Coherent Triads: Observed Successful Collaboration in Youth Care

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Abstract

Earlier research on collaboration shows that cooperation comprises problems and conflicts. The purpose of this study is to describe successful collaboration even if it unfolds during shorter interaction frequencies. In the article, interactive patterns involved in the construction of these phenomena will be analyzed. Forming the empirical basis for this study are 119 field observations of organized meetings and informal meetings before and after organized meetings, during visits to youth care institutions in Sweden, social services offices, and the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care. In this study, markers are used to define successful cooperation in the empirical material, so that actors who belong to at least three different categories will be identified. The professional actors can also shape a coherent triad with young people or parents in cases where past conflicts arise. When some professionals create a distance from other professional partners, conflicts can be erased so as to generate new conditions for coherence of the triad. Construction and reconstruction of collaboration success is an ongoing, interactive process. Presentation of the proper interaction moral is created and re-created during interactions and appears in the myriad everyday interactions.

Keywords: collaboration, triad, moral, collaboration identity, triad coherence, field notes, field work

Introduction

In Sweden, during the 20th century, multiple collaboration projects among social services, health care, and social insurance entities were initiated (see multiple excerpts in Anell and Mattisson 2009, 58-67; Axelsson and Bilhari Axelsson 2007). The intent with this collaboration was to shorten waiting periods and hasten initiation of rehabilitation while still lowering expenses. The collaboration was also supposed to benefit the clients. Between 2004 and 2009, similar tendencies could be observed between different organizations: the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care, or Statens institutionsstyrelse (abbreviated SiS), and the social services in Sweden. It was common for projects during this period to demand improved collaboration (Basic et al. 2009; Fäldtet al. 2007; Hajighasemi 2008; Lundström, Sallnäs, and Andersson Vogel 2012). An essential concern presented in these projects was the clients' best interests.

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"Counteract Violence and Gangs" (abbreviated as the MVG-project) was one of these collaborative projects conducted in Sweden from July 1, 2006, to December 31, 2008. The project aim was to enhance collaboration between social services and the SiS and rationalize youngsters' actions in social care and their families. The intent was that a new position, known as the coordinator, would have two responsibilities: (1) coordinating officials' actions concerning youngsters in social care and ensuring that the officials completed their commitments and (2) working as an extra, state-employed parent. An example of responsibilities that the coordinator was required to monitor was the arrangement of school and leisure activities after a young person's stay in an institution (Andersson Vogel 2012; Basic 2012, 2013, 2015; Basic et al. 2009; Government Office, Ministry of Social Affairs 2006; Lundström, Sallnäs, and Andersson Vogel 2012; Swedish National Board of Institutional Care 2006, 2009).

Previous research regarding collaboration between organizations and administrative authorities demonstrates the normalness of conflicts. Despite that, collaborations are considered beneficial, and trying to collaborate across the borders of organizations is a co-occurrence phenomenon in today's society (Anell and Mattisson 2009, 93-5; Axelsson and Bihari Axelsson 2007, 19-21; Basic 2012, 2013, 2015; Bolin 2011, 110, 130, 156, 172-77; Huxham and Vangen 2005, 61, 156-57; Hjortsjö 2006, 176-77, 190, 194; Johansson 2011, 209, 217-20; Lindberg 2009, 59, 98; Willumsen 2007, 191-92).

As a result of the MVG-project, multiple inter-organizational struggles among social services, the SiS, and the employees of the project emerged. These struggles also contributed to interpersonal conflicts among involved actors: the professionals, parents, and youngsters. Development of alliances during interpersonal conflicts was frequent (Basic 2012, 2013).

Empirical material for this study was gathered by three researchers (Basic et al. 2009). To enable distinction and analysis of the empirical occurrences of successful collaboration in this study, the empirical material had to be reviewed. In this process, I marked indicators where the actors were asked to appear unanimous within a triad (i.e., as three unanimous actors belonging to three different categories) (Simmel 1950/1964).

The intent with the study was to analyze, based on the empirical material, how and when actors use "the successful collaboration" in different interactive patterns and how their identity is formed and maintained through such markings. I sought to characterize a successful dimension of the phenomenon "collaboration" in this study by analyzing my own material: my field notes, i.e., different situations that are observed and written down (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995).

The study's field notes contain a great number of alliance constellations, which are based on the third actor being excluded. Three unanimous actors belonging to different categories and presenting themselves as such is less

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common in the field notes. My analytical findings are presented in the following themes: (1) coherent morally accepted triad, (2) coherent identity creation triad, and (3) coherent exclusive triad. What is interesting with these constellations is that despite the small empirical sequences being seen as examples of "the successful collaboration," they are conflicts in a wider analytical context.

Analytical starting point and field observations

This study's general analytical starting point is interactional, but it is influenced by an ethno-methodological perspective on how people describe their social reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that individuals interact with each other and try to comprehend the social reality. Typifications fulfill a less important function regarding the actors' management of everyday interaction, and typifying individuals and happenings is necessary to get around the myriad of everyday interactions. Typifications are not static but changeable depending on the situation. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that changes in the typification schedule become especially visible in "face-to-face situations," in comparison with the "more distant forms of interaction" when the other party is not present in the situation (for example, one actor talks about the other person, who is not present in the situation).

Interaction and the understanding of social reality affect relationships of different kinds; they construct and reconstruct both a dyad, which is actors within couple relationships, and a triad, which is a relationship among three actors. In addition to this general starting point, the concepts of "dyad" and "triad" are relevant factors in observations I have analyzed (Simmel 1902; Simmel 1908/1955; Simmel 1950/1964).

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995, 2-16) argue that for some research purposes, it is best to observe situations when they actually happen, which allows the researcher to collect data in its natural environment and in real situations. An important point here is that a detailed description of social life is one of the foundations of sociological knowledge gatherings. Researchers may be inspired by the directions that Becker (1998/2008, 87) gave his students regarding observations, to try to document during field work "all relevant occurrences," i.e., a broad set of impressions, observations, experiences, and happenings. Writing field notes is a selective process, and wanting to take notes on everything is an ambitious approach but, of course, impossible to implement (Becker 1998/2008; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995; Hammersley and Atkinson 1991/1983, 156).

Some of the field notes in this study have been collected through so-called "go-alongs," with the aim of producing more grounded knowledge by researchers who are following those they are studying in daily life (Kusenbach 2003). An important starting point here is that experiences, memories, and views that are not always brought up to date in a regular interview emerge when

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scientists comment on situations that occur and individuals whom they encounter. Meanwhile, field interviews are recommended in correlation with field work (see, for example, Carpiano 2009). By combining these two approaches, scientists can achieve a more versatile picture of the researched phenomenon. (Descriptions of successful collaboration in Swedish youth care are analyzed in Basic forthcoming 1. Observed successful collaboration beneficial for juveniles in Swedish youth care is analyzed in Basic forthcoming 2.)

The coordinators were followed especially with the ambition to somehow "capture" their work. The method was to interview these coordinators at the beginning and end of the project and to conduct field observations of their practical work and field interviews during the field work. The observations could be about observing the cooperators' discussions and internal meetings, phone calls with actors within the youth welfare, and the cooperators' practical encounters with both youngsters and parents and with the institution staff and social workers.

In this study, the researchers strived to write down as much information as possible with a few focus points on the coordinators, the project, and other actors in the youth welfare. Field notes were written down while the interviews were conducted, during organized meetings within the project, through dialogs that were conducted during travels, before and after interviews, and during visits at social services offices and institutions. Furthermore, notes were written down during observations of the coordinators' work with six youngsters in meetings at special childcare units and social services offices where these youngsters attended and were discussed.

The production of the field notes was achieved in the following way. More often than not, short observations were written down on paper, in the situations or immediately afterward. These notes were usually expanded the same day and with the help of the notes that were already written down, together with memory images from the time of observation, the field notes were rendered into narrative (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995,17-65).

Markers for "the successful collaboration" that are described in the study's field notes are analyzed in this article. Concurrence in interaction takes place here, in correlation with organized meetings, sometimes recorded on a dictaphone. Concurrence indicates markers in the material where actors appear or are described as appearing as unanimous in the triad; that is, as three unanimous actors who belong to three different categories (Simmel 1950/1964). The above approach provided good opportunities to comment and document on the details of the printed material in the empirical analysis. By commenting in the prints, a categorization of data was completed (Silverman 1993/2006). Empirical sequences presented in this study were categorized in the material as "accepted moral triad," "identity creation triad," and "exclusive triad." The coding of statements and notes helped to identify in the material markers for

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successful cooperation. The choice of empirical examples was guided by the study's purpose and the ability of the examples to clarify the analytical points.

Coherent morally accepted triad

The production of the successful collaboration depends on the actors' social and moral production where the rhetoric is essential. The actors strive to portray themselves as competent, and the concurrence in the triad seems to maintain a certain normative and moral order in the situation.

The youngster Ivan is placed in a SiS (National Board of Institutional Care) institution called Telis for one year. During the last meeting in the institution, Ivan, treatment assistant Karl (who is also Ivan's contact person), a treatment staff member named Huzze, Ivan's mother and brother, the social secretary, the coordinator, the head of the department, the family therapist, and one more person from municipal juvenile activities (who is going to take over the role as contact person after Ivan's homecoming) were all present during Ivan's last meeting at Telis. During the meeting, Karl summarizes the time at Telis, and the social welfare secretary asks Ivan if he wants to add anything. Ivan replies:

"It's helped me a lot, it is the best thing that has happened to me (the stay in the institution)" /…/ Karl says the personnel are very fond of Ivan, that they have trouble separating from him. Huzze interjects: "Remember, it was me who wanted Ivan to come here, because I knew Karl" (Ivan had contact with municipal youth activities long before visiting the institution). "Tell it like it is: We are damn good!" Karl jokes and everybody laughs. (Field notes)

The observed situation above demonstrates a coherent triad in the relationship among the youngster, institutional personnel, and treatment personnel from the institution. This triad is coherent because three categories within the triad are satisfied. The youngster is satisfied with his stay at the institution. Treatment assistant Karl gives confirmation of the good cooperation between Ivan and the institutional personnel ("the personnel are very fond of Ivan, that /…/ they have trouble separating from him"). Huzze, a treatment staff member from the institution, demonstrates his competence by praising Karl ("Remember, it was me who wanted Ivan to come here, because I knew Karl").

How do the other meeting participants relate themselves to the triad above? Karl appears to convince the participants to be unanimous. After the youngster's stay at the institution, which lasts a year, a consensus is required for all that emerges in the institution of residence. Karl jokes when he says: "Tell it like it is: We are damn good!" and makes "all" participants at the meeting laugh. Unity in the situation seems to be created through humor in the conversation. Simmel (1950/1964, 53) writes:

"Hence even the telling of stories, jokes, and anecdotes, though often only a pastime if not a testimonial of intellectual poverty, can show all the subtle tact that reflect the elements of sociability. It keeps the conversation

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away from individual intimacy and from all purely personal elements that cannot be adapted to sociable requirements."

Conversations are often strategic, and when individuals drive their moral reasons, they often make choices between different deeds aimed to persuade others. Van Praet (2009) writes about meeting participants who use humoristic rhetoric with the goal of steering the meeting in the direction that fits them. Karl seems to use this strategy in his presentation ("'Tell it like it is: We are damn good!' Karl jokes and makes everybody laugh").

The morals of the actors come forward in different interactive patterns. It seems as though the morals participate in the construction of the successful collaboration. The actors' presentations seem to be affected by the effort to portray them as competent, and in such appearances, the actors seem to maintain a certain normative and moral order in the situation. The construction of the successful collaboration becomes thus dependent on the actors' social and moral production where humoristic rhetoric is used extensively.

Coherent identity creation triad

The identity work of the individuals in authority, who are a part of the process where the interaction between organizational identities is created, seems to be a paradoxical phenomenon. Authority workers' professional identity is constructed through both distinctions towards others and by interaction with others. In the following example, authority workers present at a meeting distant themselves from authority workers not present at the meeting. In this way, the participants demonstrate during the meeting that in different ways, they are dependent on and linked to those not attending.

During a meeting in the town of Libstad, a group of institution directors, heads of units from social service, and coordinators gathered. The day's agenda consisted of addressing how the collaboration between coordinators and the different professionals involved takes place. The picture that is given demonstrates the unity of a triad including an institution director, a head of unit from social services, and a coordinator. An outside actor in the interaction is a coordinator from a different city. The coordinators from Cimstad have supposedly "taken over the part of the social secretary" and created conflicts at institutions. The coordinators from Libstad together with the attending directors blame how coordinators from Cimstad work. Actors attending the meeting distance themselves from the coordinators from Cimstad and their way of working and present themselves as excluded. The coordinator Catrin tells about "resistance at the institutions" because of the way of working of the coordinators from Cimstad (the meeting is recorded):

Catrin (coordinator): Many think it's great, great, really good, good and some experience problems ehh and it especially depends on the coordinators working differently, that diverse groups work differently, and that is where I meet resistance at institutions because one coordinator group works differently.

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Berit (institution director): Yes, we experience that too.

Tina (head of unit): I don't understand. Can you be more concrete?

Catrin (coordinator): We have a mission /…/ and working differently isn't good. Unlike Cimstad, we work in other ways here (in Libstad). (Field notes; recorded meeting)

The situation above demonstrates a concurrence between coordinator Catrin and Berit, the director of the institution ("Yes, we experience that too"). They agree about Cimstad coordinators' wrong way of working and they try to form a unanimous triad with Tina, head of unit, who "doesn't understand"). Coordinator Catrin seem to strive after achieving consensus to form an understanding triad between coordinator Catrin, institution director Berit, and head of unit Tina. From then on, head of unit Tina is still interrogative, and an institution director named David presents examples of the wrongdoing of coordinators from Cimstad regarding work, aiming to convince Tina:

Tina (head of unit): BUT how? Can you …

David (institution director): IF we're looking at this from the institution's point of view, you could put it like this: It's important for the youngsters to know who the adults are in the immediate front /…/ and then it becomes important how the MVG coordinators and the social secretaries collaborate, that they don't take our role or the social secretary's role. /…/ I've heard that there are certain differences in attitude regarding the coordinators from Cimstad, where you've stepped in and taken over the social secretary's role.

Tina (head of unit): THAT will be hard, that will be hard (said with irony and laughter, some people laugh). (Field notes; recorded meeting)

Institution director David's presentation seems to convince head of unit Tina. Tina now seems to be in agreement with Catrin and David. The sentence that confirms Tina's concurrence with Catrin and David—"THAT will be hard, that will be hard"—is expressed with emphasis, vigor, a higher voice, and irony and laughter. Potter (1996/2007) argues that extra weight to an argument is given if the actor pronounces a sentence (or some words) in such a way. Subsequent laughter seems also to ease the atmosphere during the meeting. Hochschild (1983/2003) writes that emotions are formed and produced within given contextual frames. Hochschild further develops Goffman's (1959/1990) concept of impression management and argues that individuals perform "emotional work" in comparison to standards that declare what emotion is "right" and what emotional expression is "right" in a given situation. Hochschild argues that when an individual's emotions are elicited, the individual will react based on the social context that s/he is a part of. Emotions may be appropriate in some contexts but inappropriate in others, and the ability to demonstrate or use these reveals how well oriented the individual is in the specific emotional context. An overall conclusion that can be drawn from

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Hochschild's analysis is that emotions fulfill an important function in the social interaction.

Tina contributes to a relaxed atmosphere with the other members by laughing. The participants present at the meeting accept Tina's invitation, thus diminishing the seriousness of the situation that arose from institution director David's presentation. The relaxation of the atmosphere is short lived. David continues his exemplification of the Cimstad coordinators' inaccuracy. The examples are this time more concrete: It is about real individuals who have been affected, namely youngsters and other involved authority people.

David (institution director): YES, especially for youngsters. THEY only see another adult.

Tina (head of unit): Of course.

David (institution director): It's an example that defends your work. There is an identifiable example with us, and there is partly a coordinator who arrived in an investigation case and defied the personnel working on the case. The coordinator talked with the parents and the youngster before the investigation started. "When you come home, how should it look at home?" It's not certain that the youngster is going to end up home again, they've been arguing and that has created expectations and problems that make it very difficult to then come home, we've had to work our asses off to come… The second part is a coordinator who talked with the department manager at Svansjö (institution), and who wants to come to a meeting /…/ before the 20th to meet the youngster. It was both the social worker and the department manager who said, "There is a meeting on the 20th and you're welcome then to meet the youngster." It's not acceptable to have it this way, but he will not budge and keeps calling me wanting me to book the meeting there. The social secretary is wretched and calls the department manager to talk about the problem of how to stop this person.

Jennifer (coordinator): Yes, it's not good that we're different (Laughter). (Field notes; recorded meeting)

Institution director David acknowledges concrete details that are presented as factual reports from reality (Potter 2007/1997, 162-73). David presents two cases exemplifying the Cimstad coordinators who, according to him, engage in an inappropriate way of working. He gets support in the rhetorical presentation from head of unit Tina and coordinator Jennifer. It creates a unanimous triad among the director of the institution, the head of unit, and the coordinator but also a clear distinction from an entire coordinator group from another city (Cimstad coordinators).

The coordinators outside the triad are the Cimstad coordinators. Participants in the meeting are all in agreement about the Cimstad coordinators' inappropriate way of working. With Simmel's concept apparatus, the Cimstad coordinators are placed in the category of outsider or strangers in the triad. Simmel (1950/1964, 402-8) argues that alienation is characterized by a

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combination of distance and proximity in relation to and in the group. The stranger's position depends on the degree of proximity versus the degree of distance throughout the relationship. Occasionally, when the moment of distance is more dominant than the moment of proximity, we develop a relationship to the stranger where the stranger is not a member of the group itself but still present.

A similar relationship can be acknowledged in the observed situation above, a praxis-based, obvious, and unspoken web of interaction, coherence, and distance that seems to create the relationship among the participants at the meeting. The actors in the context are portrayed as involved in two units, one consisting of the unanimous triad and the other consisting of Cimstad coordinators. The actors' unanimous triad performance and rhetoric produces the image of Cimstad coordinators as strangers in relation to the coherent triad. Cimstad coordinators are not members of the triad, but they are present in the interaction as a conversation topic. The coordinators from Cimstad are portrayed as a threat to working norms and values. By rhetorically excluding them, the participants at the meeting confirmed their own identities. The exclusion was maintained with the help of social control, with the rhetoric and the exemplification in the language as a significant mechanism.

The presented conceptions during the meeting give insight into the moral values of the different units. The actors' resources in terms of rhetoric seem to work like a stimulation that brought the other members to embrace the speaker's own definition of "self" and "others." Position differences between units are followed by different moral status. Attendees during the meeting considered themselves as competent in comparison with the coordinators from Cimstad, who are portrayed as incompetent. The moral differentiation, in this case, is an instrument to establish and maintain position differences.

The production of the inter-organizational interaction identities is a basic construction for the building of a successful concurrence (Lotia and Hardy 2008). Authority workers' identity work above seems to be a paradoxical phenomenon. Their profession identity is constructed both through distinction towards others and through interaction with the others. Even if they in some ways depend on and are connected to the category 'Cimstad coordinators,' they still try to distance themselves from the category.

Coherent exclusive triad

When authority personnel attempt to be included in a coherent triad with the external actor (parents or youngsters) during a meeting, that attempt can be interpreted as an effort to ease the atmosphere by creating distance from their professional coworkers. By distancing, the conflict-of-interest points that were actualized in previous interactions now are erased (Simmel 1908/70, 90,110-13, 118). It seems that the successful cooperation can produce and reproduce new

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concurrence in relationships between authority personnel and actors who are outside organizations, i.e., youngsters and parents.

The girl Priscilla has returned home after her stay at an institution called Blendius. Participating in the first meeting at the social services office in the municipality of residence are Priscilla, Priscilla's mother Mina, home therapist Britt-Marie, social secretary Rose-Marie, and the coordinator. During the meeting, Rose-Marie explains what the home therapist should be helping with besides making sure that Priscilla's homework gets done:

Britt-Marie shall be a support with the planning at home when it comes to ordinary chores such as buying groceries, laundry, and also help with the planning of the economy so that it's stable. Mina (mother) looks skeptical, Rose-Marie clarifies: "Because I've gotten reports that it's not always functioning at home, that Priscilla, for example, stayed home because she had no clean clothes, and she once said that she hadn't eaten because there was no food, and therefore had been tired in school." The mother gets very upset now: "I am doing all possible to make sure I manage my home and the kids. You only look backward, only see problems. But you said that now, here at Blendius, we were going to look ahead. So, this is extremely hard for me!" /…/ The tears are near, and Mina rapidly rises up and leaves the room, the youngster follows. "I'll go with them," says Britt-Marie and goes after them. /…/ After a couple of minutes, the youngster and the mother return, followed by Britt-Marie. (Field notes)

In the situation above, a coherent triad can be inferred from the relationships among the home therapist, the mother, and the youngster. In this situation, the coordinator and social secretary are excluded. The exclusion of the coordinator and the social secretary described above seems to have originated in social secretary Rose-Marie's accusing tone directed to the mother Mina ("I've gotten reports that it's not always functioning at home"). The defense against the attack appears to form a coherent triad including Mina, Priscilla, and the home therapist against the social secretary Rose-Marie and the coordinator.

The shared exit and entry of the home therapist Britt-Marie, mother Mina, and daughter Priscilla at the meeting projects the image of a concurrence that excludes the actors sitting down in the office, i.e., social secretary Rose-Marie and the coordinator (and the observer). By walking in the office together, Britt-Marie appears to escort Mina and Priscilla, which can be interpreted as a display of unity and coherence in the triad.

Home therapist Britt-Marie's attempt to be a part of a coherent triad with the mother Mina and Priscilla can also be seen as an attempt to ease the atmosphere during the meeting. One way to calm the external actor is to distance oneself from one's superiors (Caplow 1968). Simmel (1908/70, 90, 110-13,118) argues that the loss or absence of focus on the conflict-of-interest points diminishes battles. By distancing herself from her superior, home therapist Britt-Marie erases conflict-of-interest points that were actualized by

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the statement, “Priscilla /…/ had no clean clothes, and she once said that she hadn’t eaten because there was no food.” When Britt-Marie leaves the meeting with Mina and Priscilla, she creates distance from the other members at the meeting and therefore from social secretary Rose-Marie, who in this context is the only actor who has a decision-making mandate and is also the person who hired Britt-Marie.

The special thing with Mina and Priscilla is that they are not members of any organization. Yet, the authority personnel seem to seek concurrence in the triad with Mina and Priscilla. When Mina and daughter Priscilla leave the meeting, they are followed by home therapist Britt-Marie.

Triad constellations in which actors are outside organizations have been studied before. What is especially interesting is that interpersonal alliance constellations may shift during “interaction heat.” Interpersonal alliances can shift during a situation regarding interaction, and every interaction may contain more alliances that differ in themes, durability, and the actors’ goals (Coe and Prendergast 1985; Hedberg, Cederborg, and Johanson 2007). Researchers acknowledge that “temporary alliances” may shift during the interaction and that these most often become “short lived.” Caplow (1968), who has studied relations between organization representatives and actors who stand outside organizations, argues that a formation of alliance may occur in combat situations and that combat actors may act strategically. In my study, youngsters and parents are sometimes involved in these situations, and a concurrence in the triad between authority personnel and actors outside the organization may emerge. We have the mother Mina and the daughter Priscilla in the field notes above, together with the home therapist Britt-Marie, who seems to seek to make herself part of a coherent triad with Mina and Priscilla (“I’ll go with them,” said Britt-Marie and goes after them”). Caplow (1968, 136) writes the following about border alliances:

“In some other types of organization triads involving outsiders are much more conspicuous and important. These may be called boundary triads. From one point of view the sine qua non of an organization—its fundamental and essential characteristic—is that any two of its members interacting with an outsider in the performance of their organizational roles tend to form an automatic coalition of us against you-and-your-associates.”

Border alliances are common within different service professions where cooperation among actors is encouraged because it is beneficial for the business (Caplow 1968, 136-42). One overall image of the material for this study demonstrates that authority personnel in the youth care system usually experience border alliances with youngsters and parents, some that are beneficial to the treatment and some that are obstacles for the treatment.

Willumsen (2007, 192-97) argues that border alliances with youngsters and parents are essential aspects for a successful concurrence. According to Willumsen (2007, 183), concurrence may lead to a better use of resources, a

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higher level of quality in the services, and a higher level of "user contribution." Willumsen writes that when parents are involved in concurrence in an active and participating way, this involvement contributes to a restoration of their parenthood. The role of mother Mina and daughter Priscilla in the human care organization seems to produce and reproduce new concurrences in relations, but in this process, it's not possible to deduce a suitable and adjustable treatment that according to Willumsen (2007) and Johansson (2011, 77) requires an organization that is flexible and can change structure when necessary.

Conclusion

Previous research on collaboration shows that conflicts among collaborating authorities and organizations and that include cooperating actors are common. In this study, I have analyzed a successful dimension of the phenomenon "cooperation." The purpose of the study is to analyze examples of successful cooperation in treatment work. Based on my empirical material, I have partly analyzed different interactive patterns that are involved in the construction of the phenomenon "the successful collaboration" and how identity is formed and maintained throughout such interactions. "The successful cooperation" refers to the markers in the empirical material where the actors in the triad stand as three united actors belonging to three different categories.

The empirical base for this study is its total of 119 field observations. In this empirical material, there are several alliance constellations, some of which exclude the third actor. Empirical examples in which we can discern three united actors from different categories in a coherent triad constellation happen less frequently.

Analysis of the material shows that professional actors join a coherent triad with outstanding actors (parents or youths) to ease tension from previous conflicts. Creating distance from their professional partners erases the conflict-of-interest points that have been actualized earlier. The typical process is that the professional actors, through their verbal additions, mitigate the conflicts that were present in earlier interactions. The prominence of these actors and loss or lack of focus on the conflict-of-interest points characterizes the consistency of the triad among different categories and thus successful cooperation.

Alliances between organization representatives and actors who stand outside the organization, or so-called border alliances, are common in service occupations where cooperation between actors is sought because it is often seen as beneficial for the activity (Caplow 1968, 136-42). This study shows that the formation of larger alliances/triads across organizational boundaries can ensure successful cooperation.

Between organizational interactions, identities are created and re-created in parallel with the professionals' identity work. It seems that the professionals' professional identities are constructed and reconstructed both by interaction with the others and through distinction of the other by exclusion of that party.

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Construction and reconstruction of success identities for collaboration are ongoing, interactive processes. Success points of interests and the right morals created and re-created during interactions appear in the myriad everyday interactions. One interesting question raised during the conduct of this study is whether or not it is the coherence of the triads that creates successful cooperation or the successful cooperation that creates coherence in triads. One does not seem to exclude the other; coherence of the triads seems able to create successful cooperation in the same way as the successful collaboration seems to create coherence in triads. The successful cooperation and coherence of triads can also exclude important actors in the interaction. Therefore, I urge continued sociological research on coherent triads consisting of government officials and actors outside the organization.

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