism assumed by rationalist institutionalism.

Sociological institutionalists view interaction as a process of identity formation, role enactment and the internalization of social norms (March and Olsen 1989). The perspective of acting “appropriately” consists of mutual adjustment to the expectations of others by following established routines and conventions. Established norms provide stability and, over time,

behavior is adjusted as a result of learning from previous experiences. While the rational choice literature focuses on institutions as incentive structures that shape individual choices, the sociological perspective explains how unconscious cognitive processes guide behavior, which may be in contrast to formal incentive structures (Heikkila and Isett 2004: 4).

According to DiMaggio & Powell (1991), sociological institutionalism provides a model of “practical” rather than rational action. A practical model of action does not deny rational behavior. Under given conditions, individuals do pursue their own goals and make choices in a systematic and purposeful manner. While actors pursue their own interests, they do so within limits and must negotiate with others to find compromises that are acceptable so that the institution survives and succeeds. This is a sharp contrast to rationalist institutionalism, which assumes exogenous preferences: institutions alter the cost-benefit calculus but not preferences themselves.

The two variants of new institutionalism have been described as “basically incompatible” (Blom-Hansen 1997: 674). However, more recently, research has focused on an integrated model of institutionalism (Heikkila and Isett 2004; Svava and Mouritzen 2003) as “neither of the literatures alone provides an adequate framework for developing a model of institutional choice” (Heikkila and Isett 2004: 6).

Heikkila and Isett (2004) have developed a model that describes the effects of institutions on operational-level choices in public organizations drawing on complementary theoretical insights from rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism. This model

holds that decision making cannot be accurately explained without considering institutional constraints (see Figure 3.1). The intent of the authors is not to explain why actors in public organizations make new choices, but how they come to make these choices and how other actors come to accept and conform to these choices in a collective setting (4).

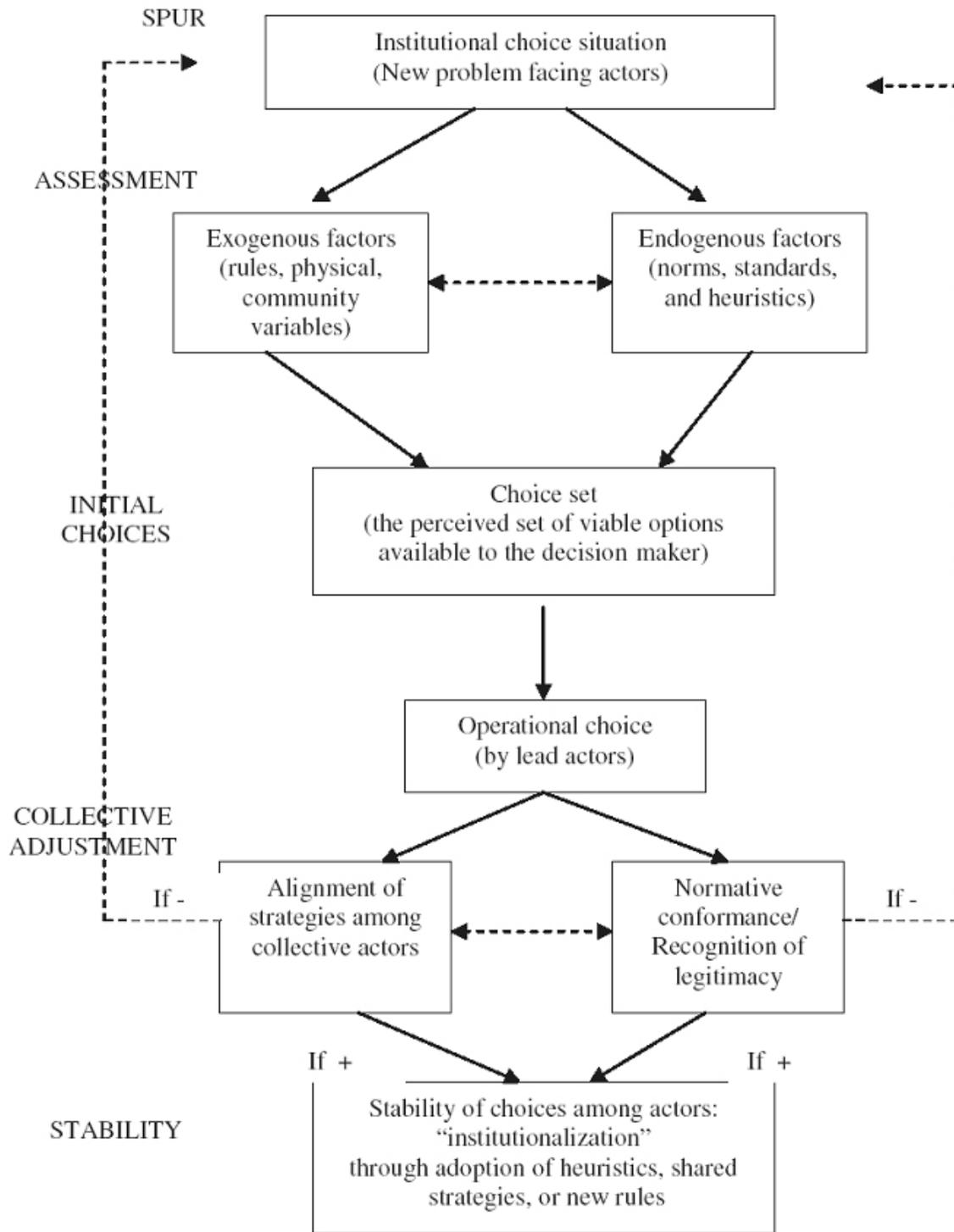


Figure 3.1 Institutional Model of Operational-Level Decision Making (Heikkila and Isett 2004: 6)

According to this model, there are five main stages: spur, assessment, initial choices, collective adjustment, and stability. As actors/organizations are faced with a new opportunity or problem, key decision-makers are likely to initiate choices based on an assessment of options. During the *spur stage* of this model, actors face an “institutional choice situation.” According to the authors, to make a decision during the *assessment phase* of the model, actors take into account both endogenous factors (those that take place within the decision maker’s cognitive processes—both conscious and unconscious) and exogenous factors (rules, laws, physical environment). This decision-making process is bounded and may not fully integrate the exogenous factors shaping choices into their assessment. However, “the interaction with endogenous institutional variables will supplement or complement the decision-making calculus for a boundedly rational actor” (9).

During the *initial choices phase* of this institutional model of operational-level decision-making, individuals/collectives/organizations choose which option is best suited to address the problem at hand, having been assessed from both normative and rule-bound lenses. If an organization or collective decision is being made, some leader or decision-maker(s) typically initiate(s) the operational choice. This decision, in turn, leads to the *collective adjustment phase* among other actors in the systems. Actors create strategies to ensure others in the collective benefit from and, if possible, conform to the institutional choice. During this process, actors adapt at a slower rate, through a normative conformance, that can lead to reinforcement of the decision. “The amount of normative change will depend upon the magnitude of the institutional strength and embeddedness of the norm itself” (10). This process of alignment of norms and strategies is crucial to the *stability phase* of the model.

Stability occurs through adoption of heuristics, shared operational strategies, or the collection of new rules that results in norms and strategies converging to conform to the choices of key decision-makers. “The model assumes that new rules or strategies of operation need to be compatible with existing norms and heuristics” (10). While instability may occur if there is a lack of compliance and stability, repetition should lead to stability due to heuristic-based decision making or conformance with rules.

The authors point out that the model is not necessarily linear. While the stages are sequential, the process “may move up and down the stages, with multiple stages being addressed at once, until stability is reached” (10). During this process, actors can take an active role in promoting stability. However, attainment is not necessarily static. It is only achieved for the period between its attainment and the time when another spur occurs.

Mouritzen and Svara (2003) suggest that actors may have mixed preferences or shift between exogenous and endogenous preferences depending on circumstances. According to Astely and Van de Ven, “On the one hand they act autonomously so as to maximize their chances of obtaining whatever goals they seek individually, apart from those of the collectivity. On the other hand, they adhere to unifying patterns of cultural and social order as they take on responsibilities of a larger social entity. . . .” Under these circumstances, “the manager acts as gamesman and statesman” (1983: 263-64). Astely and Van de Ven (1983) liken this role to what Thompson (1967: 48) describes as “the paradox of administration.”

## **Interorganizational Collaboration and Institutionalization: An Integrated Approach**

Phillips, Hardy, and Lawrence (1998) argue that “institutionalization and collaboration are interdependent; institutional fields provide the rules and resources upon which collaboration is constructed, while collaboration provides a context for the ongoing processes of structuration that sustain institutional fields of the participants” (1). However, as Ostrom (1999) points out, the invisibility of studying such institutions is problematic. Because they exist in the minds of participants, and are sometimes shared as implicit knowledge rather than in an explicit and written form, it is often difficult to identify and measure them.

A central theme of this research is to understand why organizations come together to share a common goal. According to Shepsle (1989), institutions are the result of conscious choice decisions made by fairly rational actors who are interested in collaborating. From this perspective, collaboration emerges when actors become interested in “playing the game” (138-39).

Institutions are created to solve collaboration problems and provide an opportunity to reduce transaction costs (North 1990). Yet, Ostrom (1990) writes, “getting the institutions right is a difficult, time-consuming, conflict-ridden process” (14). Processes of communicating, building trust, sharing resources, avoiding duplication of effort, setting goals, and sharing information all increase transaction costs in terms of negotiation, time, and energy.

Actors may determine costs and benefits of participation and consider whether transaction costs will be lowered by joining the interorganizational network and, the more that actors

value the future, the greater the likelihood that compliance with institutions will be a long-term rational strategy. An actor's discount rate of the future is, in part, a function of the likelihood that he/she will continue to interact with the same actors (Blom-Hansen 1997: 688; Knight 1992: 174-83).

It should be noted that the reasons for collaboration among and between organizations from the public sector involve a wider and more fundamental range of issues than those of market relations. While a number of reasons for collaboration have been elicited that support the rational choice model, including belief of gaining political advantage through collaboration (Dawes 1996; Weiss 1987), risk aversion (Kondra and Hinings 1998), increased legitimacy, and maximizing revenue, the rationale may be focused on system goals rather than organizational goals. Even when specific incentives to integrate and collaborate are weak, "emphasis is often on achieving outcomes that enhance the overall well-being of clients, without regard to whether the goals of individual provider organizations are met" (Provan and Milward 1995: 3). For example, Dawes (1996) found that improved service delivery, public accountability, and access to government information by the public were motivating factors for collaboration in the public sector. According to Galaskiewicz (1985), there is no reason why organizations, especially if facing similar environment contingencies, cannot build a consensus among themselves, even to the point that they would contribute time and resources to the collective effort without being overly concerned about the return they should expect in the short run (296).

A second central theme of this research is to analyze the process through which the particularistic interests of a group within the organization come to be widely shared by the organizational participants. As organizations collaborate, the history (and prehistory) of the organization sets in motion interactions and processes that ultimately become institutionalized. In this manner, participants come to share a culture, vision, or purpose of how things should be done. Sociological institutionalists would state that norms become imbued with a sense of morality rather than sheer pragmatism so that decision-makers feel compelled to abide by them. From the sociological perspective, the routinization of behavior over time leads to mutual expectations of the roles and responsibilities of each party to the relationship. These expectations become internalized and are not questioned by either party, taking on a legitimacy of their own “as representatives of organizations interact, their relationships become infused with shared values that turn sectional orientations into collective orientations” (Astely and Van de Ven 1983: 263).

According to rational choice institutionalists, actors seek to advance a broadly defined set of interests, including a preference for stability, autonomy, and personal gain. From this perspective, collaboration is viewed as a set of formal or informal rules that structure repetitive interactions and are known to most actors. However, research also demonstrates that administrators are not necessarily maximizers and that other factors must be considered when seeking to explain behavior (Niskanen 1971). While models of rationality have been highly successful in predicting marginal behavior in competitive situations, substantial evidence from experiments demonstrates that cooperation levels for most one-shot or finitely repeated social dilemmas far exceed the predicted levels and are systematically affected by

variables that play no theoretical role in affecting outcomes. Individuals systematically engage in collective action to provide local public goods or manage common pool resources without an external authority to offer inducements or impose sanctions (Ostrom 1998: 2).

During collaboration, institutionalization processes are constantly developing because actors interpret and reinterpret the structural characteristics of their interorganizational network (Klijn 1996: 101). According to Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence (1998), institutionalized rules and resources are used in the negotiation of at least three aspects of the collaborative process: 1) the definition of the issue or problem that the collaboration is intended to address; 2) the membership of the collaboration; and, 3) the practices utilized in response to the problem.

How a problem or issue is identified and comes to be understood is a “critical aspect of collaborative activity as the framing of the issue limits the potential outcome of the collaboration and plays an important role in determining who has a legitimate case for membership in the collaboration” (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998: 8). The definition of the problem is critical because it determines who is and is not included in the interorganizational network, defines power relationships between and among members, and begins to establish the standard practices that will guide members’ interaction processes for the duration of the collaboration (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998).

During the collaborative process, individuals tend to use heuristics or rules of thumb that they have learned over time that give them good outcomes in particular types of situations. In addition to learning instrumental heuristics, they build consensus around goals, programs, and practices and learn and adopt norms and rules through coercive, mimetic, and normative

processes (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Organizations that conform to institutional norms become “optimal,” if not efficient, in the sense that they increase their survival capabilities by conforming to those norms (Baum and Oliver 1991: Kondra and Hinings 1998).

As participants draw on institutional structures as resources, they are simultaneously re-producing, challenging, and constructing those same structures. Institutional fields develop through a process of interaction, whereby groups of organizations develop common understandings and practices that guide their collaboration efforts and shape the ongoing patterns of interaction from which they are produced. “The result of this process is a more or less structured institutional field composed of organizations who share institutionalized rules and resources” (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998). The definition of the collaboration problems, the delineation of membership, and the construction of the solution to the problem all produce effects that spill over into the institutional context (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998: 11).

### **Chapter Summary**

In institutional theory, addressing topics like collaboration requires first understanding how consensus is built around the meaning of collaboration and then understanding the ways in which concepts and practices associated with collaboration are developed and diffused among organizations. It is not sufficient to merely discover the best definition of collaboration and then identify the best contextual factors. Rather, it necessitates

understanding how the concepts of collaboration are constructed, accepted, and sustained—how they become rule-like and embedded and become accepted practice.<sup>4</sup>

Looking through the theoretical lens of institutionalism, actors are assumed to exhibit behaviors that can be explained by both rational choice institutionalism and/or sociological institutionalism. The rational choice model of institutionalism alone is too narrow for understanding interorganizational collaboration in the public sector. Likewise, it is important to recognize that the sociological model may ignore some hard realities that shape whether participants initially come to the table, as well as whether they keep coming back.

Fulfillment of self-interest may be an important incentive for autonomous participants early in the collaboration process. Over time, however, organizations may shift to normative terms as the problem or issue comes to be understood and as the collaboration deepens and participants develop common understandings and practices. The potential for a collaboration developing into a long-term arrangement has important consequences for this and future research. Clearly, the balance between self and collective interests that characterizes collaboration remains an important area for future research (Thomson 1998: 179). As this review of the literature has revealed, while fundamental differences exist between rational choice and sociological institutionalism, these two “competing frameworks” can, together, provide important insights into how structures and activities provide stability and meaning to social behavior while operating at multiples levels of jurisdiction (Scott 1995).

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<sup>4</sup> The model being developed here relies on an understanding between action (collaborative processes) and structure (including institutionalized rules and resources) existing as a duality, work set forth by Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence (1998).

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE CASE STUDY: THE IT INITIATIVE**

### **The Context and Setting of the Study**

In June 2001, Valencia, Seminole, and Lake-Sumter Community Colleges launched an initiative “to develop an IT workforce for the twenty-first century that would meet the economic development needs and opportunities of Central Florida” (memorandum from Valencia senior administration to selected individuals, July 14, 2004). This research is aimed at understanding the preferences and institutional arrangements that facilitated this interorganizational collaboration. This chapter describes the context and the setting for this study. First, a brief history of the role of community colleges in workforce development is provided. Next, an overview of the community colleges under study and the mission and values of each of the institutions are presented. Finally, the IT Initiative that is the focus of this research is described.

### **Workforce Development and the Community College: A History of Collaboration**

Since President Truman’s declaration that a two-year college would be established in every major population center as a strategy for access to higher education and regional development, community colleges have been vitally linked to their communities. According to Spangler (2002), “the position of community colleges in the middle of the educational hierarchy—between K-12 and the university—enables them to move easily and comfortably along that continuum as circumstances arise, and as resources shrink and expand.” Spangler describes community colleges as “conditioned to be flexible and responsive” (1).

Today, in response to business leaders' requests, many community colleges are playing critical roles in economic development by providing training necessary for the growth of existing businesses, and the recruitment of new ones. As a result, many of the nation's community colleges have found themselves locked in interdependencies with business/industry and other organizations. According to Lorenzo and LeCroy (1994), the philosophy of 'go it alone' must give way to a more pluralistic 'do it together' attitude if America's community colleges are to enjoy benefits related to workforce education.

Research is currently underway to understand and describe how contextual factors impact collaboration efforts in the community college arena. Katsinas and Lacey (1989) outline the following factors as critical to the success of seven community colleges' economic development efforts:

- Involvement of the CEO during both the incubation and evaluation periods of the project
- The provision of incentives to encourage involvement of full-time faculty in the delivery of programs
- Support for applied research for the development and delivery of programs (60).

In a study of a multi-campus community college, Ballantyne (1985) sets forth the following components for a successful model for business/industry linkages:

- Clearly defined internal processes and procedures
- Comprehensive training for staff
- Total internal commitment on the part of all college divisions
- Clearly delineated plan for marketing, delivery of instruction, evaluation, follow-up and continuous monitoring of customers
- Development, collection, and maintenance of resources.

Other research has highlighted potential barriers to collaboration efforts. Sundberg (2002) states that bureaucracy, the concept of multiple stakeholders, boundary issues, and governance were all issues that had to be addressed during a process of collaboration between Carol Sandburg College and business/industry when building the Center for Manufacturing Excellence. According to Sundberg, due to a significant learning curve, the “process and the critical elements of developing partnerships with either businesses or other educational institutions were simple in theory but complex in practice” (14). Nevertheless, Sundberg describes the collaboration as “an overwhelming success” due to the fact that, first and foremost, partners were committed to listening and trying to understand one another’s positions and needs. By staying in constant dialogue, the project was able to remain focused on the task at hand.

Allen (2002) outlines several challenges that emerged when Illinois Community College (IVCC) entered into a partnership with the Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (JATC), Local 176. From the onset, there was a natural reluctance to change from traditional ways of doing business and a resistance to taking necessary steps to make a commitment. However, these obstacles were overcome by exhibiting patience, perseverance, and cohesiveness and by keeping the goal of the project at the forefront of all decision-making.

Bynum (2002) outlines several challenges in implementing a comprehensive college-and-industry-based training program entitled the “Alameda Corridor Industry & College Collaborative.” These potential barriers included local business practices employed by each of the eight partnering colleges and determining which of the multitude of local government,

community-based, economic development, and various public and private sector entities to work with. Navigating the dynamics of working with multiple organizations with different levels of funding, available resources, staff experience, and missions was also problematic. However, the most difficult aspect of the collaboration was the painstaking and laborious administrative task of keeping track of multiple grants, multiple contract relationships, and multiple service contract relationships, giving little turnaround time for implementation.

As community colleges strive to collaborate to meet the workforce education needs of their local communities, it is clear that such efforts are not without potential pitfalls and detractors. While community colleges are positioned to continue to forge and enhance collaboration efforts to support their respective communities, more information is needed regarding how to launch and sustain such efforts (Taber 1995).

### **Valencia Community College**

Founded in the fall of 1967, Valencia Community College has four campuses and two centers in the Orlando area and is now the second largest of Florida's 28 community colleges<sup>5</sup>. Valencia's faculty and staff put their energies into a "learning-centered" philosophy that emphasizes individual student success.

In 1999/2000, Valencia Community College had an annual enrollment of more 39,000 students and an operating budget, including grants and financial aid, of \$101.5 million. The college employed 1,957 faculty and staff (please refer to Table 4.1).

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<sup>5</sup> Florida's community college system is comprised of 28 community colleges, locally governed by individual district board of trustees, providing each board with legal responsibility for maintaining and operating its own college.

### **Seminole Community College**

Founded in 1965, Seminole Community College has three campuses and is recognized as a student-centered and community-connected institution. Emphasis is placed on student success as evidenced by an investment in distinctive and diverse programs. Attention is focused on forging mutually beneficial partnerships and alliances that anticipate and address the specific needs of a diverse community.

In 1999/2000 Seminole Community College had an annual enrollment of 11,713 students and an operating budget of more than \$39 million. The college employed 1,364 faculty and staff (please refer to Table 4.1).

### **Lake-Sumter Community College**

Lake-Sumter Community College was authorized by the 1961 Florida Legislature as the result of citizens' efforts in Lake and Sumter Counties. The college began operating as part of the state community college system on January 2, 1962. Lake-Sumter continues to have a major impact on the surrounding region by complementing its academic offerings with a variety of athletic, leisure time, personal enrichment, and cultural entertainment programs and activities.

In 1999/2000, Lake Sumter Community College had an annual enrollment of 3,360 students and employed 290 faculty and staff. The college had an operating budget of \$10.6 million (please refer to Table 4.1).

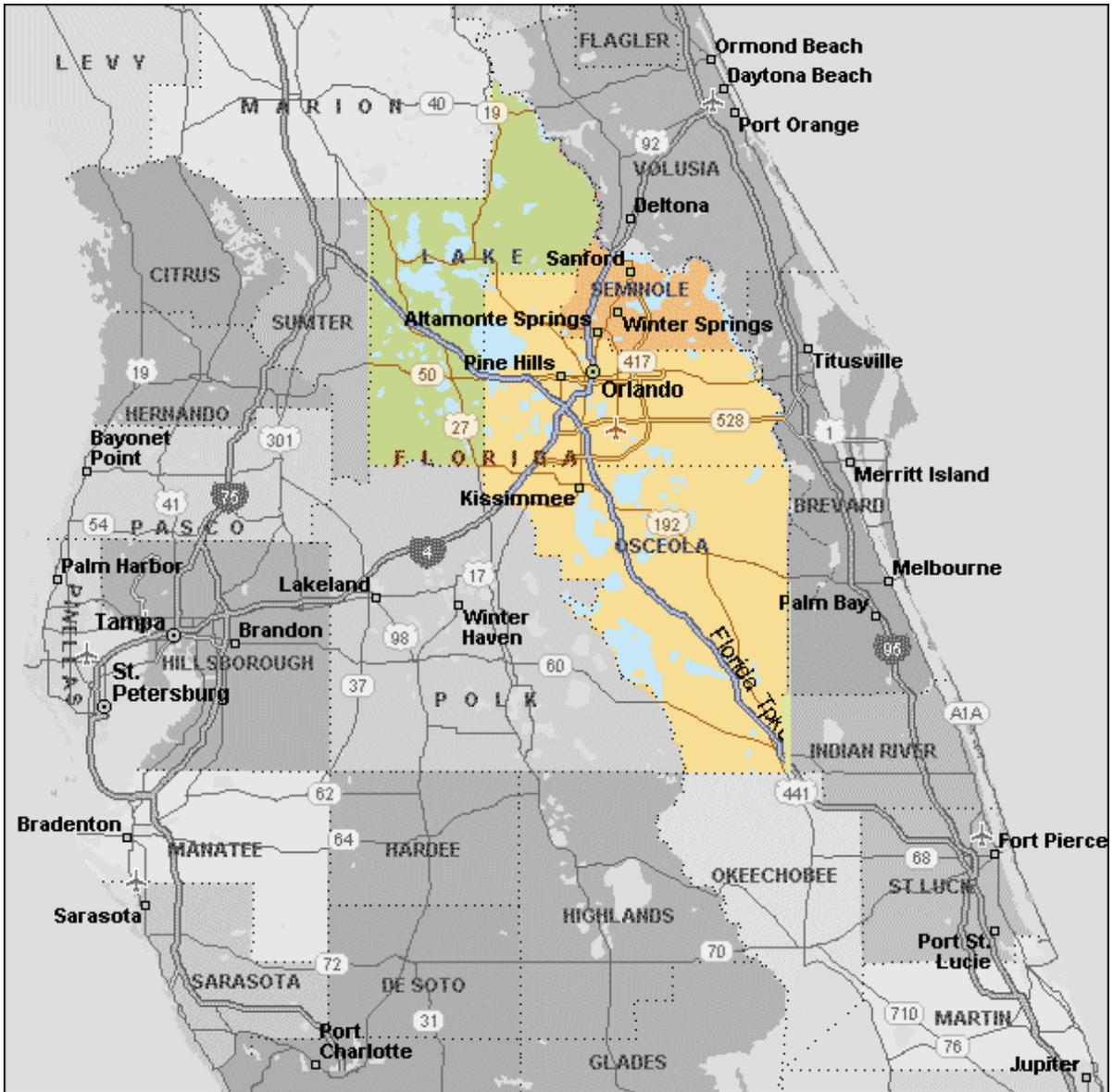


Figure 4.1 Map of the I-4 Corridor, Central Florida

Table 4.1 Valencia, Seminole, and Lake-Sumter Community Colleges' Profiles (1999/2000)

<b>1999/2000 Data</b>	<b>Valencia</b>	<b>Seminole</b>	<b>Lake-Sumter</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b><i>Annual Enrollment</i></b>				
College Credit (unduplicated)	39,234	11,713	3,360	54,577
Continuing Education and Vocation Credit	11,283	11,189	5,390	27,862
Adult Education	-0-	4,742	-0-	4,742
Conference & Seminars	5,864	-0-	-0-	5,864
Total	53,381	27,644	9,020	93,045
FTE	13,745	6,777	1,217	21,739
<b><i>Personnel</i></b>				
Administrators	37	19	24	80
Faculty (Full Time)	323	155	46	524
Professional	101	74	20	195
Career	459	228	70	757
Part-Time	1,037	888	130	2,055
Total	1,957	1,364	290	3,611
<b><i>Student Body</i></b>				
Male	43%	45%	34%	34% to 45%
Female	57%	55%	66%	55% to 66%
African-American	13	11	7	7% to 13%
American Indian	1	1	1	1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	6	4	1	1% to 6%
Caucasian	60	70	186	60% to 86%
Hispanic	18	12	3	3% to 18%
Other	2% (Non Res)	2	2	2%
Full-Time	34	35	32	32% to 35%
Part-time	66	65	68	65% to 68%
Credit	24.5	28.3	27.5	24.5 to 28.3
Continuing Education	38.4	31.6	50	31.6 to 50
Associate in Arts	2,454	536	176	3,166
Associates in Science	502	303	79	884
Technical Certificates	278	162	6	446
Vocational Certificates	129	493	-0-	622
GED/High School Diploma	-0-	703	-0-	703
Total	3,363	2,197	261	5,821
Placement Rate of AS/ Certificate Programs (Average)	94%	95%	99%	94% to 99%
Operating Budget, including grants, financial aid	\$101.5 Million	\$39.2 Million	\$10.6 Million	\$151.3 Million

## **The IT Initiative**

In 2001, Valencia, Seminole, and Lake-Sumter Community Colleges pledged to differentiate Central Florida from the rest of the nation by training 15,000 skilled IT workers in three years. A review was conducted nationally, regionally, and locally of the employment projections and forecasts in the field of information technology. The summary projected a need of 2,226 average annual openings representing 11,130 new IT job openings from 2001-2006 (Valencia Community College Report on IT Initiative, June 2001). In response to business and industry requiring industry-based certification and a higher level of education and training in information technology, the community colleges responded to meet the workforce needs by developing and offering IT programs designed specifically for IT certifications which are also part of IT programs.

In fiscal year 2000/2001, Lake-Sumter Community College had 2,112 IT training slots available to students annually. Seminole Community College had 12,343 slots available and Valencia Community College had 15,618 (Valencia Community College Report on IT Initiative, 2000/01). Table 4.2 presents a profile of each of the community college's existing IT programs and certifications prior to the start of the IT Initiative.

Table 4.2 Lake-Sumter, Seminole, and Valencia Community Colleges' Information Technology Programs & Certifications—Spring 2001

<b>Information Technology Existing Programs</b>	<b>Lake-Sumter CC</b>	<b>Seminole CC</b>	<b>Valencia CC</b>
Computer Engineering Technology – Networking (AAS/AS Degree)	X	X	X
General Track		X	
Microsoft Specialization (MCSE, MCP, A+ Certifications)			X
CISCO Specialization		X	X
Networking Specialization	X	X	
Siemens Partnership Program		X	
Computer Information Technology (AAS/AS Degree)	X	X	
Computer Programming	X		
Microcomputer Applications	X		
Computer Programming and Analysis (AS Degree)		X	X
C++ Programming Specialization		X	
Database Administration Specialization		X	
Visual Basic Programming Specialization		X	
World Wide Web Programming Specialization		X	
Computer Programming (Technical Certificate)		X	X
Computer Services and Repair (Vocational Certificate)		X	
Computer Assisted Design and Drafting (CADD) for Individuals with Disabilities (Vocational Certificate)			X
Graphics/Multimedia Technology		X	X
Graphic Design Technology Specialization	X	X	X
Multimedia Technology Specialization			X
Television and Film Production Specialization		X	X
Web Design Specialization		X	
Network Services Technology (AS Degree)		X	
Microsoft Specialization (MCP and MCSE Certification)		X	
Novell Specialization (I and CNE Certifications)		X	
Internet Services Technology (AS Degree)	X	X	
Internet/Intranet Specialization		X	
PC Support Specialist for Individuals with Disabilities (Vocational Certificate)			X
Auto CADD Course		X	X
Desktop Publishing Courses		X	X
IT Continuing Education Courses	X	X	X
<b>Information Technology Industry Certifications Available</b>			
A+ (CISCO Certified Network Associate)	X	X	X
CCNA (Certified Novell Administrator)		X	X
CAN (Certified Novell Engineer)	X	X	
MCP (Microsoft Certified Professional)	X	X	X
MCSD (Microsoft Certified Solution Developer)		X	
Network+ (Comp TIA)	X	X	X
MOUS (Microsoft Office User Specialist)	X	X	X
OCP (Oracle Certified Professional)		X	X

On April 20, 2001, the presidents of the three community colleges announced plans to address worker shortages in the information technology sector to an audience of 600 business leaders, industry experts, and legislators at a luncheon sponsored by the Orlando Regional Chamber and the Central Florida Innovation Corporation (CFIC). Governor Jeb Bush joined the presidents and told the audience that community colleges have an important role to play in achieving high tech growth in Florida's companies and in making certain skilled workers are ready for the new economy (Orlando Sentinel, April 20, 2001).

The three community colleges pledged, over the next three years to provide:

- 9,000 workers with an average of 150 hours of class and lab time in technology fields
- 3,600 workers with 200 to 1,000 qualifying them for industry-sponsored certification as technicians or specialists with product lines such as Microsoft software
- 2,400 workers with more than 1,000 hours of training and education, earning them associate degrees
- Nearly double their high tech faculty.

To launch the IT Initiative, the community colleges attracted \$6.5 million in state and federal grants and pledged to spend a combined \$10.8 million during the next three years on instructors, software, computer equipment, and other expenses (Orlando Sentinel, April 20, 2001). In succeeding months, due largely to the events surrounding the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington DC, the economy took a very different turn. However, the collaboration continued based on the expectation that shortages in the field of information technology would return as the economy recovered and "those communities that have made provision for an ample supply of skilled IT workers will reap a

competitive advantage for job growth and retention” (letter from Community College Presidents to those involved in the collaboration and legislators, July 8, 2002).

The IT Initiative between Valencia, Seminole, and Lake-Sumter community colleges has been defined as a *partnership* because it involves a limited number of organizations from one sector that make a moderate, limited-term commitment and face a moderate level of risk.

Accomplishments as a result of this three-year commitment are outlined below:

- Goal met—15,174 IT workers trained
- 3.5 million hours of IT training provided over three years
- 35 IT programs available
- Training available to prepare for 30 Industry Certifications

(Memorandum from Valencia senior administration to selected individuals, July 14, 2004).

The results of the IT Initiative are considered to be “a reflection of the regional partnership between the three community colleges working together in providing and enhancing learning experiences for students while addressing the needs of the IT business and industry”

(Memorandum from Valencia senior administration to selected individuals, July 14, 2004)<sup>6</sup>.

This interorganizational collaboration provides an opportunity to gather firsthand information from participants regarding the preferences and institutional arrangements that facilitate collaboration.

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<sup>6</sup> Questions remain regarding whether the scalability of the IT Initiative influenced the preferences and institutional arrangements of the interorganizational collaboration.

## **Chapter Summary**

As community colleges and other public institutions work together to solve society's complex problems, such efforts will require additional information regarding leadership skills required to successfully collaborate as well as a firm understanding of how the individual members and the partners and organizations relate to the work being conducted (Taber 1995). According to Kanter and Eccles (1992), "the best way to acquire this kind of knowledge is to study individual managers who have been successful" (527).

The IT Initiative provides a useful case for effectively bridging the gap between theory and practice regarding launching and managing interorganizational collaboration. Findings will contribute to a growing body of information regarding collaboration in the public sector and beyond. Based on certain expectations that have arisen from this review of the literature, this research will present and "test" a model that can be used to consider the institutional arrangements for interorganizational collaboration. This research will use institutional theory to expand on the conceptual frameworks presented in the literature, thus providing explanations guided by a more complex model.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

Chapter One showed a compelling need for collaborative approaches to solving many of society's complex issues, including workforce development. Chapter Two reviewed relevant literature concerning new governance and identified several key exogenous and endogenous factors influencing the preferences and institutional arrangements for interorganizational collaboration. Chapter Three expanded the theoretical context for this study by reviewing the literature concerning rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism. Chapter Four presented the case study that is the focus of this research. Based on findings from this review of the literature, it is possible to understand and explain interorganizational collaboration via an integrated model of two seemingly divergent strands of institutionalism.

### **Building an Analytical Framework**

Based on certain expectations that have arisen from this review of the literature, this research will present and “test” a model that can be used to consider the preferences and institutional arrangements for interorganizational collaboration. This research will use institutional theory to expand on prior conceptual frameworks presented in the literature and thus provide explanations guided by a more complex model.

The model assumes that there is not necessarily a conflict between self-interest and serving others or having shared interests. For example, while fulfillment of self interest may be an important incentive for autonomous participants to collaborate, the creation and attainment of shared goals may also be important to keep the actors working together. Indeed, according to Khator and Brunson (2001), the condition of shared vision is not contrary to the condition of

self-interest. They can and do exist: the scope of shared vision includes but is not limited to the scope of self-interest. The co-existence means, however, that the shared vision may be fragile and can be undermined by a reassertion of self-interest as a predominant concern.

Two aspects of interorganizational collaboration should be examined: formation of collaboration and sustainment/enhancement of collaboration. Looking through the theoretical lens of institutionalism, actors are assumed to exhibit behaviors that can be explained by both rational choice institutionalism and/or sociological institutionalism. The rational choice model of institutionalism alone is too narrow for understanding interorganizational collaboration in the public sector because the rationale may be focused on system goals rather than organizational or individual goals. Likewise, the sociological model may ignore some hard realities that shape whether participants initially come to the table, as well as whether they keep coming back.

The analysis will search for behaviors that are consistent with either the rational choice institutionalism or sociological institutionalism, and assess the extent to which nine factors affect formation and sustaining efforts of the interorganizational collaboration. Endogenous factors to be considered are the imposition of rules/regulations, commitment of members, perceptions and values of members, trust, and leadership (i.e. champions). Exogenous factors to be examined are the relative power of members, impact of the political/cultural context, the type of issue to be addressed, and history of relationships. Rational choice institutionalist and sociological institutionalist perspectives regarding each of these factors are presented in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2.

Prior research suggests that no assumptions can be made about which factors are likely to be more important than others. The analysis will distinguish the extent to which pre-existing and endogenous and exogenous conditions shape the collaborative effort compared to the conditions that arise with the process of interaction. The perspective of sociological institutionalism is that the exogenous factors are not automatic and may be interpreted differently or overcome by endogenous factors. For example, it cannot be assumed that organizations enter collaboration with a willingness to equalize resources but they may come to accept this based on the process of collaboration. Finally, the analysis will search for behaviors that are consistent with either the rational choice institutionalism or sociological institutionalism. For example, the basis for motivation may change from the early stages of collaboration to the later stages. This kind of analysis has not been conducted in the established literature on interorganizational collaboration.

Table 5.1 Endogenous Factors Influencing Interorganizational Collaboration

<b><i>Endogenous Factor</i></b>	<b><i>Definition</i></b>	<b><i>Rational Choice Institutionalism</i></b>	<b><i>Sociological Institutionalism</i></b>
<i>Imposition of rules/regulations</i>	Rules and regulations imposed by third-party organizations or by the participants themselves serve to shape the behaviors and decision-making of the participants. Institutionalized rules and resources are used in the negotiation of at least three aspects of the collaborative process: the definition of the issue or problem that the collaboration is intended to address; the membership of the collaboration; and the practices utilized in response to the problem (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998).	Institutions are viewed as rules that constrain action in repetitive interdependent relationships. Actors interact within specific, given constraints and try to figure out how to do a better job in the future than they have done in the past (E. Ostrom 1999: 50).	Attention is focused on how shared norms and value—rather than rule—guide behavior. As actors interact, shared meaning systems develop, are regularized, and become taken-for-granted (Scott 1995).
<i>Commitment of members</i>	While participants may enter into a collaborative arrangement for a variety of reasons, the degree to which these divergent reasons mesh will greatly affect what partners accomplish (Mandell 2002-03).	Actors act autonomously to maximize their chances of obtaining whatever goals, wants, or preferences they seek individually, apart from those of the collectivity (Astely and Van de Ven 1983).	Actors are driven by a logic of appropriateness—a blend of moral obligation, normative expectation, and cognitive elements (March and Olsen 1989). Through repeated interactions, mutual expectations become internalized.
<i>Perceptions and values of members</i>	Members carry different backgrounds that shape their perceptions of the problem and what needs to be done. The degree to which these perceptions can be reshaped by the actions within the collaboration are, therefore, critical (Mandell 2002-03).	Individuals must anticipate the outcomes and alternative courses of action and calculate that which will be best for them. All other social phenomena are reducible to these individual actions.	Norms are imbued with a sense of morality rather than sheer pragmatism. Participants are motivated by serving a shared vision of attaining a collective goal.

Table 5.1 (continued)

<p><i>Trust</i></p>	<p>Established relationships grounded in trust may, in fact, encourage collaboration (Ring and Van de Ven 1994; Agranoff 2003). A history of distrust increases the difficulty of establishing trust.</p>	<p>The emergence of trust in social interaction is a rational response to attempts to build coalitions (Coleman 1990). Relationships grounded in trust reduce transaction costs (Ring and Van de Ven 1994). History of distrust will increase transaction costs as partners must learn to work together and build trust. Distrust, therefore, is not preferential.</p>	<p>Trust is a core value that is sought after and attained through reciprocal arrangements and mutual awareness.</p>
<p><i>Leadership</i></p>	<p>During the collaboration process, various leadership roles may be required. A convener or chairperson (Agranoff 2003) provides vision, credibility, and trust and assists in performance and goal attainment. A “champion” may emerge. This individual has the energy and commitment to sustain the effort. In political arenas, such individuals have been called policy entrepreneurs. This individual may or may not be the convener or chairperson (Agranoff 2003). During the collaboration process, other leaders may emerge who may identify and procure other resources.</p>	<p>Leaders select the course of action most likely to maximize their/their organization’s interests.</p>	<p>Actors behave like statesmen, seeking out collaborative stewardship projects that would benefit the community (Nelson and Weschler 1996).</p>

Table 5.2 Exogenous Factors Influencing Interorganizational Collaboration

<b><i>Exogenous Factor</i></b>	<b><i>Definition</i></b>	<b><i>Rational Choice Institutionalism</i></b>	<b><i>Sociological Institutionalism</i></b>
<i>Relative power of members</i>	Some members may be in a position to exert more influence and/or control over others. Ways in which participants interact and negotiate and the degree of conflict and cooperation will produce a wide range of alternative responses (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998).	Social interaction is a process of social exchange. If an organization/individual is largely dependent upon another, they will be able to wield less power and have little influence on the price they have to pay.	Actors may be willing to give more than they get. <sup>7</sup> Equal resource allocation and sharing is key to maintaining positive interactions between members.
<i>Impact of political/cultural context</i>	The political context includes the laws and entities that govern the organizations involved.  The cultural context refers to the values, attitudes, and beliefs of members based on their own individual backgrounds and the organizational entities they represent, facilitating or impeding collaboration (Mandell 2002-03).	Institutions become constraints on individual action (North 1990; E. Ostrom 1986). Actors alter/respond to their environment via calculated decision-making.  The norms and values of actors are not discounted but are simply arbitrary preferences.	Actors may be willing to give up their traditional role to gain some new or innovative means of solving a problem, in accordance to beliefs and practices.  Individuals make conscious choices but operate within the parameters set by institutional norms as interpreted by the individual

<sup>7</sup> The perspective of sociological institutionalism is that exogenous factors may be interpreted differently or may be overcome by endogenous factors.

Table 5.2 (continued)

<i>Type of issue</i>	Reasons for participation and how the issue is defined and understood influences the membership of the collaboration and the potential outcome of the collaboration and the roles of participants (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998).	Actors collaborate when they perceive that an issue/goal will result in a net benefit to them/their organization and will continue to participate if they perceive a future net benefit.	Actors may be willing to participate because relationships become infused with shared values that turn sectional orientations into collective orientations (Astely and Van de Ven 1983: 263).
<i>History of Relationships</i>	To the extent that partners bring pre-existing relationships with them into collaborative settings, this history will facilitate or impede collaboration, especially as it affects the level of trust (Agranoff 2003).	Participants collaborate when they recognize that they/their organization do not have the resources necessary to succeed and they recognize a reward.	Participants may be willing to collaborate to share costs to contribute to a shared vision/goal or to overcome a history of mistrust (Nelson 2001).

## **The Case Study**

This research uses a single case study approach. Yin (1989) defines the case study as “an empirical inquiry that (1) investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when (2) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which (3) multiple sources are used” (23). Scholars find that the individual case study is the most convenient focus of study when the research goal is to acquire a contextually rich understanding of some phenomenon of interest because this method can contribute uniquely to knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena (Yin, 1994). Case studies are best suited for “how” and “why” research questions when the researcher has no control over behavioral events and wants to focus on contemporary events (Yin 1994).

Critics of case studies believe that the study of only a small number of cases cannot offer grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings as there is no assurance that the variables of a proposition are correlated and there is no way to eliminate other possible determinants of the dependent variable. Furthermore, the intensive exposure to study of the case biases the findings. While the case researcher will typically uncover more variables than he or she has data points, making statistical control (ex., through multiple regression) an impossibility, this, however, may be considered a strength of case study research: it has the capability of uncovering causal paths and mechanisms, and through richness of detail, identifying causal influences and interaction effects which might not be treated as operationalized variables in a statistical study

(<http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/pa765/cases.htm>).

Many case study researchers have written about the benefits of case study research. For instance, Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest that case studies:

- Clearly articulate the complexities of the phenomenon and the way these interact
- Are the most responsive of formats in which to communicate multiple realities
- Provide the reader with tacit knowledge and the vicarious experience of “being there” in the setting
- Provide the reader an opportunity to probe for internal consistency, including trustworthiness.

Case studies are complex because they generally involve multiple sources of data and produce large amounts of data for analysis. Yet, this approach has been chosen for this study because it is applicable to real-life, contemporary human situations and provides a basis to explore or describe interorganizational collaboration. According to Yin (1993), this approach is applicable when there is a set of questions to be explored and when one is trying to attribute causal relationships. That is, it is appropriate to use when an investigation must cover both a particular phenomenon and the context within which the phenomenon is occurring, either because (a) the context is hypothesized to contain important explanatory variables about the phenomenon or (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (31).

### **Context of the Research**

The unit of analysis for this case study is the IT Initiative that is a collaborative effort between three community colleges who are working to address IT educational training needs in Central Florida. Launched in 2001, the overall goal of the interorganizational collaboration is to prepare a highly-trained IT workforce for the twenty-first century. The IT Initiative was

selected for this research project following discussions with business and industry leaders and elected officials who were asked to identify examples of interorganizational collaboration in the region.

### **Selection of Participants**

Participants for study were identified by reviewing minutes of planning meetings and by using “snowball” or “chain sampling” techniques (Patton 1990). This latter approach identifies “people who know people who know people” who are considered knowledgeable about the subject under study and, therefore, good interview subjects (Patton 1990: 182).

While proponents of this approach contend that snowball sampling brings richness to the data because it allows the researcher to create comparisons and contrasts within the evidence gathered, concerns have been raised regarding selection bias based on inter-relationships (Kaplan et. al 1987). However, replication of results can serve to overcome this issue. The main value of using snowball sampling in this study is that it allows the researcher to identify interviewees that are few in number and because some degree of trust is needed to initiate contact.

Once identified, individuals were asked to participate in one-on-one, confidential interviews.

Those identified to be interviewed are outlined below:

- Community College Presidents (3)
- Provosts (1)
- Vice Presidents (2)
- Assistant Vice Presidents (2)

- Directors (2)
- Project Consultant (1)
- Special Assistant to the President (1)

### **Data Collection Strategies**

Data collection and data analysis must be a continuous process in qualitative research

(Marshall and Rossman 1989). Data was collected from April 2004 through January 2005.

To assist the data collection phase, the researcher utilized a field log to document experiences and perceptions throughout the research experience. Using as many data sources as possible is crucial to a strong case study (Yin 1994). This study includes the following sources of information: in-depth interviews with participants directly involved in the IT Initiative and collateral materials including newspaper articles, videotapes of meetings, memoranda, and meeting minutes.

### **In-Depth Interviews**

Interviews were conducted in-person with 12 individuals who had participated in the IT

Initiative. Ten interviews were made in-person, recorded on tape, and transcribed verbatim.

Due to time constraints, two interviews were conducted via telephone and the researcher took

copious notes. Follow-up interviews were conducted with three participants for a total of 15

interviews. As interviews were conducted, interviewees were assigned an identifier. Letters

were used and assigned in alphabetical order. Numbers were used to differentiate whether

the information presented was from the first, or in three cases, the second interview.

It is important to note that, while qualitative research methods are used in this case study, this is not pure qualitative research. The researcher has drawn heavily on the literature to develop an analytical framework to be “tested.” It is assumed that a number of factors influenced the formation and sustaining stages of the IT Initiative that can be explained by rational choice institutionalism and/or sociological institutionalism. This researcher will address the following research questions:

1. Why do organizations come together to pursue a common goal?
2. How are members recruited?
3. How were goals defined and established?
4. Testable Hypothesis 1: How were roles and responsibilities conferred?
5. What are the preferences and institutional arrangements that facilitate collaboration?
6. What are the roles of public managers in such settings?
7. What are the conclusions?

While an interview guide was developed for this study (Appendix A), questions were asked in an open-ended fashion to minimize the likelihood of predetermined responses (Patton 1990: 295). The resulting narratives were analyzed using thematic content analysis primarily designed to explore individuals’ understandings of the collaboration process that took place between the three community colleges. To address the issue of inter-rater reliability, the data was also reviewed by another researcher because without the establishment of reliability, content analysis measures are not valid (Neuendorf 2002). The researchers reached a high level of agreement.

## **Documents and Records**

Another data collection method involved reviewing meeting minutes, press releases, newspaper articles, meeting agendas and handouts, grant proposals, videotapes of presentations, and annual reports. Information gleaned from these documents was used to identify key participants, to develop a timeline of events, and to gain an understanding of the main issues under consideration. In addition, the websites of the three community colleges who participated in the IT Initiative were reviewed prior to conducting interviews to gather information regarding each organization's goals and values.

## **Data Analysis Procedures**

The data analysis for the in-depth interviews consisted of seven stages:

1. Organizing the raw data
2. Coding the data
3. Logging field notes
4. Organizing the coded data searches
5. Determining categories or themes
6. Member check
7. Writing the report.

The transcribed interviews were treated exhaustively through a careful coding and collating process to preserve multiple perspectives and assure that all information presented by the individuals was accounted for and accurately represented. Written documents and other materials were carefully reviewed to determine categories or themes to help establish a timeline.

## **Categorizing**

An analysis of the overall structure of the interview transcripts and notes yielded insights into both the topics introduced and the sequencing of them by respondents. This enabled a sense of factors that were important to the participants. By looking at what the respondents chose to talk about or not talk about, and how they talked about the topics that were introduced, the researcher was able to gain important information (Agar and MacDonald 1995; Mathews et al. 1994). Through repeated and close examinations of the transcripts categories, similar characteristics were identified and information extracted regarding reasons why participants decided to work together and the preferences and institutional arrangements that facilitated the IT Initiative. This information was then further scrutinized with information gathered from documents and records. The analysis continued with this interplay between data and the emerging patterns until the patterns were refined into adequate conceptual categories (Eisenhardt 1989).

## **Validity and Reliability**

Validity is a broad term that addresses the key question: does it measure what it is supposed to measure? Reliability, in contrast to validity, has to do with consistency and how the same findings behave over repeated samples. The greatest threats to the validity of this research are the use of a single case study approach, the small number of participants interviewed, poor questionnaire or research design, poor interpretation of data, and bias on the part of the researcher and interviewees.

Traditionally, qualitative research studies, and especially case studies, are not considered externally valid or generalizable. This is due to the fact that the instrument in qualitative research is a human being and the people and setting examined are not randomly selected. Generalizability is not the intent of this research project. Rather, the goal of this research is to present in-depth findings that can be utilized as a starting point for future research projects. The research, therefore, to some extent, sacrifices external validity.

Following the development of the in-depth interview guide, a preliminary interview was held with two staff members from one of the participating community colleges. These individuals were familiar with the IT Initiative but had not been directly involved and would, therefore, not be invited to participate in this study. The questions appeared to be adequate. To help to promote internal validity and minimize interviewer bias, interviews were held with multiple members from each of the three community colleges. All interviewees were informed that their identities would remain confidential. A peer review of the analysis of the data was also conducted to shed additional light on other aspects of the findings (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

Transferability of findings depends upon the similarity of both the “sending” and “receiving” contexts. The judgment of transferability is made by the person seeking to make the inference. The “thicker” the description of the context is, the better an individual is able to assess transferability (Geertz 1973). To minimize interviewer bias, in keeping with inductive process, the meanings of concepts of qualitative research were intentionally left open by using direct quotes of participants whenever possible.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has utilized a triangulation of research methods—in-depth interviews and review of written materials, including meeting agendas, minutes, reports, and press releases—to identify the preferences and institutional arrangements that facilitated the IT Initiative under study. Findings from this research will contribute to a growing body of knowledge regarding why and how organizations come together, how public administrators identify and effectively engage partners in collaboration activities, and what type of institutional design maximizes performance outcomes. The following chapter reviews the findings of this research. Chapter Seven then reviews the implications of this research and outlines recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER SIX: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS**

This chapter reviews research findings gathered from in-depth interviews, memoranda, meeting minutes, and other documents to determine the preferences and institutional arrangements that facilitated the IT Initiative under study. In 2001, Valencia, Seminole, and Lake-Sumter Community Colleges came together to train 15,000 IT workers over a three-year period. Based on a review of the literature, this initiative has been defined as a partnership. That is, a limited number of organizations from the public sector came together and made a moderate, limited-term commitment. By participating, participants faced a moderate level of risk.

Significant to this analysis are three pre-existing contextual factors to the IT Initiative. First, a history of antagonism between and among the three community colleges under study had resulted in a lack of collaboration prior to the start of this partnership. Second, one of the three community colleges was perceived by its partners to wield more power due to the number of students served, number and diversity of services, and discursive legitimacy. Third, the longstanding leadership characteristics had been altered when a new community college president arrived at the largest and most powerful of the three community colleges immediately prior to the start of the collaboration.

## **Research Question One: Why do Organizations Come Together to Pursue a Common Goal?**

During interviews, participants were asked to discuss reasons why they/their organization decided to participate in the IT Initiative. Findings reveal that participants were motivated to become a strong regional competitor in the field of information technology by undertaking a significant regional training effort. However, to succeed it would be necessary to share resources, expertise, and skills.

### **Reason for Collaboration: A Desire to Become a Stronger Regional Competitor**

Prior to the launch of the IT Initiative, information technology had become a booming industry across the United States and, as a result, there was a national shortage of trained IT workers. Findings indicate that, at roughly the same time, Valencia, Seminole, and Lake-Sumter Community Colleges recognized the significant role community colleges could play in addressing this shortage by expanding the scope of their training activities and building connections with an expanding industry.

Clearly, all three community colleges had been discussing the possibility of expanding and enhancing IT training at each of their respective organizations for some time. One community college president explains:

“We had been toying with the need to expand our IT Training. The need was there as well as the opportunity. It was something I had been discussing with senior administration for a while” (B:1).

As business and industry leaders faced a shortage of trained IT workers, they turned to community colleges for a solution:

“The companies here were having a fit and asking what are we going to do about it—we need your help. So we began talking about what options we had.” (L:1).

In response, the community college presidents and their senior staff began to consider how they could improve the economic development of the regions by significantly increasing the number of trained information technology workers:

“IT in the community, as well as nationwide at that time, had a critical shortage. So all of the employers were talking about the critical shortage of IT needs and the amount of salary that was escalating because of the shortage” (D:1).

While the IT Initiative was not mandated, elected and appointed officials, business leaders, and the public were all increasingly aware that the booming IT industry afforded opportunities to attract high paying jobs to the region:

“The governor was also talking about the need for IT. In response, we joined the dots . . . We looked at national and regional reports . . . Everyone said expand. The timing was right. The community was looking for training for IT. We looked at needs and demands from the inside and the outside and moved forward” (E:1).

By positioning the I-4 Corridor of Central Florida as a leader in informational technology, it would be possible to attract new businesses to a region largely dependent on tourism:

“This was a unique opportunity to put Central Florida on the map. We wanted industry to seriously consider us when planning to start or relocate their business. This had always been a struggle” (L:1).

Each of the community college presidents held a common vision to become an established regional leader:

“[Name] and the other community college presidents wanted to get out in front of something—to be a regional leader” (F:1).

However, to deliver a significant training effort, partners recognized that they would not be able to work independently. One interviewee describes the bleak situation they would face if their community college worked alone:

“We realized we did not have the capacity to pull this off alone—we had huge gaps in our programs—we just didn’t have it. We talked about producing and training an IT workforce for Central Florida but there were no courses, no faculty, etc. We had a lot of work to do” (E:1).

Interviews and written records reveal that none of the three community colleges had the necessary social and human capital to successfully launch and sustain a significant regional training effort independently:

“I’ll have to say that at the onset, our college was probably one of the weakest institutions in the State of Florida in IT. And we knew this. We didn’t have very many programs in IT that was specifically computer-related. We had graphics in IT, but in the computer side of the house, I think we probably had two programs at that time” (D:2).

However, by working together it would be possible to pool scarce resources and share expertise. Indeed, one interviewee reported that, due to changes in federal and state funding guidelines, community colleges were facing new challenges of demonstrating collaboration to secure future funding:

“There were philosophical changes at our organization and at others because of the expectations from the feds. There was, and is, more emphasis on accountability. This was a huge change in the way we had been doing business. We were being asked, ‘Where are your partners?’ when we submitted grants.” (L:1)

While a history of antagonism and competition had previously existed between the three community colleges for several years, the arrival of a new president presented an opportunity for collaboration between three previous competitors. One interviewee explains:

“There was a history of animosity but when (name) came, the other community college presidents reached out and they became friends. It was a powerful moment when they linked hands” (F:1).

During interviews, participants talked at length about how the newly-arrived president brought a new, collaborative approach to expanding and enhancing workforce development in Central Florida:

“So (name), for whatever reason—native intelligence, looking with a fresh eye, or a different personality—whatever, saw that all the colleges are better off if we work together and seek to get stronger funding for everyone, rather than trying to eat each other’s lunch . . . (name) said, ‘Let’s all partner to serve the larger, combined service districts’” (H:1).

The newly-arrived president was credited for creating a culture of mutual cooperation and building trust:

“In the past we sent our lobbyists to Tallahassee and tried to come home with as big a piece of the pie as possible. And, because (name) is more a systems thinker and has had more of a background in working with college systems rather than individual institutions understood that each college would fare better if all of the colleges got a larger pie, rather than us scrambling to get a bigger piece of the legislative pie . . . . when (name) came on board, (name) understood the cannibalism we were practicing and saw that all the colleges are better off if we work together and seek to get stronger funding for everyone . . .” (H:1).

Conversations and communications between the community college presidents helped create a culture for collaboration:

“We talked about how we really wanted to think of something we could work on to put us on the map and I said, ‘Count me in’ . . . part of what we wanted to do was move forward together. From my perspective, the idea was to bring us together” (B:1).

Clearly, a number of factors led to the IT Initiative. At one extreme, participants were motivated by an opportunity to position the I-4 Corridor of Central Florida as a strong regional partner. At the other extreme, formation occurred because participants had the common realization that they and the organizations they represented were only a small piece of the total picture. While the three community colleges had not given high priority to working together in the past, the arrival of a new community college president presented a new opportunity for collaboration. Partners recognized that by working together it would be possible to carry out a predefined goal that could be mutually beneficial to all parties. Once

an agreement to collaborate was reached, the process for launching and sustaining the IT Initiative was set in motion. The next section of this analysis considers how members were identified and recruited.

### **Research Question Two: How are Members Recruited?**

Research findings indicate that decisions regarding which organizations should be included in the IT Initiative were strongly influenced by perceptions of trust, the geography of the region, concerns regarding the scale of the initiative, and that partners had no previous history of working together.

#### **Recruitment of Members**

When considering who to include in the IT Initiative, personal relationships grounded in trust emerged as an important determining factor. For example, one community college president spoke about how a positive relationship with another president influenced decision-making:

“We agreed that we would invite (other) into the discussion. (Name) was the president at the time . . . a good friend and a very trustworthy colleague”  
(A:1).

Invitations to participate were influenced by a desire to ground the collaboration in stable, preferential relationships:

“I was not comfortable with including others at that time. We made it a Central Florida region” (B:1).

As discussions centered on which organizations to include, one participant recalls how concerns regarding who might be excluded from the collaboration arose:

“We talked about who’s in, who’s out. They brought (other) in because when you think of Metro Orlando you have these fake boundaries of Orange, Osceola, etc. It was hard for us not to include (other). But from an EDC perspective, they probably did not want to be included in an Orlando initiative” (F:1).

The geography of the region and existing institutional arrangements (e.g. Economic Development Commission) also emerged as a determining factor for participation. To position the I-4 Corridor as a regional leader in information technology, it was determined to limit participation to organizations located in a five-county region served by the three partners. Many of the employers served by the three community colleges were located in this five-county region. One interviewee explains how the five-county regional approach seemed a natural fit because the workforce development boards and commissions served this five-county region:

“So, we felt like for this to really reach our population of Central Florida, it needed to be a regional approach. So we went with our five-county Central Florida area as a regional approach, because our (regional) workforce development board serves all five counties, and our workforce region is all five counties, and the Economic Development Commission serves those same counties” (D:2).

The size and scale of the task ahead presented a number of challenges and it was anticipated that partners would have to expend a significant amount of time and effort to actually learn to work together. Indeed, additional partners could further complicate the collaboration process. One community college president explained:

“We decided not to expand it much further, because the challenges of partnering at this level . . . with the histories we had would be enough. So, we could have included tech centers; we could have included three other colleges in the larger region . . . but our thought was, this is really our problem to solve, and we’re the major players, and it’s going to be complicated enough if we do this” (A:1).

Scope of membership in the interorganizational collaboration was influenced by notions of trust, geography, and concerns regarding the complexity of the task ahead. It was recognized that, as the number of partners rose, so too would the level of performance monitoring required to succeed. A stable environment was perceived as preferential to minimizing transaction costs and alleviating the risk of opportunism. Once an agreement to collaborate was reached, partners worked diligently to establish institutional arrangements that would launch and sustain the collaboration process.

### **Research Question Three: How are Goals Defined and Established?**

The overall goal of the IT Initiative was “to substantially improve Central Florida’s economic prospects by undertaking a major training effort” in the field of information technology (Memo from College Presidents to Economic Development Commission Board Members, June 25, 2001). Through a series of meetings, a numerical goal of training 15,000 IT workers over a three-year period was established by a core team of administrators, faculty, and staff from each of the three participating community colleges. Partners were motivated to demonstrate to elected and appointed officials how they could collaboratively enhance economic development in Central Florida. During this process, partners took each other’s interests and opinions seriously and engaged in a focused, integrative process. In this

manner, a process of institutionalization was set in motion that reduced uncertainty and increased cooperative behavior.

### **Defining Goals**

Interviews and meeting minutes indicate that partners spent a great deal of time brainstorming together to develop a numerical goal for the IT Initiative. Additional hours were then spent developing and defining benchmarks. One interviewee explains that it was important for all three partners to have an equal opportunity to establish and define goals:

“The design of the initiative came from all three institutions—where we all came together and all the presidents were there about making decisions on this Initiative, and actually laid out the plans and laid out the goals in collaboration” (D:2).

Once a numerical goal was established, a series of planning meetings were held with a core team of representatives from each of the community colleges to develop definitions and define benchmarks:

“So, once we established the goals, we had to be sure that all of our definitions were identical—from, what is IT, by definition, to what does 15,000 mean, what do training hours mean, what does duplicated and unduplicated enrollments and headcount mean. . . (D:2).

Findings indicate that, during these meetings, the relative power of members emerged as an important factor and that partners worked purposefully to establish and maintain a level playing field:

“We did not step out and say, we will define this, we will do this, this way. We had to work as equal partners and there had to be a level playing field, or we would never have gotten to step two” (D:2).

One interviewee explains that it was important not to impose processes and desired outcomes on other partners:

“We developed the definitions together. It was not us developing it and sending it out, it was taking everyone’s comments as a consensus and building it that way, even with data collection. We brought in our data collection people that worked with us from all institutions, so everyone talked about methodology and the best way to do it, what we had and how we could get that done, so it was that collaboration of everything that we were doing. . . (G:1).

Interviews and meeting minutes revealed a secondary goal for the IT Initiative. Partners viewed the IT Initiative as an opportunity for “demonstrating results to the Florida Legislature in terms of what community colleges can deliver” (Meeting Minutes, June 28, 2000). The collaboration afforded an opportunity to showcase how, by working together community colleges could have a significant impact on workforce development:

“It was also to show the business community and the governor and the legislature the size and impact of community colleges when you put us together . . . to ask them to just think of us as one institution. We would be one institution of more than 85,000 students. We wanted them to realize that we’re out there and a major player” (B:1).

One participant succinctly describes the IT Initiative as an opportunity to:

“ . . . convince legislators that we [community colleges] can produce what they want” (D:1).

By accomplishing a significant goal of training 15,000 workers over a three-year period, community colleges could position themselves to influence State support for future initiatives and projects. One interviewee explains:

“ . . . one of the ways in which our legislature works is that they listen to the business community. So, along those lines, we saw that there was a value added in order for business partners to say that community colleges do deliver and they are our main source of providing our workforce. Therefore, if we had a population of the business community that would purport and encourage the funding for community colleges, they had to have something to say . . .” (D:2).

Findings indicate that there were two main goals for the IT Initiative: 1) to position the I-4 Corridor of Central Florida as a regional leader in the field of information technology by undertaking a significant training effort; and, 2) to demonstrate to legislators what community colleges can accomplish when they work together. To accomplish these goals, a great deal of work had to be accomplished over a relatively short period of time. First, however, roles and responsibilities had to be clearly defined and understood.

#### **Research Question Four: How are Roles and Responsibilities Defined and Conferred?**

During interviews, interviewees described how they drew upon each others' strengths when defining and conferring roles and responsibilities. As partners interacted with one another, they exchanged points of view and learned more about one another and each others' organizations. In this manner they entered into a process of mutual adjustment and common

practices were developed that shaped the ongoing patterns of interaction from which they were produced.

### **Defining Roles and Responsibilities**

As partners worked to define roles and responsibilities they entered into reciprocal arrangements. Throughout the collaboration process, participants worked hard to offset power differentials and ensure that each partner contributed something of value to the collaboration. For example, based on the expertise of one community college, this partner was assigned to play a leadership role in setting meetings and collecting and interpreting the data:

“(Name) sort of became the lead institution of communication with the other two institutions, especially in the form of definition of bringing us together for discussions, and for collecting the data and defining that data” (D:1).

Another interviewee corroborates how partners drew upon each others’ strengths when assigning responsibilities:

“I think that we did most of the work on design, and that once we had figured out how to extract and analyze the data, I think they pretty much followed suit; now, if you talk to them, you might get a different story. My thinking is that because we had more resources available to begin with, we had much more in our department to extract and analyze data in SAS” (L:1).

One community college’s strength and, therefore, contribution to the collaboration was the development of curriculum:

“We had the curriculum. This was our strength. We had established faculty. We brought the resources and (others) brought the expansion” (B:1).

Clearly, the amount of time and resources that each partner brought to the table was different yet contributed to an overall, shared goal:

“(Name) couldn’t produce anything alone. Not anything close to the numbers we were looking at. We were the tiny fish in the big pond but also knew that the number of students we trained, whether two thousand or three thousand, could tip the balance of attaining the goal” (L:1).

In a strategic effort to offset power differentials, representatives from the largest community college agreed that a project manager hired to facilitate the development of a communication plan for the IT Initiative should be assigned to work at another community college. This decision was viewed as a deliberate strategy on the part of the largest partner to demonstrate a willingness to collaborate:

“(Name) wanted to have the project manager at (other), and we agreed to that, you know, making it more of a level playing field. We viewed it as this will show the fact that we will be a very good partner at the onset” (D:2).

Partners clearly believed that, to be a true collaboration, it was important to establish and maintain a culture of reciprocity:

“To ‘play the game’ we needed equal people and equal resources among partners . . . my background in organizational development and communication was helpful in recognizing what it would take to stay in balance” (G:1).

While a flexible working environment adaptable to multiple layers of decision-making was important to facilitate collaboration, it was also important for each organization to maintain its own distinctive identity. Partners reported that, during the collaboration process, they

were able to maintain their own distinctive identities and organizational authority separate from (though simultaneously with) the collaborative effort:

“We prided ourselves in the niche/role we have created for technology. We have a significant role in the I-4 Corridor and have a number of certification programs. We actually had a jump on (the others) and this was considered a nice niche for us [in the collaboration]” (F:1).

Regular communication and face-to-face meetings provided opportunities for participants to learn more about their former competitors and, over time, a process of mutual adjustment emerged as partners learned to work together:

“We found that we complemented each other. We would sit down and determine what needed to be done and each take parts. It was a lot of hard work” (E:1).

Evident in these findings is that reciprocal arrangements developed over time. Partners were willing to make mutual adjustments and, as the collaboration unfolded, trust emerged.

### **Research Question Five: What are the Preferences and Institutional Arrangements that Facilitate Collaboration?**

This section of the analysis considers factors that facilitated the collaboration under study.

Exogenous factors to be examined are history of relationships, the type of issue to be addressed, the impact of the political/cultural context, and the relative power of members.

Endogenous factors to be considered are commitment of members, perceptions and values of members, emergence of rules/regulations, leadership (i.e. champions), and trust. Based on

the review of the literature, no assumptions can be made about which factors are likely to be more important than others.

### **History of Relationships**

To overcome a history of antagonism and mistrust, participants spent a great deal of time and effort learning to work together, especially during the early stages of collaboration. With little or no history of working together, participants reported that their initial interactions were, at times, challenging.

One interviewee explains that the history of animosity between new partners was due, in part, to competition for students:

“There had been a long history of natural competition. Campuses were popping up and there was competition for students” (G:1).

With the arrival of a new community college president, however, the leadership dynamics between the three community colleges changed and there was a new opportunity for collaboration. Interviews revealed that personal relationships, grounded in provisional trust, were influential in launching the collaboration:

“We talked often and I was delighted to have a new colleague and friend. The more we talked, the more comfortable I became with the idea of working together” (B:1).

However, while the community college presidents were ready and willing to set aside a previous history of mistrust to accomplish a shared goal, the decision to collaborate did not always readily or easily translate into action. One community college president describes

encountering a culture of skepticism among faculty and staff regarding the viability of the collaboration:

“From the get go, my arms were locked with the other community college presidents but this did not immediately translate down. This effort was an opportunity for them to dangle their toes in the water—to test the waters and accomplish something together. But it was hard at first” (B:1).

This same community college president recalls the negative reaction to the collegewide announcement of the IT Initiative:

“What are you doing to us? (Name) is not our friend. But I pushed this back. They were not used to collaborating” (B:1).

The shift from a culture of competitiveness to a culture of collaboration was initially disconcerting for some participants. One interviewee describes a personal challenge in adjusting to working with former competitors:

“So . . . now you were sitting with partners who, historically, prior to the arrival of a new president, had not worked well together. We had always sort of been put at being more competitive with one another rather than working with one another to bring about the greatest good for all of us. So here you were with your competition, and now all of a sudden you had to work differently . . . historically you’d think, now why would I want to do this with my competitor, but now all of a sudden they weren’t a competitor, they were a partner” (D:2).

For another interviewee, the collaboration was intriguing:

“We had had a very competitive relationship with (other), and the other we pretty much ignored, and they ignored us. And so, this [collaboration] really was an interesting arrangement” (H:1).

The new leadership dynamics between the three community college presidents was significant in facilitating the collaboration. However, participants were initially concerned about the potential moral hazards they may face because of the unpredictability of actions and the possibility of opportunistic behavior or free riding.

### **Type of Issue to be Addressed**

Interviews revealed that a key motivating factor for participation was that partners held a shared vision of attracting new business and industry to a region of the country largely dependent upon tourism. They viewed their work as a catalyst for enhancing the lives of residents of Central Florida:

“So the goals were to put all of us in our surrounding communities and our regions together, all up and down the I-4 corridor, and everywhere, to provide our community with skilled laborers who could enhance their lives, as well as the community workforce” (I:1).

The training effort presented a unique opportunity to address concerns regarding the lack of high salary jobs in Central Florida:

“Meanwhile, Central Florida was really trying to even out the economy and go from a tourist economy toward a little more technical. There were many opportunities in technology in the area, either through being involved in a kind of re-branding—you know—the entertainment technology . . .” (E:1).

Staying focused on the overall goal throughout the collaboration process was crucial to

success. Participants had set a lofty goal of training 15,000 workers over a three-year period and, despite the tragedy of September 11, participants remained committed:

“And then 9-11 happened and I remember thinking, ‘What now?’ I knew the information technology would be affected. But, after a few days, I was more determined than ever that we would get this job done. We all counted on the economy coming back and we wanted to be ready” (H:1).

To continue to build support and motivate participants, it was important to share results and celebrate successes:

“We worked hard to publish annual reports that demonstrated, fortunately, that we were on target. As the numbers of students rolled in we began to think, we can actually do this. I would call (other) and say, this is the latest and they would be elated” (J:2).

Despite unanticipated obstacles, partners remained motivated by a shared vision of enhancing the public interest by attracting business and industry to a region largely dependent upon tourism. The socio/political climate in which they operated also influenced the collaboration process and is discussed in the next section.

### **Socio/Political Climate**

The three participating community colleges are governed by the laws and entities of the State of Florida. However, despite shared policies and procedures, participants bring to any collaboration their own values, attitudes, and beliefs based on their own individual backgrounds and the organizational entities they represent. As articulated earlier, participants had to overcome personal and professional challenges related to working with former competitors. In addition, interviews and meeting minutes revealed that a number of

intraorganizational changes had to be implemented at each of the participating organizations to accomplish the shared goal. These changes were time consuming and costly, especially during the early stages of the collaboration.

One interviewee describes how departmental barriers had to be torn down to accomplish the shared goal:

“It’s not that those departments debated a lot—it was that there never seemed to be a consensus on what was needed. Therefore, there was no discussion. It wasn’t that they would fight with one another, there was no fight going on, from a turf kind of thing, it was just that there would never be a consensus on what was needed” (D:2).

A culture of intraorganizational collaboration was needed in order to succeed. Participants were encouraged to “think outside of the box” and engaged in regularly scheduled high-quality interactions. In this manner, they built upon each others’ knowledge and skills and produced good ideas on future activities. As a result, a great deal of enthusiasm was generated as individual and collective outcomes became satisfied:

“It was very fun to us. For the first time we did not have a set of rigid goals that could have limited what we had done . . . We had to change the culture of our organization. If there was a procedure to break we broke it. We had to develop degrees. We had to develop curriculum. We had to measure how effective we were. The faculty was phenomenal” (E:1).

One interviewee discusses how patience and openness to new ideas was a critical aspect of working together:

“So, the collaboration required a lot of openness, it required a lot of patience, it required a willingness to accept silence from time to time so that you get people who are reticent to respond—because sometimes those are the people who have the deepest thought, and everyone else is jumping to another conclusion, and they’re real hesitant to move forward with their idea, and so that is the idea” (I:1).

During the initial stages of the collaboration, participants recognized that their own individual actions could potentially impact the overall success of the collaboration. One participant explains:

“I was sensitive to the fact that my actions or another’s could totally destroy the collaboration” (D:1).

During initial meetings, interviewees reported how a natural tension arose. While one interviewee perceived this situation as stimulating, it took a significant amount of time and effort to keep participants focused on the overall goal:

“There was a tension . . . you need to allow for that . . . there was a group perspective and a negotiated perspective. What I mean by that is that a natural tension worked well for us although it was real messy trying to pull it together” (G:1).

The natural tension was considered by another interviewee as important for maintaining a balance of perspectives during the collaboration process:

“So . . . (in meetings) we were just putting our gifts to work a little differently. It’s a dance, and you see it as positive, and it’s just a balancing act. You go a little over to one side, you go to the other side, but the job is to balance it. And it’s not good and bad, it’s just the nature of people. You know, people who are kind of black and white on these things think that collaboration means that everything is done the same way by everybody” (A:1).

Navigating the dynamics of working with organizations with different levels of power and influence clearly impacted transaction costs. However, as participants learned more about their colleagues and each organization contributed something of value to the collaboration norms of respect and trust emerged.

### **Commitment of Members**

Participants dedicated significant time and resources to the IT Initiative and, as evidenced earlier, attempts were made to offset power differentials. Findings indicate that organizations were willing to bear initial disproportional costs because they expected and believed that their partners, out of a sense of duty, would equalize the distribution of costs and benefits over time.

The largest community college was perceived to be uniquely positioned to identify and procure additional resources needed to sustain and enhance the collaboration:

“(Other) had, of course, the resources in place and could readily get others”  
(F:1).

“(Other) had the numbers and the money to put behind this” (B:1).

The largest community college demonstrated commitment to the collaboration by giving away resources. For example, one interviewee describes how the fiscal management of a grant was given to another, smaller community college:

“This was clearly an effort of (name of other) to manage balance. Maybe they intuitively knew they would have to keep a balance?” (G:1).

Throughout the process, partners worked hard to identify and secure additional sources of funding and resources:

“The college put in a great deal of resources, in addition to that grant. But, that grant helped a lot, especially with some of the development things on that side, and it also helped a lot with equipment and software, but also college funds helped a great deal” (D:2).

Allocation of resources was important to accomplishing the overall goal. The community college presidents, therefore, called upon members of their senior teams to identify, reallocate, or obtain staff time and money to dedicate to the collaboration:

“We found a significant amount of internal money and resources that we directed. All of us—provosts and faculty—worked very hard to identify resources” (E:1).

Commitment of resources was valued by participants:

“It was very much a shared goal, but it was a supported goal, with a commitment of the resources, and that’s what it took. It was the fact that, if we’re going to do this, are we going to have the resources to do it, or are we talking about it, and then they saw that the resources were going to be there, and [name of president] made sure the resources were there” (D:2).

A great deal of faculty and staff time was also redirected toward working with leaders from the field of information technology. Meeting minutes outline four day-long meetings were held in order to gain information regarding the design, development, and content of curriculum. In this manner, the quality of the curriculum could be ensured and students

could complete the degree or certificate with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the e-marketplace (Valencia News, April 20, 2001).

One interviewee describes the meetings:

“There were 43 faculty and staff from the three colleges who attended these meetings. This was a huge commitment of time and resources and a tremendous collaboration. We all came to the table willing and prepared to share curriculum (D:2)”

Each of the partners contributed significant time, talents, and resources to the IT Initiative. Resource allocation and efforts to offset power differentials demonstrated commitment to the overall shared goal and was valued by members. Other rules clearly facilitate the collaboration process and are considered in the next section of this analysis.

### **Rules**

Rules established to facilitate collaboration included the establishment of a flexible working environment, a communication plan, performance measures, reciprocal arrangements, and minimizing power differentials. As indicated earlier, participants made a number of intraorganizational changes to facilitate the collaboration. This distinctly new form of management was different from the traditional, hierarchical way of doing business that had guided their efforts in the past.

However, efforts to move beyond traditional notions of managing projects across departments and disciplines were not always welcomed.

“There were a number of senior faculty and staff who thought we should have done this in a very traditional way. We did not have a very set kind of goal which we would have had in the past.” (E:1)

For others, this new climate of setting challenging and lofty goals and identifying new and creative ways of project management was viewed as exciting:

“We did not set rigid goals as this would have limited what we would have done. The president wanted to push our capacity and push our ideas . . . wanted no preconceived notions of what could/could not be accomplished” (E:1).

Performance monitoring was a key aspect of the collaboration process. By selecting the rules for the collaboration early in the “game,” partners were able to develop a sense of accomplishment and remain interested in the collaboration. One interviewee explains:

“We had identified a need and now we had to develop momentum to accomplish our goal” (E:1).

As partners worked together they made mutual commitments to ensure that costs and benefits were distributed equitably:

“I’d say a level playing field was put in place, because everyone had the opportunity to establish the goal, everyone was there together brainstorming and talking about what that goal needed to be, it wasn’t one community college coming up with the goal and saying, ‘Here it is, guys’” (G:1).

Face-to-face meetings were critical, especially during initial planning phases:

“At the start it was essential to set up a communication plan, being sensitive to the need for regular meetings. We set up specific communication deadlines

and assembled team meetings face-to-face when possible and bi-weekly (G:1)”

Key to sustaining the collaboration was regular communication. As a result, partners interacted regularly and a process of mutual learning led to trust being extended:

“So, it took a great deal of making sure that we met, communicated, and probably, especially the first year, there was a great deal of meetings and communications between us to help build that trust and to help build that relationship. Even in the second year, we still had quite a few meetings, and I’m talking about meetings—especially administrative staff. There were lots of meetings, especially the first year, with faculty with those institutions, but you know, that was new for all of us” (D:2).

Shared experiences formed the basis for expectations about future interactions. While partners focused on attaining shared goals, it was also important to respect each others’ organizational goals:

“I had to give it priority within my institution to help reach that goal. I was constantly reviewing the programs, reviewing IT industry certifications to ensure the maximum use and the maximum need in the community. That may mean developing new programs, modifying old programs, bringing on new industry certifications, bringing on additional faculty, increasing the number of courses, and increasing the number of seat opportunities for students in IT” (D:1).

Regular information sharing and participation in forums to celebrate accomplishments served to maintain high levels of enthusiasm over a long period of time. One participant explains why participants remained motivated to succeed:

“We worked hard to recognize efforts and celebrate successes” (D:1).

Commitment of valuable time and resources was important to overcoming a culture of “we’ve always done it this way.” However, by encouraging the development of norms of reciprocity, civility, and mutual trust, a process of institutionalization was created that helped to reduce uncertainty and increase cooperative behavior. An unanticipated finding was the level of involvement of the community college presidents during all stages of the collaboration.

#### **Research Question Six: What are the Roles of Public Administrators in Such Settings?**

Interviewees spoke at length about the key role the community college presidents played in launching and sustaining the IT Initiative. In addition, they described how a “champion” emerged early in the collaboration process. This individual is credited with facilitating collaboration and trust.

#### **Leadership**

The community college presidents played a much more significant role launching and sustaining the IT Initiative than anticipated. Management in such settings involves “a complex sequence of moves and countermoves, adjustments and readjustments, actions and nonactions” (Agranoff and McGuire 2003: 34). However, interviews revealed that the roles of all three presidents were much more strategic. Each was instrumental in not only launching but also sustaining the collaboration. Their roles included overcoming a history of mistrust to build credibility for the collaboration, reaching goal agreement, allocating and securing resources, and in performance monitoring.

On April 20, 2001, the IT Initiative was formally launched. At a meeting with more than 600 business and industry leaders, all three presidents presented a collaborative plan to train 15,000 workers over three years to Florida's Governor, Jeb Bush. One community college president recalls the moment:

“And the three of us stood on stage together and described, not what we wanted from the community, but what we were going to do for the community—we're here to make a commitment to you; this is what we're going to do, here's why we're going to do it, here's how we're gonna do it, and watch us do it. So, it wasn't an ask, it was a commitment” (A:1).

Once the numerical goal was publicly announced, the community college presidents worked alongside faculty and staff to establish and implement the IT Initiative. One interviewee describes the role of the presidents:

“Each of the presidents stayed actively involved. (Name) was really hands-on and really tried to work with us all” (F:1).

The presidents were applauded for taking a hands-on role during all stages of the IT Initiative:

“[Name] didn't back off and say, “Okay, handle it,” but would say, “Let me look at this...let's talk about this...what about this . . .,” I mean, [name] was still active and involved even after it kicked off and didn't just say, ‘Well, I want to see the numbers at the end of three years, and it better be good.’ It wasn't that kind of a feeling. It was, “What are we doing for the students and the community? You know, what are we doing for the workforce? How is this going?” (E:1)

Each community college president played a significant role in setting the rules and procedures and in developing the values and norms that facilitated the collaboration:

“[Name] brought the leadership to this initiative—[name] said, ‘Let’s all partner to serve the larger, combined service districts’ and, again, that’s taking the longer view, and is much more the systems accomplishment than it is a college one” (E:1).

One community college president recalls sending a message regarding the nature of the work to be undertaken with faculty and staff at the beginning of the collaboration:

“And I said, ‘We’re all going to do this together, and we’re all going to support each other, and we’re all going to build capacity in our areas, and we’re going to sum all that up, and instead of tooting each of our horns individually, we’re going to toot our horns together—all of us’” (A:1).

While framing tasks, values, and the institutional arrangements of the interorganizational collaboration were a shared effort among partners, it was important for the community college presidents to set the culture for the collaboration. During interviews, participants also spoke about the significant role of one “champion” which emerged early in the collaboration process.

### **The Role of a Champion**

A senior assistant vice president was heralded for orchestrating and maintaining a shared vision, facilitating communication, prompting members regarding deadlines, calling meetings, and working to identify and procure additional resources to support the initiative.

This individual was credited with taking great ownership in accomplishing the three-year goal:

“[Name] was totally dedicated to making it right—totally” (I:1)

One participant commented on the substantial time this individual committed to launching and sustaining the IT Initiative:

“We needed a huge time commitment from (name) if the project was to succeed. Took a lot of perseverance” (G:1).

This individual established and maintained excellent working relationships with all participants and played a significant role in performance monitoring:

“You know, over three years you can get off track but (name) did not let us do that. You would not hear anything for a few weeks but then you would get a call, a reminder call about what we were working toward” (I:1).

As challenges arose, this “champion” worked collaboratively with partners to address challenges and move processes forward toward accomplishing the three-year goal:

“So there were challenges, and somehow, a couple of times this deadline really needed to be met, so there had to be a little intervention. But [name] picked up the phone and encouraged and prompted and collaborated to take care of it” (I:1).

One interviewee reports that others were willing to take a back seat to this individual who was perceived to wield significant influence and hold a great deal of power:

“When (name) chairs an activity, there really isn’t a lot of discussion about roles and responsibilities (laugh), and I say that fondly and with respect. So,

(name) assumed the leadership and everyone assumed a helping role . . .”  
(H:1).

This “champion” was able to facilitate agreement on participants’ roles, operating rules, and build support for the role and scope of the interorganizational collaboration. Other key attributes identified were keen diplomatic skills:

“(Name) is a great diplomat. It took great diplomatic skills, I’m sure, and trustworthiness, to pull people together and get them to work together and make these commitments” (A:1).

This individual was also credited with an ability to motivate participants:

“You know, it was a very difficult task, and it was also the time of the year each time that everyone was busy with a lot of deadlines, so it really presented a challenge for everyone, but everybody really worked well together and [name] is very good at collaborating—very, very good. [Name] always maintained a real positive, can-do attitude with the team and with the staff”  
(I:1).

Drawing from a variety of skills, the “champion” who emerged was able to achieve collaboration while preventing, minimizing, and removing blockages to that cooperation. This individual worked to build critical linkages that contributed to the overall success of the initiative.

The next section of this research summarizes the findings presented in this analysis and the extent to which the factors affect two aspects of interorganizational collaboration: formation and sustainment. Endogenous factors to be considered in this analysis are commitment of

members, perceptions and values of members, emergence of rules/regulations, leadership (i.e. champions), and trust. Exogenous factors to be examined are the relative power of members, impact of the political/cultural context, the type of issue to be addressed, and history of relationships. The main findings of this analysis are presented in Table 6.1.

### **Summary of Findings**

This section of the chapter summarizes research findings and searches for behaviors that are consistent with either the rational choice institutionalism and/or sociological institutionalism. A fundamental distinction between rational choice and sociological institutionalism is that the former considers how exogenous factors affect outcomes while the latter views institutions as factors that are endogenous to actors (Heikkila and Isett 2004). That is, sociological institutionalists reject the neo-classical arguments of utility maximization, equilibrium states, over-reliance on efficiency explanations, and exogenous preferences. The next section of the chapter will consider factors influencing the formation of the IT Initiative.

### **Factors Influencing Formation of Interorganizational Collaboration**

At roughly the same time, participants recognized that they were positioned to become a strong regional leader by undertaking a significant training effort. The overall goal was to train 15,000 information technology workers over a three-year period. This finding is consistent with rational choice institutionalism that holds that actors will seek to increase their “market share.” The definition of the overall goal was critical because it determined who was and was not included, defined power relationships between and among members,

and began to establish the standard practices to guide members' interaction processes for the duration of the collaboration (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998).

Participants decided to work together because they recognized that they and the organizations they represented were only a small piece of the total picture and that their independent efforts alone would not accomplish the overall goal (Mandell and Steelman 2003). Moreover, by working together, participants realized they could leverage, combine, and capitalize on each others strengths and capabilities and minimize individual risks. These findings are consistent with rational choice theory that holds that actors collaborate when they perceive that an issue/goal will result in a net benefit to them/their organization.

A previous negative history of relationships clearly impacted decision-making processes during both the formation and sustaining stages of the IT Initiative. The arrival of a new president at the largest community college changed the leadership structure among the three colleges and presented an opportunity for collaboration. Despite a history of antagonism, provisional trust of a new leader changed the social dilemma from x to y, and previous competitors were willing to collaborate to achieve a challenging new target. This "skilled convener" (Mattessich and Monsey 1992) entered into professional and personal trust relationships with the other community college presidents and they, in turn, trusted this newcomer. As a result, former competitors responded to an opportunity to overcome a history of mistrust and contribute to a shared goal (Nelson 2001).

Findings suggest that trust can contribute to changing the social dilemma from one that rewards competition to one that rewards sharing. With time and experience, shared rewards can be replaced with broader shared goals, and the sociological institutionalism perspective may emerge. These findings are supported by the sociological institutionalism perspective that holds that collaboration between organizations from the public sector involves a wider and more fundamental range of issues than those of market relations. That is, the rationale for collaborative action may be focused on system goals rather than organizational goals.

Once a decision to collaborate was agreed upon, decisions regarding who should be included in the collaboration were influenced by the community college presidents' perceptions of trust and power, the geography of the region, and concerns regarding the scale of the initiative. That is, the community college presidents decided which organizations to include in the collaboration based on a "logic of consequentiality" (March and Olsen 1989; 1998). Participants' preferences limited the number of partners and identified the "right" partners to maximize individual/organizational interests. These findings are consistent with rational choice theory. However, the participants sought more than just the reliability needed to pursue the training target. The desire to establish a pervasive atmosphere of trust also shaped decision-making. This endogenous factor is firmly grounded in sociological institutionalism that holds that individuals will follow a blend of moral obligation, normative expectations, and cognitive elements (March & Olsen 1998).

In summary, during the formation stages of the collaboration, individuals engaged in calculations of the costs and benefits of different action choices, reflecting utility-maximizing

calculations (Coleman 1990). Preferences were strongly influenced by the need to deal with two exogenous factors: the history of relationships and the type of issue to be addressed. Provisional trust guided decision-making regarding who to include in the collaboration and how to create the conditions that could minimize transaction costs and sustain the collaboration.

### **Factors Influencing Sustaining/Enhancement of Interorganizational Collaboration**

To accomplish a shared and lofty goal over a relatively short period of time partners worked to develop efficient rules and procedures. As the collaboration process unfolded, a number of endogenous and exogenous factors influenced the preferences and institutional arrangements that sustained the effort and are considered in the following analysis.

#### **Endogenous Factors**

Based on a review of the literature, endogenous factors to be considered here are commitment of members, emergence of rules/regulations, perceptions and values of members, leadership (i.e. champions), and trust. Findings indicate that participants committed significant time and resources to the IT Initiative and were willing to bear disproportional costs because they expected and believed that their partners, out of a sense of duty, would equalize the distribution of costs and benefits over time.

Institutionalized rules and resources were used in the negotiation of at least three aspects of the collaborative process: the definition of the issue or problem that the collaboration was intended to address; the membership of the collaboration; and the practices utilized in

response to the problem (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998). Early in the collaboration process, rules were established regarding shared decision-making, regular communication, resource allocation, performance monitoring, and distribution of resources to reduce power differentiations. These views are consistent with rational choice theory that holds that participants will make decisions to maximize outcomes and to reduce transaction costs.

However, as the collaboration process unfolded, findings indicate that participants did not always favor rules that maximized individual preferences. Instead, they were driven by a “logic of appropriateness” or shared vision for positively impacting the communities they served. As participants interacted with one another, norms of reciprocity and trust became regularized and guided behavior. These findings are consistent with sociological institutionalism that holds that individuals will adjust to the expectations of others by following established routines and conventions. Established norms provide stability and, over time, behavior is adjusted as a result of learning from previous experiences.

An unanticipated finding of this research was the role of leadership in the collaboration process. Findings indicate that the community college presidents played a significant role in activating, framing, mobilizing, and synthesizing the behaviors and resources necessary to successfully attain the overall goal of the collaboration (McGuire 2002). Each of the community college presidents remained highly visible and involved during all stages of the collaboration. Their key role was to change the former antagonistic relationships between partners, allocate new and existing resources, and establish and maintain interaction rules.

An ability to reshape participants' perceptions away from a culture of skepticism regarding collaboration was critical to the overall success of the IT Initiative.

It took a great deal of time and effort for participants to decipher and order their collaborative environment. Over time, notions of suspicion were replaced with a greater awareness of shared interests and reciprocal arrangements emerged, grounded in trust and respect. In addition to the important role played by the community college presidents, findings indicate that the role of a "champion" was critical to sustaining the collaboration. This individual worked to establish and maintain rules/regulations, identify and procure resources, celebrate accomplishments, maintain a shared vision, and facilitate regular interaction.

### **Exogenous Factors**

Exogenous factors to be examined in this analysis are the history of relationships, type of issues to be addressed, relative power of members, and impact of the political/cultural context. During both the formation and sustaining stages of the IT Initiative, the history of relationships was an influential factor for collaboration. A great deal of time was needed to offset the initial skepticism regarding the feasibility of the collaboration due to the previous history of competition for students. Partners worked hard to offset power differentials and were motivated by an opportunity to address a shared goal at the core of their organizational mission, in accordance with their beliefs and practices. While the community colleges are governed by the laws and entities of the State of Florida, participants brought to the collaboration their own values, attitudes, and beliefs based on their own individual backgrounds and the organizational entities they represented.

Due to a history of mistrust, a great deal of time was spent establishing and maintaining an institution to facilitate collaboration. Membership necessitated that participants move beyond traditional notions of hierarchy within their own organizations and work alongside former competitors. These situations were time consuming and costly, especially during the early stages of the collaboration. However, participants were motivated initially by an opportunity to achieve a larger training objective than any could accomplish alone and increasingly by the opportunity to enhance the lives of the residents of their communities. To succeed they were willing to give up roles and resources. Recognizing that partners had reciprocal skills and assets and needed one another, partners built upon each others' strengths and worked to make sure each member contributed something of value to the collaboration. Resource allocation and information sharing were key rules developed early in the collaboration process that served to offset power differentials and maintain positive interactions. Members worked hard to ensure that resources were somewhat equal, thereby avoiding the risk of members exiting. The resultant reciprocal arrangements served to support shared values and norms.

While participants gave up some resources, they recognized that by working together they could position themselves more strategically than if they had worked separately. In this manner, self-interest was being advanced. That is, although participants gave up some resources, they were all ahead of where they would have been if they worked separately. Thus, it can be argued that self-interest was being advanced. This may, therefore, be a pre-condition for sustaining mutual goals. The rational choice and sociological institutionalism explanations may, therefore, not be as sequential as the discussion sometimes suggests.

Given the history and the formal structure that promoted competition, it seems that distrust could easily re-emerge if the basic needs of each community college were not being met.

Table 6.1: An Integrated Model of Institutionalism for Interorganizational Collaboration

<b><i>Formation Stage: Endogenous and Exogenous Factors</i></b>	
<i>Type of issue</i> ( <i>Exogenous Factor</i> )	Participants will participate when they perceive that the issue/goal will result in a net benefit to them/their organization. The definition of the problem is critical because it determines who is and is not included, defines power relations among members, and begins to guide members' interaction processes (Phillips, Hardy and Lawrence 1998) from a prisoners dilemma to an assurance game.
<i>History of relationships</i> ( <i>Exogenous Factor</i> )	Participants may be willing to collaborate to share costs and/or to overcome a history of mistrust (Nelson 2001).
<i>Leadership</i> ( <i>Endogenous Factor</i> )	Leaders select the course of action most likely to maximize their/their organization's interests. Leaders may behave like statesmen and seek more than just the reliability needed to pursue a common goal. Dynamics of leadership can alter a situation from one of competition to a shared rewards situation.
<i>Trust</i> ( <i>Endogenous Factor</i> )	Partial/provisional/self-interested trust guides decision-making regarding who to include in the collaboration. Mistrust is not preferential as it increases transaction costs.
<i>Relative power of members</i> ( <i>Exogenous Factor</i> )	Participants may be willing to give up something (power/resources/ autonomy) to collaborate if they can position themselves more strategically than if they worked separately. In this manner, self-interest is being advanced.
<i>Imposition of rules/ Regulations</i> ( <i>Endogenous Factor</i> )	Participants move beyond traditional notions of hierarchy to establish an institution for collaboration that will lower transaction costs by reducing imperfect information and uncertain environments (Ostrom 1998; Williamson 1975).
<b><i>Sustaining Stages: Endogenous and Exogenous Factors</i></b>	
<i>Perceptions and values of members</i> ( <i>Endogenous Factor</i> )	Norms are imbued with a sense of morality rather than sheer pragmatism. Participants are motivated by serving a shared vision of attaining a collective goal. Established norms provide stability and, over time, behavior is adjusted as a result of learning from previous experiences.
<i>Trust</i> ( <i>Endogenous Factor</i> )	Trust is a core value that is sought after and attained through reciprocal arrangements and mutual awareness. Over time, a deeper more pervasive trust can contribute to changing the social dilemma from one that rewards competition to one that rewards sharing.
<i>Leadership</i> ( <i>Endogenous Factor</i> )	Various leadership roles are required to sustain the collaboration process. "Conveners" continue to play a significant role in framing, mobilizing, and synthesizing behaviors and resources. A "champion" may emerge who works to advance the effort.
<i>Commitment of members</i> ( <i>Endogenous Factor</i> )	Actors are driven by a logic of appropriateness – a blend of moral obligation, normative expectation, and cognitive elements (March and Olsen 1989). They may be willing to bear disproportional costs because they believe that their partners, out of a sense of duty, will equalize the distribution of costs and benefits over time.

Table 6.1 (continued)

<p><i>Imposition of rules/ regulations</i> (<i>Endogenous Factor</i>)</p>	<p>Participants do not always favor rules that maximize individual preferences. Instead, they are driven by a “logic of appropriateness.” Participants adjust to the expectations of others by following established routines and conventions. Resource allocation and information sharing are key rules to maintaining positive interactions.</p>
<p><i>Relative power of members</i> (<i>Exogenous Factor</i>)</p>	<p>Power differentials can and do exist. Actors may be willing to give up power/resources to demonstrate commitment to the overall goal, to maintain good working relationships, and avoid exit.</p>
<p><i>Type of issue</i> (<i>Exogenous Factor</i>)</p>	<p>While self-interest may continue to drive behavior, as participants interact relationships become infused with shared values that turn sectional orientations into collective orientations (Astely and Van de Ven 1983: 263).</p>
<p><i>Impact of political/ cultural context</i> (<i>Exogenous Factor</i>)</p>	<p>Actors alter/respond to their environment via calculated decision-making. They may be willing to give up their traditional role to gain some new or innovative means of solving a problem, in accordance to beliefs and practices.</p>
<p><i>History of relationships</i> (<i>Exogenous Factor</i>)</p>	<p>Participants remain willing to collaborate when they recognize that they/their organization do not have the resources necessary to succeed and they recognize a reward. Participants may be willing to collaborate to share costs, to contribute to a shared vision/goal, or to overcome a history of mistrust (Nelson 2001).</p>

## **Chapter Summary**

With the arrival of the new community college president, the dynamics of leadership are altered and the situation changes from a competitive to a shared reward situation, i.e., from a prisoners dilemma to an assurance game. While rational choice institutionalism applies to early stages of the collaboration process, over time sociological institutional explanations are more, but never exclusively, applicable to how individuals sustain and enhance collaboration. This view is supported by the fact that exogenous institutional factors are important during the early phases of collaboration and that endogenous factors are more influential as the collaboration process unfolds.

The sociological institutionalism literature explains these findings. Once normative institutions are in place, the conscious calculations of transaction costs may not be as highly relevant to decision-making because boundedly rational actors can rely on accepted practices to make decisions. Over time, endogenous factors become legitimized as participants interact with one another and enter into a process of mutual adjustment. These behaviors become legitimized across organizations.

Based on these findings, it can be stated that, while fulfillment of self-interest may be an important incentive for autonomous participants to collaborate and a condition for continuation, the creation and attainment of shared goals may also be important to keeping actors working together. The model, therefore, assumes that there is not necessarily a conflict between self-interest and serving others or having shared interests. It is also

assumed the trust and the relative power of members are key considerations when explaining how the collaboration emerges and unfolds.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **Contrasting Institutional Perspectives**

According to Heikkila and Isett (2004), decision-making cannot be explained accurately without considering institutional context. As indicated in Table 6.1, both endogenous and exogenous factors are important to shaping decision-making in interorganizational collaboration. The next section of this analysis reviews the major tenets of this analytical framework to deal with rational choice explanations for interorganizational collaboration based on a logic of consequentiality (March and Olsen 1989) as well as action driven by a logic of appropriateness (March & Olsen 1989; 1998). Rational choice institutionalism holds that the basic relationship between organizations is antagonistic; organizations are viewed as rational, purposeful actors pursuing preferences that are exogenous. Sociological institutionalists tend to regard institutions as social constructions that shape understandings and preferences of actors (Scott 1995).

### **Summary of Major Findings**

Findings suggest that actors may have mixed preferences or shift between exogenous and endogenous preferences depending on circumstances. The analysis of this study supports, in part, that participants' self-interest is an important incentive for participants to decide to collaborate. However, findings also indicate that as partners work together regularly and learn more about one another, the attainment of shared goals is important to keeping actors working together. These views are consistent with those of Mourizen and Svara (2003) and Heikkila and Isett (2004). An unanticipated finding of this analysis is that the leadership role

played by the community college presidents emerged as critical to not only launching but also sustaining the collaboration.

### **Rational Choice Institutional Explanations**

The three community colleges—Valencia, Seminole, and Lake-Sumter—sought to advance a broadly defined set of interests, holding a preference for optimizing rewards, and attaining power and reputation by becoming a regional leader in the field of information technology. Benefits for participation included the prestige of becoming a regional leader, the acquisition of additional funds and resources, new competencies, useful knowledge to support their own activities, increased exposure to and appreciation by business and industry, and an enhanced ability to affect public policy. Participants wished to increase their “market share” by expanding the scope of their training activities and building connections with an expanding industry. Due to the complexity of the issue to be addressed, there was a need to share risks and resources. Partners determined that transaction costs of participation could be lowered and that the benefits of participation could be increased by working with former competitors. These perspectives are at the heart of rational choice institutionalism that holds that individuals select the course of action most likely to maximize their interests (March and Olsen 1989). To collaborate, however, it was first necessary to set aside a negative history of competition for students. These findings are consistent with those of Dodge and Montgomery (1995) who found that communities with shared circumstances will lay aside economic competition among themselves in order to become stronger competitors with other regions.

Once a decision to collaborate was reached, decisions regarding who should be included in the interorganizational collaboration were influenced by the complexity of the task ahead, the need to manage imperfect information, and notions of trust (Gulati and Garguilo 1999).

Partners were concerned about the scope of the IT Initiative and that they had no prior history of working together. It was decided to limit the number of participants to more efficiently manage the initiative, thereby minimizing transaction costs. As one community college president stated:

“Our thought was, this is really our problem to solve, and we’re the major players, and it’s going to be complicated enough if we do this” (A:1).

Participants clearly engaged in calculations of the costs and benefits of who to include or not to include in the interorganizational collaboration. This process of utility-maximizing calculations is a major tenet of rational choice institutionalism.

Once the collaboration was set in motion, participants worked to create an institution for interorganizational collaboration that would minimize transaction costs (North 1990). The process for establishing rules was both time consuming and difficult (Ostrom 1990: 14). Partners had to not only learn new ways to work with their former competitors but had to implement new intraorganizational management practices to support the collaboration.

According to rational choice institutionalism, institutions are a series of regulations that constrain behavior and alter individual incentive structures. From this perspective, it is assumed that once the collaboration was launched, participants would seek to increase the opportunities for and dampen the limitations on their choices (Svara and Mouritzen 2001).

However, this study does not entirely support the picture drawn by rational choice theorists and a number of other factors must be considered when seeking to explain behavior (Niskanen 1971). Participants did not always favor the rules that promoted preferences that would maximize their individual goals. While actors held a common goal of maximizing profit by becoming a regional leader and perceived a net benefit from the collaboration, they were also driven by a shared vision for positively impacting the communities they served.

### **Sociological Institutional Explanations**

According to sociological institutionalism, actors select courses of action according to their perceptions of “what is feasible, legitimate, possible, and desirable” in particular institutional environments (Hay & Wincott 1998: 956). This analysis supports the sociological perspective that, while participants initially came together to maximize their market share, their norm-driven behavior during the collaboration process was directed toward supporting the needs of the community and advancing the public interest, rather than simply advancing their own interests.

Over the course of the three years, participants moved beyond notions of suspicion regarding their partners and toward a mutual understanding of the task ahead. Participants were held together by a shared goal and mission and, over time, trust emerged as individuals learned more about one another and successfully reached benchmarks. In this manner, the collective confidence of the group was enhanced (Agranoff 2003).

Over time, norms became imbued as participants worked to meet the mission of their respective organizations as well as that of the collaboration. Trust emerged as representatives made commitments on behalf of their organizations and determined how to fairly share workload and take equal credit for accomplishments (Nelson 2001; Ostrom 1998). Trust was further developed by providing participants with opportunities to interact with one another, by sharing costs equitably (Ostrom 1998), and by working to offset power differentials. One participant describes how partners learned to work together and, as a result, how partners learned to trust one another

“One had to work differently at becoming a good partner and so we had, in the process, we had to build that partnership, and we had to build the trust of one another, in order to support one another. We had to share lots of information with one another, so when you share information on what you’re doing, how you’re doing it, what it means, you have to learn to trust” (D:2)

Through repeated interactions, organizations began to conform to the institutional environment as the pluralistic interests of the participants came to be widely shared through regular interaction and information sharing (Meyer & Rowan 1977; DiMaggio & Powell 1983). As partners worked to institutionalize goals and structures, a mutual awareness developed and a process of institutionalization unfolded (Meyer & Rowan 1977; DiMaggio & Powell 1983). These perspectives are consistent with sociological institutionalism that holds that individuals follow a blend of moral obligation and normative expectations of what is feasible and desirable in particular institutional settings (Hay & Wincott 1998; Mouritzen and Svara 2003; Heikkila and Isett 2004).

Participants were motivated, in part, by the expectations of upper management. The community college presidents sought out a collaborative stewardship project that would benefit the community, stayed active during all stages of planning and implementation, and played a significant role in establishing the culture for the collaborations.

### **Blending of Perspectives**

There is a fine line between consequentiality and appropriateness (Mouritzen and Svara 2001). The results of this analysis indicate that the rational choice model of institutionalism alone appears to be too narrow for understanding interorganizational collaboration in the public sector. While, from a rational choice perspective, values and norms are “given” (North 1990), it is important to understand what specifically guides behavior in collaborative settings. Likewise, the sociological model may ignore some hard realities that shape whether participants initially come to the table as well as whether they keep coming back. Ostrom (1990) provides evidence of a much more complex world.

The model presented here employs varied combinations of two basic views of institutions: the first constraining and proscriptive, the second constitutive and prescriptive (Clemons & Cook 1999: 446). Recent research postulates that there is a blurring between the lines of rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism (Khator and Brunson 2001; Svara and Mouritzen 2001; Heikkila and Isett. 2004). Findings from this research support the view that there is not necessarily a conflict between self-interest and serving others or having shared interests (Khator and Brunson 2001). As Svara and Mouritzen (2001) and

Heikkila and Isett (2004) have pointed out, actors may have mixed preferences or shift between exogenous and endogenous preferences depending on circumstances.

These research findings indicate rational as well as sociological forces at work during the collaboration process and sets forth an integrated model of institutionalism for interorganizational collaboration. It should be noted that, as with any theoretical framework, there are strengths and limitations. However, by using an integrated model of rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism, it is possible to elicit important insights for examining reasons for collaboration and how the collaboration process unfolds. Both approaches provide distinct “filters” that reveal different aspects of institutional theory. Used independently, they help to clarify the options associated with each. Used together, they can complement each other and provide important insights that help to prevent the shortcomings of using any of the models alone. As Ostrom (1998) points out, all long-enduring political philosophies have recognized human nature to be a complex mixture of the pursuit of self-interest combined with the capability of acquiring internal norms of behavior and following enforced rules when understood and perceived to be legitimate (2).

### **Limitations of Research**

This study uses a single case study approach for understanding participants’ forming and sustaining collaboration between three public organizations governed by rules and regulations of the State of Florida. Correlation, explanation, or comparisons in other arenas are not the intent of this study and may not be valid. Questions, therefore, remain whether the findings from this research will be transferred to other initiatives. Whether

generalizations will hold in other forms of collaboration will be an important aspect and contribution to the literature.

### **Implications for Research and Practice**

Institutions matter because they reduce transaction costs, provide information under uncertainty, and stabilize expectations about the behavior of others. As public organizations continue to cross nontraditional organizational boundaries to address society's "wicked" problems, explaining the reasons for interorganizational collaboration and determining ways to sustain such efforts remains important for the field of public administration and beyond. As O'Toole (1997a) points out, "There is still plenty of work to be done to adapt what we think we know to the emerging networked world" (47).

Clearly, it takes a great deal of time and effort in getting institutions right (Ostrom 1990). The analytical framework developed here offers public administrators a way to consider relevant endogenous and exogenous factors that influence outcomes. In addition, the study presents a framework for defining different types of interorganizational collaboration. From the review of the literature, it seems that there are two characteristics that are important in classifying these activities: 1) the degree to which the organizations are involved, i.e. level of commitment; and 2) the range of organizations involved. This research has contributed to the literature by presenting a framework for defining different types of collaboration that have previously been defined using a variety of terms (please refer to Table 2.2.)

This study makes a number of contributions to institutional theory. First, this research has empirically explored interorganizational collaboration through the theoretical frameworks of

both rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism. Second, each of these frameworks has been compared and contrasted. Third, this researcher has used an integrated approach to institutional theory to develop a model and propositions related to the institutional arrangements that may facilitate or impede interorganizational collaboration. Finally, this study has demonstrated that it is possible to enhance our understanding of institutional theory through a single case study method using qualitative methods.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

An integrated model of institutionalism provides important insights for interorganizational collaboration. If only viewed through one theoretical lens, either rational choice institutionalism or sociological institutionalism, a great deal of information would be lost. However, by considering both perspectives, a richer and more complex view is available.

A starting point for future research regarding interorganizational collaboration in the public sector is to address the six testable hypotheses presented below.

### **Testable Hypothesis 1: Why do Organizations Come Together to Pursue a Common**

#### **Goal?**

*Rct: Actors will choose to participate when they perceive an opportunity to advance a broadly defined set of goals and perceive a future net benefit to them/their organization.*

*Soc: Actors will choose to participate when they perceive an opportunity to address a more fundamental range of issues than those of market relations.*

### **Testable Hypothesis 2: How are Members Recruited?**

*Rct: Actors will draw from a hierarchy of preferences to determine selection of partners and consider which organizations will maximize efficiency and minimize transaction costs.*

*Soc: Efficiency is less valued and actors will recruit members based on existing institutionalized practices regarding collaboration. Partial/provisional/self-interested trust guides decision-making regarding who to include in the collaboration.*

### **Testable Hypothesis 3: How are Goals Defined and Established?**

*Rct: Decisions are guided by sheer pragmatism. Participants will select goal(s) that maximize their/their organization's interests.*

*Soc: Participants are motivated to attain a collective goal that follows a blend of moral obligations.*

### **Testable Hypothesis 4: How are Roles and Responsibilities Conferred?**

*Rct: Participants may be willing to give up something (power/resources/autonomy) to collaborate if they can position themselves more strategically than if they worked separately. In this manner, self-interest is being advanced.*

*Soc: Participants may be willing to bear disproportional costs because they believe that their partners, out of a sense of duty, will equalize the distribution of costs and benefits over time.*

### **Testable Hypothesis 5: What are the Preferences and Institutional Arrangements that Facilitate Collaboration?**

*Rct: Actors alter/respond to their environment via calculated decision-making. Participants favor rules that maximize individual preferences.*

*Soc: As partners interact, norms of reciprocity and mutual trust emerge that help to reduce uncertainty and increase collaboration. Actors are driven by a "logic of appropriateness."*

### **Testable Hypothesis 6: What are the Roles of Public Managers in Such Settings?**

*Rct: Leaders select the course of action most likely to maximize their/their organization's interests.*

*Soc: Leaders may behave like statesmen and seek more than just the reliability needed to pursue a common goal. Dynamics of leadership can alter a situation from one of competition to a shared rewards situation.*

Future research should determine whether the relationships that were established and developed during the three-year IT Initiative are sustained over time. During interviews, one participant spoke about a vision for the future of the interorganizational collaboration:

“These are personal relationships not institutional. If we ignore what we have grown, it will not thrive. We need to find another mountain to climb. If the individuals change or the attitudes of the individuals change, there is always a risk. Another piece is that it is easy to collaborate when there are enough students to go around. The biggest test will be when there are not enough. Therefore, it is important to keep working together—it sounds like a marriage—and it is” (DH1).

Preliminary research indicates that one of the outcomes of the IT Initiative may develop into an interorganizational network as partners continue to work together:

“There's no sense of rivalry about that now. There's a sense of healthy competition; I would say that there's a nice sense of healthy competition, but it's not at all a sense of fear and dread that you're trying to outdo us (E:1).

Future research should consider the long-term outcome of the collaboration under study and examine the implications for my observations. For example, will partners work to celebrate

victory, dismantle, continue their collaborative IT training expansion efforts, or identify a new set of goals in another arena? It will be significant to examine whether there is a new alliance that will continue and take on more complex goals or whether this was a fixed-term partnership to accomplish the specific goal of IT worker development. As one interviewee states:

“It will be interesting to see where we go from here. I really don’t know if anything has stemmed from this—I mean other partnerships on other projects. Do you know? Can we find out? I would hope more have developed” (A:1).

Leadership and/or guidance is another potential contributor to collaboration that has not been explored empirically (Agranoff and McGuire 2003: 183). The degree to which leadership is critical to both initiating and sustaining collaboration should be more fully examined. During the collaboration process, various leadership roles may be required. A convener or chairperson (Agranoff 2003) may provide the vision, credibility, and trust needed to assist formation and goal attainment. During the collaboration process, a “champion” may emerge who has the energy and commitment to sustain the effort. In political arenas, such individuals have been called policy entrepreneurs. This individual may or may not be the convener or chairperson (Agranoff 2003). During the collaboration process, other leaders may emerge as they work to identify and procure additional resources.

Recognizing that the arrival of a new community college president altered the situation from a prisoner’s dilemma to one of an assurance game, it will be interesting to determine how any future changes in leadership may alter the current culture of collaboration between the three community colleges under study. That is, will the current willingness to collaborate be

sustained, transition, or start falling apart? Future research should also consider how you can get a commitment from middle managers when leaders are not so involved.

Building on the findings from this research requires cross-validation and continued systematic research. Next steps in research should examine interorganizational collaboration between and among organizations from both the public and private sectors to determine the differences, if any, regarding how the contextual factors discussed influence preferences and institutional arrangements.

### **Conclusion**

Using two seemingly divergent theoretical frameworks, rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism, it is possible to consider the preferences and institutional arrangements that launch and sustain collaboration between partners from the public sector. Institutional theory provides a useful framework for gaining a firmer understanding of how and when organizations come together to solve a common goal or problem and how organizations define and sustain their efforts in terms and concepts drawn from the institutional fields in which the members are located.

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## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A: In-Depth Interview Questions

1. Please describe the problem that you are working to address and who is involved in this initiative.
2. Which agency(ies)/organization(s) was (were) given the formal responsibility for addressing this problem?  

Who conferred this responsibility?

When was this responsibility conferred? (Stage of policy process)
3. How was it determined who should be involved in this effort?
4. Were some organizations recruited by others?
5. How would you describe the extent of the responsibility that these groups have to address this issue?
6. Does one or more of the groups have more formal responsibility than others?  

Is there one person/one agency that you perceive as taking a lead role?
7. Can you describe the major activities or contributions of each of these participating organizations beginning with your own?
8. Why were the activities divided in these ways?
9. Have you worked with these other agencies/organizations in the past?  

Can the relationships be described as ongoing?
10. Why did you/your agency decide to participate?  

What outcomes of this initiative will benefit your agency/organization?
11. How do you communicate with others working to address the problem?  

How often do you interact with one another?
12. How are specific roles and responsibilities defined?

13. Do you think that your behavior in this effort has been different from the way you normally operate?
14. How do those involved set goals and monitor performance?
15. What has been the greatest obstacle you have encountered during the development and implementation of the program?
16. Where do you think the responsibility for the success of the effort lies?  
That is, who do you perceive as ultimately accountable for reaching the project goal?  
Would this also be the case if the effort were not successful?
17. How committed are you personally to solving this issue?
18. Has there been any change in the nature of your commitment since you got involved in this project?
19. Has the nature of the group commitment changed over time?
20. Is it possible that the effort could lose support from the participants and dissolve?
21. If this effort is successful, do you anticipate that these organizations will continue to work together on some other problem?