Working collaboratively?
The community sector and universities

Dr. Margot Rawsthorne
Social work & policy studies
Faculty of Education & Social Work
The University of Sydney
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What are we talking about?

- Lack of clarity about concepts such as ‘partnership’ and ‘collaboration’
- Many use terms interchangeably

A collaboration involves cooperation between partners during one or more stages of the research (such as data collection or report writing)

A partnership, alternatively, involves cooperation at every stage of research

- Collaboration often relies on a pre-existing relationship
Partnerships require

’an egalitarian and equitable relationship between two different kinds of groups, with different missions, activities, resources and operating methods. In this relationship, each partner makes a different contribution but both consider this contribution to be equally important. Genuine partnership, therefore, is based on respect for and mutual recognition of the contributions of the partners in an interdependent relationship’ (Panet-Raymond and Bourque, 1991: 9-10)

Collaboration:

- multiparty alliances [that] facilitate transactions between people and environments, helping influence systems and mobilize resources (McCarthy & Zald 1977)

- to work, one with another; cooperate, as in literary work. (Macquarie Dictionary Online)

- to cooperate treacherously (Macquarie Dictionary Online)
The challenge

Inequalities in power and access to resources must be addressed to ensure that there are substantial transformations of these conflicts into increased community capacity for social change. Relatively few coalitions have been able to make this transformation (Chavis 2001, p. 312).

There is need to embrace lay knowledge ... but to take secular knowledge seriously implies a shift of the ownership and control away from the professional experts (Ansare et al 2002: 156).

[Partnerships have] borne very limited fruit and there has been a considerable opportunity cost in terms of loss of time dedicated to other actions for social change (Murphy 2002: 89).

Barriers to effective partnerships

- Time
- Lack of commitment
- Partnership fatigue
- Poor previous outcomes
- Lack of trust
- Lack of details and clarity
- Lack of equality in commitments and requirements
- Lack of resources
- Competitive environment and organisational cultures
- Funding arrangements
- Professional training and orientation
- Administrative issues and processes
- Staff turnover
Some collaborators and partners

- Glebe Community Development Project
- National Community Legal Centres Association
- Women’s Legal Centre
- Liverpool Women’s Resource Centre
- Blacktown Council/Blacktown Migrant Action Group
- Benevolent Society and Mission Australia
- Federation of P&Cs
- Post-graduate students

Community partners

- Access to information
  - What’s going on/what’s important
- Access to networks
  - Key people to talk to
- Access to data
  - Client data or other service based information
- Contribution to teaching and learning
  - Perspectives from the field (particularly theory/practice nexus)
- Research advice
  - ‘Grounding’ research efforts
- Research site
- Collaboration on research projects
- Research partnerships
Academic partners

- Access to information
- Access to literature
- Access to data
- Research and evaluation expertise
  - Evaluation framework
  - Survey/questionnaire design
  - Data management
- Collaborative research projects
- Research partnership

An example

Medium sized NGO
Professional and personal knowledge
Formal partnership agreement

- Assistance with data management
- Questionnaire design
- Evaluation framework
- Information about ‘what’s happening in services’
- Participation in teaching program
- Research site for my research
- Support for funding applications/projects
- Joint publications and conference papers
Promotion of safe and healthy relationships for young women

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Key questions</th>
<th>Data collection</th>
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| Do young women who participated in the groups have more knowledge about safe and healthy relationships? | **Young women**
- Pre and post-questionnaires with all group participants
  (this questionnaire would integrate some of the social capital measurements and link with previous research)
- Questionnaire with control group of young women who had not participated in education program/groups
- Focus group with peer educators
- In-depth interviews with max. 4 young women
**2 and 5 year follow-up with peer educators and/or group participants** |
| How has the project affected young women’s attitudes towards violent relationships? | **Service providers**
Survey with youth workers and school staff (counseling, teaching and admin) |
| Is there any intended behavioural change arising from the participating in the program? | **Broader community**
List of promotional activities to raise awareness of issues
If website, number of hits and feedback received |
| Are service providers aware of the issues facing young women hoping to form safe and healthy relationships? | |
| What role do service providers play in supporting young women’s healthy choices? | |
| How successful has the project promoted the issue of healthy relationships to the broader community? | |

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What role do service providers play in supporting young women’s healthy choices?

How successful has the project promoted the issue of healthy relationships to the broader community?

First name: School: Age:

Here are some examples of different types of violence. Please tell us how serious you think each of these are by ticking one box for each.

Please tick one box for each item
Building productive partnerships

- Be clear about your commitment to partnership/relationship and what you hope to achieve
- Include time and processes to establish trust and respect
- Through dialogue build understanding of different roles/perspectives
- Through dialogue create shared responsibility and common goals
- Develop and implement processes that ensure ongoing communication between partners
- Provide those involved in the partnership with support, training and resources
- Be creative and flexible in getting the work of the partnership done
Strategies for the future

- Partnerships are not inherently good – in each case, we need to ask:
  
  *what will the partnership achieve that would not otherwise be possible?*

- The model that is adopted needs to be tailored to specific goals and circumstances AND evaluated against these

- Partnerships need to build the capacity of the partners

- Training and support for those involved in partnerships

- Empowerment model