

**COLLABORATION IN HUMAN SERVICES:**  
**A STUDY OF AN AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM**

Erin Rebekah Cornelius  
University of Northern Iowa  
10<sup>th</sup> World Leisure Congress  
October 7, 2008

# Introduction

- Collaboration has been promoted as a solution to the problem of scarce resources for human service organizations, yet the process of collaboration is not understood
- Present the application of a theoretical model of collaboration to a real life example of collaboration
- Purpose of the study: To operationalize the theoretical supports for collaboration

# Significance of Study

- Tie theory on collaboration to the practice of collaboration in a real life setting
- Operationalize supports for collaboration found in literature by studying it through a theoretical model
- Theoretical model provides a clear definition of supports for collaboration with which to begin studying collaboration

# Review of Literature

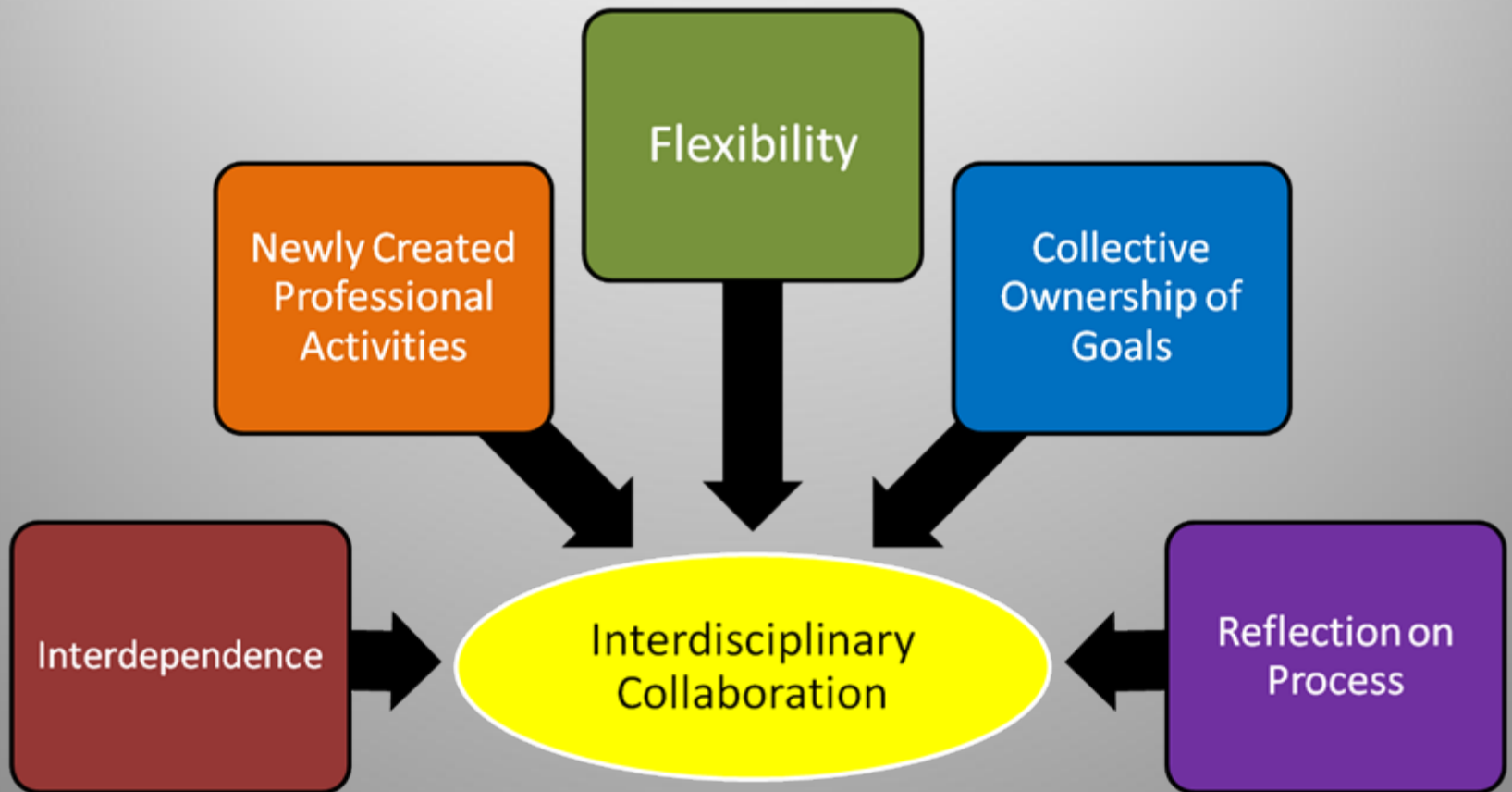
Literature from Europe, North American, and the Middle East

- **Reasons for Collaboration**
  - Economic or Shared values and goals
- **Processes of Collaboration**
  - Recognition and identification, Direction setting, Implementation, and Evaluation
- **Barriers to Collaboration**
  - Lack of communication, Adversarial relationships, Philosophical differences, Organizational Culture
- **Supports for Collaboration**
  - Sharing common goals and values, Importance of relationships, Interdependence

Not much literature on theories of collaboration.

# Interdisciplinary Collaboration Model

(Bronstein, 2003)



# Definitions

- **Interdependence:** “occurrence of and reliance on interactions among professionals whereby each is dependent on the other to accomplish his or her goals and tasks.” (Bronstein, 2003, p. 299)
- **Newly created professional activities:** “collaborative acts, programs, and structures that can achieve more than could be achieved by the same professionals acting independently.” (Bronstein, 2003, p. 300)
- **Flexibility:** Deliberate role and relationship blurring necessary to collaboration. (Bronstein, 2003)
- **Collective ownership of goals:** “shared responsibility in the entire process of reaching goals, including joint design, definition, development, and achievement of goals.” (Bronstein, 2003, p. 301)
- **Reflection on process:** “thinking and talking about working relationship and process.” (Bronstein, 2003, p. 302)

# ECHOES After-School Program

(Every Child Has the Opportunity to Excel and Succeed)



- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant
- Waterloo middle schools and Cedar Falls junior highs (Bunger, Central, Hoover, Logan, Holmes, and Peet)
- Site coordinators at each school
- Collaborates with community organizations to provide programming.
- Agency staff, ECHOES staff, and teachers provide programming.



# Methodology of Study

## o Procedure

### o Data sources

- o Data has been collected as part of the evaluation process for the ECHOES after-school programs in the Waterloo and Cedar Falls middle schools and junior highs.
- o Interviews with ECHOES employees and agency collaborators, reports from ECHOES employees, and case studies done by evaluation team at UNI
- o Had to use data that had been collected previously

# Methodology (cont.)

- Method
  - Boolean analysis  
(Becker, 1998)
  - Coding  
(Strauss, 1987, p. 29)

# Products of the Study

- Matrixes of each support for collaboration
- Ex: Collective Ownership of Goals

	School Districts and ECHOES		School Administration and ECHOES		Agencies and ECHOES		Teachers and ECHOES	
	Presence	Absence	Presence	Absence	Presence	Absence	Presence	Absence
<b>Sharing Resources</b>	Districts provide supervision for ECHOES through principals		Hoover school and ECHOES buy computers together, Power Hour provides access to school's resources		Art Club shares room and resources with school's art teacher	Grout Museum and ECHOES have problems sharing supplies for RC Wars program.	Art Club shares room and resources with school's art teacher	Teachers share resources with ECHOES, but complain about messes
<b>Sharing Facilities</b>	ECHOES is located in the schools		ECHOES is located in the schools	Gym time is hard to come by for ECHOES, Schools tell ECHOES to cancel	Art Club shares room and resources with school's art teacher			Home Economics teacher complains that room is left messy, Teachers at Logan don't like sharing rooms
<b>Negotiation of new goals</b>		Waterloo changes policy	Site coordinator and school work together to achieve goals, Development of goals at Peet, Peet surveys school about after-school content	Schools want to impose "school-day feel" in after-school	Developing curriculum for Exploring Electric Cars, Program Providers evolve programs, Hartman Reserve after-school staff member	Imaginarium not evolving programs, Grout Museum appears to be more concerned with funding than programming	Power Hour evolves to meet students' needs	

# Results of the Study

- **Interdependence**
  - Disciplinary Interdependence
  - Mutual Support and Success
  - Sharing Resources
  - Supervisory Interdependence

# Results (cont.)

- Newly Created Professional Activities
  - New to program
  - All new

# Results (cont.)

- Flexibility
  - Location of Staff
  - Source of Funding
  - Negotiation of Curriculum
  - Facility
  - Shared Expenses
  - Program Hours

# Results (cont.)

- Collective Ownership of Goals
  - Sharing Resources
  - Sharing Facilities
  - Negotiation of new Goals
  - Transcendent Goals

# Results (cont.)

- Reflection on Process
  - No examples of this support for collaboration were found

# Discussion

- Implications
  - Research Methodology
    - More specific research is needed (not participant driven, but researcher led)
    - Example: Semi-structured interviews
    - Open-coding procedures worked well with this study

# Discussion (cont.)

- Implications

- Theory

- Independent Supports

- Bronstein's supports are independent

- Different aspect of the data evidences each support (i.e. Hartman Reserve after-school staff member is evidence of both collective ownership of goals and flexibility)

# Discussion (cont.)

- Implications
  - Theory
    - Enhancement of Bronstein's theory
      - Results add to Bronstein's definitions of the supports for collaboration
      - Categories created refine and enhance the definitions that were broad and vague

# Discussion (cont.)

- Implications
  - Implications for practice
    - Collaboration is essential
    - This study helps collaborators figure out the supports for collaboration (i.e. where and how to support the process)
    - Practitioners must pay attention to reflection on process

# Discussion (cont.)

- Suggestions for Further Research
  - Continuing research is needed because collaboration is an ever-changing process
  - Studying collaboration in different areas of human services
  - More structured approach (such as structured interviews) to discover more about the supports for collaboration
  - Using research and literature on the subject to further define “successful collaboration” for future studies

# References

- Altshuler, S. (2003). From Barriers to Successful Collaboration: Public Schools and Child Welfare Working Together. *Social Work, 48*(1), 52-63.
- Armbruster, Andrews, Couenhoven, and Blau. (1999). Collision or Collaboration? School-Based Health Services Meet Managed Care. *Clinical Psychology Review, 19*(2), 221-237.
- Becker, H. (1998). *Tricks of the Trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Beeman, S., Hagemester, A., and Edleson, J. (1999). Child Protection and Battered Women's Services: From Conflict to Collaboration. *Child Maltreatment, 4*(2), 116-126.
- Blalock, Hubert. (1982). *Conceptualizations and measurement in the social sciences*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Bronstein, L. (2003). A Model for Interdisciplinary Collaboration. *Social Work, 48*(3), 297-306.
- ECHOES program description (n.d.). Retrieved February 1, 2005, from <http://echoes.iowapages.org/>
- Findlater, J., and Kelly, S. (1999). Reframing Child Safety in Michigan: Building Collaboration Among Domestic Violence, Family Preservation, and Child Protection Services. *Child Maltreatment, 4*(2), 167-174.
- Graham, J., and Barter, K. (1999). Collaboration: A social work practice method. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 80*(1), 6-13.
- Hill, C., and Lynn, L. (2003). Producing Human Services: Why do agencies collaborate? *Public Management Review, 5*(1), 63-81.
- Hodges, S., Hernandez, M., and Nesman, T. (2003). A Developmental Framework for Collaboration in Child-Serving Agencies. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 12*(3), 291-305.
- Itzhaky, H., and York, A. (2002). Showing results in community organization. *Social Work, 47*(2), 125-131.
- Osborne, S. and Murray, V. (2000). Collaboration between non-profit organizations in the provision of social services in Canada: Working together or falling apart? *International Journal of Public Sector Management, 13*(1), 9-18.
- Ouellette, P., Briscoe, R., and Tyson, C. (2004). Parent-School and Community Partnerships in Children's Mental Health: Networking Challenges, Dilemmas, and Solutions. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 13*(3), 295-308.
- Provan, K., Nakama, L., Veazie, M., Teufel-Shone, N., Huddleston, C. (2003). Building Community Capacity Around Chronic Disease Services Through a Collaborative Interorganizational Network. *Health Education & Behavior, 30*(6), 646-662.
- Reisch and Sommerfeld. (2003). Interorganizational Relationships among Nonprofits in the Aftermath of Welfare Reform. *Social Work, 48*(3), 307-319.
- Sanford, J. (1999). The Structural Impediments to Human Service Collaboration: Examining Welfare Reform at the Front Lines. *Social Service Review, 73*(3), 314-332.
- Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. New York: Cambridge University Press.