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# E-PARCC

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

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**Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration**

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## **Collaboration Gone Awry: A Struggle for Power and Control over Service Delivery in the Non-Profit Sector**

### **Teaching Note**

This teaching note provides a summary of the case discussion questions and guidelines for simulation. Ideally, students should have an opportunity to read the case and the recommended readings before class and come prepared with preliminary thoughts. The Case describes the inter-organizational collaboration effort and its challenges. The Simulation offers students an opportunity to practice collaborative problem solving from the perspective of five organizations and their representatives. The discussion questions cover a range of key focal issues illustrated in the case; instructors may use all of the questions or select those that are most relevant to the learning objectives of the class. To address all the discussion questions effectively and complete the simulation exercise would require more than one class meeting. Instructors may also choose to use the descriptions of the organizations presented for a simulation that engages students in active discussion of topics specifically related to their course learning objectives.

### **Case Summary**

This is a case of inter-organizational collaboration gone awry where several non-profit and government agencies have come together to develop and implement a streamlined first response protocol for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence in one Ontario community. Despite having created a common protocol, not all members of the Action Committee on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence (ACSADV) follow this protocol. Moreover, each agency appears to have a different level of commitment to the collaboration and the decisions made by the ACSADV.

This case was an honorable mention winner in our 2009-10 “Collaborative Public Management, Collaborative Governance, and Collaborative Problem Solving” teaching case and simulation competition. It was double-blind peer reviewed by a committee of academics and practitioners. It was written by Melissa Brazil and Eli Teram of Wilfrid Laurier University. This case is intended for classroom discussion and is not intended to suggest either effective or ineffective handling of the situation depicted. It is brought to you by E-PARCC, part of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University’s Collaborative Governance Initiative, a subset of the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC). This material may be copied as many times as needed as long as the authors are given full credit for their work.

This case illuminates a range of issues for students to consider when establishing an effective inter-organizational collaboration. These include:

- The institutional context for inter-organizational collaborations
- Power, control and resistance in the context of inter-organizational collaborations
- Participating organizations' characteristics and their effect on the collaboration
- The implications of inter-organizational collaborations for the participating organizations and their clients

In addition, this case stimulates discussion about inter-organizational collaboration as a tool for control of clients as opposed to its use for genuine improvement of services, thereby promoting students' critical thinking about the purpose and value of inter-organizational collaborations. A simulation also offers students an opportunity to gain practical skills in collaboration by actively engaging in discussion to resolve the challenges faced by organizations in the collaboration presented in the case.

### **How to Use the Case**

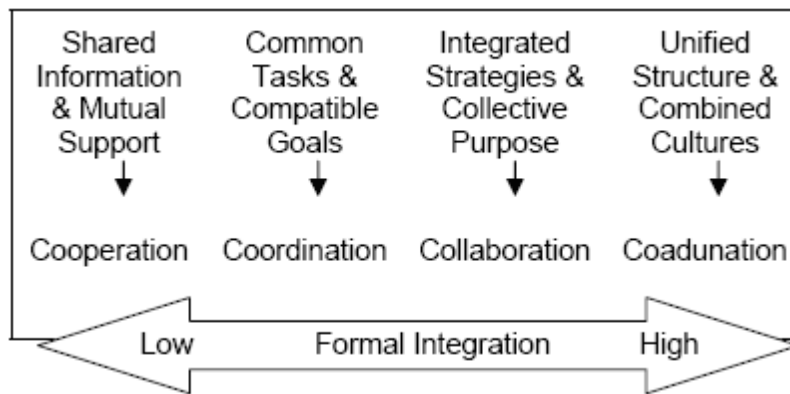
Students should be provided the reading material for the case to review before class. What follows is a range of questions highlighting various topics that can be discussed in relation to this case. Questions 1 through 4 are designed for a general discussion of the case by the whole class; questions 5 through 8 are designed to facilitate small group discussions in preparation for the simulation exercise, but they can also be used for small group or general discussions.

### **How to Use the Simulation**

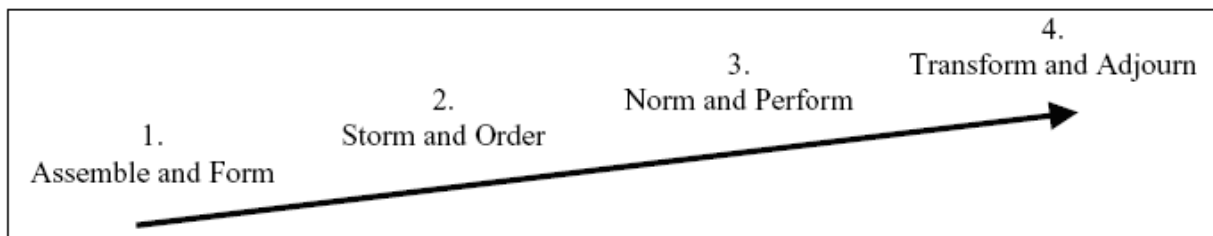
After giving the instructions on how to use the case, students should be divided into groups and each should take the perspective of one of the five organizations presented in the simulation (*Women's Crisis Services, Family and Children's Services, Sexual Assault Care and Treatment Centre, Humane Society, or the Community Mental Health Clinic*) to discuss questions 5 through 8. After a preliminary discussion of these questions the instructor can present the task to be addressed in the simulation. Each group of students should work together to prepare their strategy for the simulation exercise; a representative should be elected to put this strategy into action in the actual simulation. It is suggested that 30-45 minutes be allotted for preparation. Once all groups are prepared, the elected representatives for each organization come to a table to address the assigned task while the rest of the class observes. An additional 45-60 minutes is suggested for this portion of the exercise. Upon termination of the simulation, instructors should provide time to debrief the exercise using the debriefing questions provided below.

## Discussion Questions

1. Although inter-organizational collaboration has become an increasingly popular mode of service delivery, it remains a mysterious concept. That is, while organizations enter into collaboration ultimately to increase service integration and to benefit clients, often they lack a clear understanding of what the process or outcome of collaboration and service integration ought to look like to best serve the goals and needs of all organizations involved (Gadja, 2003).
  - a. This is largely because there is a myriad of different types of collaboration, and as many labels attached to them. What do you see as the distinguishing features of this collaboration? How would you describe it?
  - b. Using Bailey and Koney's (2000) model of integration presented below, where would you place this collaborative? Does this level of collaboration serve the needs of the group or would the inter-organizational collaboration function better at another level on the continuum? If there is a gap between the actual and ideal location of the collaboration on the continuum, discuss its implications.



- c. Bailey and Koney (2000) also suggest that collaboration takes place in stages as depicted below. In what stage of collaboration would you place the ACSADV? Assuming that being in a particular stage of the model determines the tasks that the collaboration initiative is performing; discuss the implications of the stage you have selected for the collaboration. Which of the ACSADV's tasks or strategies place them in this stage? What steps can they take to move to the next stage?



- d. Does the sort of collaboration you have identified fit the goals of the ACSADV? Are the strategies used by the ACSADV appropriate? Explain. You may use Gajda's (2003) Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR) to guide your discussion.

▪ Resources:

1. Bailey, D., & McNalley Koney, K. (1996). Interorganizational community-based collaboratives: A strategic response to shape the social work agenda. *Social Work, 41*(6), 602-611.
2. Gajda, R. (2003). Utilizing collaborative theory to evaluate strategic alliances. *American Journal of Evaluation, 25*(1), 65-77.

Level of Integration	Purpose	Strategies and Tasks	Leadership and Decision-Making	Interpersonal and Communication
Networking  1	Create a web of communication	Loose or no structure	Non-hierarchical	Very little interpersonal conflict
	Identify and create a base of support	Flexible, roles not-defined	Flexible	Communication among all members infrequent or absent
	Explore interests	Few if any defined tasks	Minimal or no group decision making	
Cooperating  2	Work together to ensure tasks are done	Member links are advisory	Non-hierarchical, decisions tend to be low stakes	Some degree of personal commitment and investment
	Leverage or raise money	Minimal structure	Facilitative leaders, usually voluntary	Minimal interpersonal conflict
	Identify mutual needs, but maintain separate identities	Some strategies and tasks identified	Several people form "go-to" hub	Communication among members clear, but may be informal
Partnering  3	Share resources to address common issues	Strategies and tasks are developed and maintained	Autonomous leadership	Some interpersonal conflict
	Organizations remain autonomous but support something new	Central body of people	Alliance members share equally in the decision making	Communication system and formal information channels developed
	To reach mutual goals together	Central body of people have specific tasks	Decision making mechanism are in place	Evidence of problem solving and productivity
Merging  4	Merge resources to create or support something new	Formal structure to support strategies and tasks is apparent	Strong, visible leadership	High degree of commitment and investment
	Extract money from existing systems/members	Specific and complex strategies and tasks identified	Sharing and delegation of roles and responsibilities	Possibility of interpersonal conflict high
	Commitment for a long period of time to achieve short and long-term outcomes	Committees and sub-committees formed  High	Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths	Communication is clear, frequent and prioritized  degree of problem solving and productivity
Unifying  5	Unification or acquisition to form a single structure	Highly formal, legally complex	Central, typically hierarchical leadership	Possibility of interpersonal conflict very high
	Relinquishment of autonomy to support surviving organization	Permanent re-organization of strategies and tasks	Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths	Communication is clear, frequent, prioritized, formal and informal

**Gadja's (2003) Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR)**

2. It can be a daunting task in inter-organizational collaboration to find a way to integrate various cultures to create one inclusive **organizational culture** that encompasses elements of each individual agency's culture in the newly formed collaborative effort. Ultimately a collaborative effort is an assembly of individuals challenged to rethink their ideas about how to best serve a particular client group in a way that makes sense for all organizations involved.
  - a. Do you think the formation of one inclusive culture is essential to meet the goals of the collaboration in this case?
  - b. Do organizations always need to create an inclusive culture when they engage in collaboration or it sufficient to be able to implement common practices within several organizations making up a collaborative in spite of cultural and structural differences? Explain.
    - Resources:
      1. Iles, P., & Auluck, R. (1990). Team building, inter-agency development and social work practice. *British Journal of Social Work, 20*, 151-164.
  
3. Renade and Hudson (2003) suggest that a key ingredient for effective collaboration is to create a broad vision for the future of the group to help member agencies see how they are linked together in ongoing development in order to maximize their potential. Some might interpret this to mean that there must be agreement on a shared vision not only among members of the ACSADV, but also among the managers and staff of the individual organizations. This can be a complex and perhaps impossible process given the multiple interpretations of member organizations' mission and vision by their managers and staff.
  - a. Can the ACSADV ever truly create a vision that is shared by all individual members of the committee, and all managers and staff at each organization? Do you think this a necessary objective?
  - b. Can collaboration be effective without a fully diffused shared inter-organizational vision?
  - c. How does the nature or type of inter-organizational collaboration determine the response to this question?
    - Resources:
      1. Iles, P., & Auluck, R. (1990). Team building, inter-agency development and social work practice. *British Journal of Social Work, 20*, 151-164.
      2. Longoria, R. A. (2005). Is inter-agency collaboration always a good thing? *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 22*(3), 123-138.
      3. Renade, W., & Hudson, B. (2003) Conceptual issues in inter-agency collaboration. *Local Government Studies, 29*(3), 32-50.

4. Some purport that the foundation of inter-organizational collaboration is relationship building. That is, it is vital to take the time to build relationships among the representatives of each organization before beginning to collaborate. This requires building relationships, not just between organizations but also between individuals making up the committee (Gadja, 2003; Renade & Hudson, 2003).
  - a. Imagine you have been consulted to help the ACSADV improve the collaboration among member agencies. What strategies would you recommend to build such a foundation?
    - Resources:
      1. Renade, W., & Hudson, B. (2003) Conceptual issues in inter-agency collaboration. *Local Government Studies*, 29(3), 32-50.

**NOTE: Although these questions were designed to help students prepare for the simulation exercise, they can also be used to facilitate further discussions. For example, the class can be divided to small groups to address these questions from the perspective of one of the five organizations presented in the simulation, and present to the whole class a summary of its discussion.**

5. Ultimately one must consider whether collaboration is a good or viable option for any new group coming together. What is its purpose? Who does it benefit? Imagine you are the members of the ACSADV coming together to meet for the first time. Discuss the following.
  - a. Why is it important to offer a standard first response to victims of sexual assault or domestic violence? What difference would it make for clients and for the inter-organizational field? Are there any drawbacks to the introduction of standard first response?
  - b. Is this collaboration beneficial to your individual organization? Why or why not?
  - c. Will this collaboration improve services to your clients?
  - d. Which of the above questions is most important when deciding to collaborate? Why?
    - Resources:
      1. Longoria, R. A. (2005). Is inter-agency collaboration always a good thing? *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 22(3), 123-138.
6. Some would argue that the reasons for inter-organizational collaboration are inherently political (Longoria, 2005). Organizations collaborate to gain legitimacy, build reputation and conform to political pressures. Historically, collaboration has often been viewed as a tool to maintain power or increase influence over other organizations (Hardy, Philips, & Lawrence, 2003; Longoria, 2005).

- a. Can this argument be applied to the ACSADV? What institutional pressures might be affecting member agencies of the ACSADV's decision to collaborate?
  - b. What impact do these political factors have on the potential of this collaborative effort to succeed?
  - c. Explore the tension between the need to collaborate for organizational survival and the aspiration for organizational autonomy? What are the advantages and disadvantages for your organization in entering the ACSADV?
    - Resources:
      1. Barringer, B. R., & Harrison, J. S. (2000). Walking a tightrope: Creating value through interorganizational relationships. *Journal of Management*, 26(3), 367-403.
      2. Hardy, C., Philips, N., & Lawrence, T. B. (2003). Resources, knowledge and influence: The effects of inter-organizational collaboration. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(2), 321-347.
7. Discuss the **organizational characteristics** of your agency using Foster and Meinhard's (2002) figure presented below. (Refer to their article for detailed descriptions of each characteristic.)
- a. Are you a large or small organization? What is your mandate for service?
  - b. Consider environmental pressures. How does the community within which your organization is located view collaboration?
  - c. What are your organization's attitudes towards collaboration and competition?
  - d. What implications do these characteristics have for the engagement of your organization in this collaborative effort?
    - Resources:
      1. Foster, M. K., & Meinhard, A. G. (2002). A regression model explaining predisposition to collaborate. *Nonprofit and Volunteer Sector Quarterly*, 31(4), 549-564.



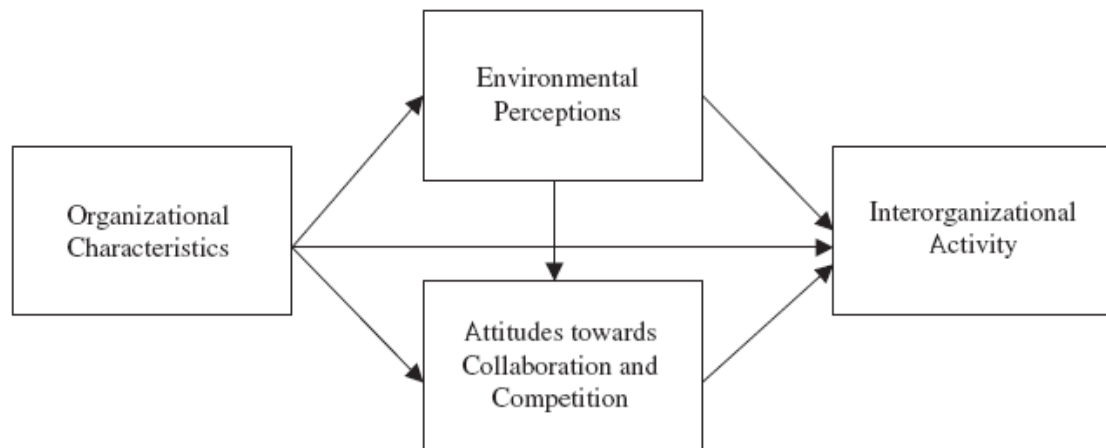


Figure 1. Determinants of Interorganizational Activity

8. Often inequalities of status and power are brought into the interactions of group members. That is, some agencies have greater access to financial resources or have greater access or influence in the community. Perhaps some work more closely with the problem to be addressed in the collaborative than others. The challenge lies in encouraging organizations holding power to share it with other less powerful organizations so that their ideas have equal value and importance and are included in making decisions (Renade & Hudson, 2003).
- a. Who holds significant power in the ACSADV? What sources of power does your organization hold?
  - b. How might the power of your organization be used to influence the decision-making of the ACSADV?
  - c. When a more powerful agency uses its power to try and control the actions of less powerful organizations, how might those less powerful respond?
    - Resources:
      1. Hardy, C., Philips, N., & Lawrence, T. B. (2003). Resources, knowledge and influence: The organizational effects of inter-organizational collaboration. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(2), 321-347.
      2. Renade, W., & Hudson, B. (2003) Conceptual issues in inter-agency collaboration. *Local Government Studies*, 29(3), 32-50.

## **Simulation Instructions**

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The simulation is designed to facilitate students' integration of the learning and discussion of this case by offering them an opportunity to experience first-hand the challenges of collaboration and to develop practical skills and strategies to make it work effectively. Please refer to the simulation exercise for complete instructions. Instructors should allow 30-45 minutes to prepare, 1 hour to complete the simulation, and 20-30 minutes to debrief the exercise. Some debriefing questions to consider with the entire class follow:

- a. Were you able to negotiate effectively and come to a consensus on the task assigned?
- b. What were some of the challenges that the group faced in working to come to a consensus?
- c. Were the group members able to overcome any of these challenges? If so, what strategies were used to do so?
- d. Did one organizational representative control the discussion and/or decision making process or was this process shared among all representatives? How did this impact the interactions of the group and your ability to complete the task?
- e. For each individual organizational representative, did you feel that you were heard in the negotiations? How did this affect your sense of commitment to the collaboration?
- f. For the observers, what was the experience of watching this exercise like?
- g. Are there any other thoughts/questions that arose for you in this exercise?