Conceptual Frameworks for Collective Impact

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MESI 2016 Spring Training
Overview

Collective Impact Defined & Envisioned
Systems Thinking
Complex Adaptive Systems
Integrated Framework for Collaborative Governance
Factors that Support Collective Impact
Systems-oriented conceptual frameworks for collective impact
Collective Impact Defined

“The commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem” (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 36)
What does collective impact look like to you?

Collective Impact
Exercise: Mental Models for Collective Impact

Gallery Walk

What characteristics and patterns describe your images?

Post-it!
Systems Theories
Cabrara & Cabrara, 2015, p. 22 (with permission)

Figure 2.2: Select Elements of MFS Universe of Systems Thinking
Systems Thinking
Cabrara & Cabrara, 2015, p. 31

Describes, summarizes, predicts and leads to behaviors in approximation of

**Mental Model** ↔ **Real World**

*Feedback on* consequences that inform adaptation, selective effect on viability and competition among model
Rules of Systems Thinking
Cabrara & Cabrara, 2015, p. 45

- **Distinction**: ideas and things are distinguished from other ideas and things
- **Systems**: Any idea or thing can be split into parts or lumped into a whole
- **Relationships**: Any idea or things can relate to other things or ideas
- **Perspectives**: Any idea or thing can be the point or the view of a perspective
- **Alternatives**:
  - **Boundaries, Interrelationships, Perspectives** (Williams, R. & Hummelbrunner)
  - **Containers, Differences, Exchanges** (Holladay, R.)
Complex Adaptive Systems

Autonomous agents following simple rules

Emergent complexity

The collective dynamics of which lead to
Program Impact to Collective Impact

Autonomous Agents → Emergent Complexity

The collective dynamics of which lead to

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Integrated Framework for Collaborative Governance
Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh, 2011

Collaborative dynamics
principled engagement,
shared motivation, and
capacity for joint action

Collaborative actions

Impacts (i.e. the results on the ground)

Potential adaptation (i.e. the transformation of a complex situation or issue)
Integrated Framework for Collaborative Governance

Collaborative Dynamics

- Drivers
  - Shared motivation
  - Principled engagement
  - Capacity for Action

Adaptation

System Context

ACTIONS

Adaptation

Adapted from Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh, (2011). JPART 22:1-29
Driving Forces
Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh, 2011

Leadership
Consequential Incentives
Interdependence
Uncertainty
Collaborative Dynamics
Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principled Engagement</th>
<th>Shared Motivation</th>
<th>Capacity for Joint Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Mutual trust</td>
<td>Procedural/Institutional Arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Mutual understanding</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberation</td>
<td>Internal legitimacy</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>Shared commitment</td>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Evaluating Collective Change
Holladay, R., 2016

Patterns – similarities, differences, connections that matter across space and time

Tensions (pos/neg)

Ability of the system to be adaptive to change – amplify or dampen

Containers (who we are)
Differences (what’s important)
Exchanges (how we connect)

Simple “Rules” that shape patterns
Inquiry Process
Holladay, R., 2016

Judgement > Curiosity
Disagreement > Shared Exploration
Defensiveness > Self-reflection
Assumptions > Questions
Group Exercise

Take a moment to think about your illustrations in light of the concepts and framework just presented.

1. Would you change your illustration? If so, how and why?
2. How would you evaluate a collective impact? What approaches would you use and why?
3. How would you engage a group of individuals with different mental models in conversations about efforts to create a collective impact?

Return to large group for share out
Factors that support collective impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011)

- Shared vision and agenda
- Shared measurement system
- Mutually reinforcing activities
- Communication
- Backbone organization for support
When considering these five factors,

1. **How well do they align with systems thinking and complex adaptive systems?**

2. **Are these factors sufficient for supporting a complex adaptive system? Why or why not?**

3. **How do mental models and systems frameworks for collective impact influence the role of evaluators and their approaches to evaluation?**
So what?

A desire to make a collective impact requires a **shift in thinking** from programs as autonomous agents to activities within a system of emergent complexity.

Systems thinking is important for **establishing clear boundaries, making distinctions, and identifying relationships** among a system’s elements and for recognizing the **perspectives** that shape them.

A conceptual framework or theory of change for collective impact must be framed as a **complex adaptive system** in which multiple internal and external outcomes and impacts occur.

Factors that support collective impact must go beyond shared visions and agendas to **incorporate collaborative dynamics** in order to respond to adaptations both within and outside the collaborative system.
What are the practical implications for evaluating a collective impact?

Evaluation and assessment have to be responsive and adaptive (see Patton, 2011)

Boundaries, relationships, distinctive elements, and perspectives of collective impact systems have to be clear and revisited from time-to-time

Capacity building becomes essential for sustaining ongoing evaluation that is needed for dynamic and adaptive systems

What implications do you recognize?
References


