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## **Title: Coherent Triads and Collaboration Identities in Swedish Youth Care**

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### **Abstract**

Previous collaboration research shows that problems and conflicts sometimes arise as a part of collaboration. Researchers have highlighted the importance of narratives, but have not focused on narratives about successful cooperation. This article tries to fill this gap by analyzing stories of successful cooperation, even if it unfolds during shorter interaction sequences. The aim is to analyze how and when the actors within youth care portray successful cooperation, and which discursive patterns are involved in the construction of this phenomenon. The empirical basis for this study is formed by 147 recorded interviews with institution-placed youths, their parents, and different occupational categories within the social services and the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care. The personal interactive aspect of cooperation among actors in youth care is important to the success of a collaboration. This aspect also appears to have significance for producing and reproducing joint collaboration identities. However, joint collaboration identities and the coherence triad can limit the sphere of cooperation to the youth care entities: the juvenile (or his/her parents) is left out.

**Key words:** collaboration, triad, moral, collaboration identities, triad coherence, interview.

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### **Biography**

Postdoctoral researcher in sociology at the Department of Sociology, Lund University. Research concerns fieldwork in Bosnia and Herzegovina, written articles on the postwar society and carried out an evaluation of a project in the Swedish juvenile care. The dissertation “When collaboration becomes a struggle. A sociological analysis of a project in the Swedish juvenile care” is based on ethnographic material. Currently analyzing the collaboration between border police and coastguard in the countries of Baltic region. Main research and teaching areas: Sociology, Interactionist Theory and Analysis, Ethnography, Narrative Analysis, Social Constructivism, Criminology, War Sociology, Social Psychology, Conflict Sociology, Peace and Conflict Studies, Ethnicity, Victimology, Social Work, Strategic Communication, Collaboration, Juvenile Care, Reconciliation, Concentration Camp, Sociological Theory, Qualitative and Quantitative Methods, Balkan History, Ethnic Conflicts.

## **Introduction**

Earlier research about collaboration between organizations and administrative authorities shows that conflicts are common. Still, collaboration is considered beneficial and the tendency to try to collaborate across the borders of organizations is a co-occurrence phenomenon in our society today (Huxham and Vangen 2005: 61, 156-157; Hjortsjö 2006: 176-177, 190, 194; Axelsson och Bihari Axelsson 2007: 19-21; Willumsen 2007: 191-192; Anell och Mattisson 2009: 93-95; Lindberg 2009: 59, 98; Bolin 2011: 110, 130, 156, 172-177; Johansson 2011: 209, 217-220; Basic 2013, 2012).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, multiple collaboration projects were initiated between the social services, health care, and social insurance entities in Sweden (see multiple inserts in Axelsson and Bilhari Axelsson 2007; Anell and Mattisson 2009:58-67). This collaboration was intended to result in shorter waiting periods and faster initiation of rehabilitation while lowering expenses. Furthermore, the collaboration was supposed to benefit the clients. Similar tendencies can be observed in the relationship between the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care, or Statens institutionsstyrelse (abbreviated SiS), and the social services in Sweden between 2004 and 2009. During this period, it was common for projects to demand improved collaboration (Fäldt, Storbjörk, Palm, Oscarsson, Stenius 2007; Hajjghasemi 2008; Basic, Thelander & Åkerström 2009; Lundström, Sallnäs, and Andersson Vogel 2012).

One of these collaborative projects is “Counteract Violence and Gangs” (abbreviated as the MVG-project), which was conducted in Sweden from 1 July 2006 to 31 December 2008. The project aimed to enhance collaboration between social services and the SiS, and to streamline the actions for youths in social care and their families. The intent was that a new position, known as the coordinator, would have two responsibilities: to coordinate officials’ actions regarding youths in social care and ensure that the officials completed their commitments, and to work in part as a sort of extra, state-employed parent. An example of a commitment that the coordinator was obligated to monitor is the arrangement of school and leisure activities after a stay in an institution (Government Office, Ministry of Social Affairs 2006; Swedish National Board of Institutional Care 2006, 2009; Basic, Thelander & Åkerström 2009; Lundström, Sallnäs, och Andersson Vogel 2012; Andersson Vogel 2012; Basic 2013, 2012).

The MVG-project resulted in many inter-organizational struggles between social services, the SiS, and the project employees. It also resulted in interpersonal conflicts among involved actors: the professional occupations, parents, and youths. Alliances were frequently formed during interpersonal conflicts (Basic 2013, 2012).

The empirical basis for this study is comprehensive (see the Methods section). The empirical material was collected by three researchers (Basic, Thelander & Åkerström 2009). In this study, the empirical material was reviewed in order to distinguish, and analyze empirical occurrences of successful collaboration. I noted markers in the material where actors were asked to appear unanimous within the triad (i.e., as three unanimous actors belonging to three different categories) (Simmel 1950/1964).

The aim of this study is to use the empirical material to describe how and when actors within youth care (including the coordinator, social secretary, unit managers in social services, personnel of the specific youth homes, youths, and parents) portray successful collaboration, and to analyze discursive patterns involved in the construction of the phenomenon. The main question is: How and when does successful collaboration of the involved actors present?

In this study I endeavor to describe the contributing dimensions that are necessary to achieve the phenomenon of a successful collaboration. I do this partially with help from studies published in the literature, but especially by analyzing my own empirical material: narratives from the interviewees comprising their retrospective descriptions of relations between themselves and others (Riessman 2008, 1993; Dailey and Browning 2014).

Many alliance constellations, which are based on the exclusion of the third actor, were observed in the study interviews (Basic 2012). Triad constellations characterized by collaboration, in which we can distinguish three unanimous actors that belong to different categories, are not that common in the material. How the category “successful cooperation” appears in the described situations is analyzed in this article. My analytical findings are presented in the following themes: (1) Coherent vision triad, (2) Coherent morally accepted triad, and (3) Coherent exclusive triad.

### **Successful collaboration in earlier research**

Kolb and Putnam (1992: 16-17) state that changes within the organization and the pursuit of collaboration may accumulate conflicts. It is fairly natural that struggles continuously takes place in intermediate organizational relationships in which actors want to control, influence, or resist the activities of others (Huxham and Beech 2008: 555-579). According to Schruijer (2008: 432), collaboration and conflict go hand in hand, and the source of the conflict is usually a contradiction between organizational goals, interests, and identities. Attempts to reduce conflict between organizations do not improve cooperation, as “conflict-reducing interventions can never in themselves stimulate collaboration” (Schruijer 2008: 433).

Still, there are examples of successful cooperation. According to Lindberg (2009: 54-55) factors contributing to the success of collaboration include: that chiefdom and functional borders have been decided in an appropriate manner; organizations are located at the same place; administrative and political management and finance are coordinated; cooperation includes all levels in the organization that are going to cooperate; mutual respect and mutual trust exist between the cooperating parties; mutual additional training of all personnel is practiced; mutually beneficial development projects are practiced; and economical stimuli or forced legislation exist (Lindberg 2009: 54-55). Many of the listed factors involve actors that should become “the same type” (e.g., mutual education, mutual house, etc.). The picture that is presented in the research above shows that collaboration occurs between equal actors, rather than between different actors.

However, basically, research does not support the hypothesis that collaboration necessarily improves the client’s situation or reduce the overlapping of work. (Anell and Mattisson 2009: 57-75, 92, 109-112; Johansson 2011: 74-75). According to Reitan (1997; 1998), there is a structural unwillingness to cooperate with other organizations. This structural opposition in organizations is quite visible regarding human care, wherein the client is outside of organizations control. In human service organizations, the client is considered a consumer of the service, as a production tool when he/she is expected to participate in treatment, and finally as a crude product of the business when treatment is being administered. Furthermore, human-serving organizations use an obscure knowledge base and have ambiguous purposes which provide a lot of space for professional and ideological opposition, which eventually obstructs collaboration between organizations.

Hjortsjö (2006) observe that organizations are encouraged to cooperate both from within and from without, because it cooperation seen as something that improves activity and helps the client.

An interesting question here is how a successful collaboration is created. What dimensions are important? Hornby and Atkins (2000/1993) emphasize that personal relationships are an important contributing factor for collaboration. The interactionists' outlook regarding roles and identities can help us in the search for answers. Blumer (1969/1986: 62-100) states that the "self" is a basic construction for individual creation and recreation of an identity. During life, an individual plays many roles in society in the presence of different audiences; as a result, the "self" forms and changes in every social situation (1969/1986: 9-10). Blumer (1969/1986: 9-10) states that to be recognized in our roles is to be recognized in our identities. Blumer (1969/1986: 10, 101-116) sees the identity as a dynamic field rather than a static condition. The identity can be seen as the name we give ourselves, and because it is socially constructed it can change. The identity can also be negotiated and can lie on the border between different categories; it is not clearly defined. One individual can use multiple identities at the same time (e.g., their gender identity, ethnic identity, and professional identity).

The outlook of interactionists regarding roles and identities has meaning for the construction of the organizational identity. Salzer (1994: 21) wrote that the organizational identity is about how individuals in a group define themselves and their organization. Whetten and Godfrey (1998: 37) defined organizational identity as "the continuously renegotiated set of meanings about who we are as an organization". Sevón (1996: 53) found that organizational identity appears through interpersonal interaction, and that it cannot be found in static form. Czarniawska (1997) wrote that the creation of organizational identity is a constantly ongoing narrative process. Organizations do not exist independent of their members, and the members construct the organization through their speech, writing, and actions. In the context in which the organizational identity is created and recreated, the morality of the participant is also produced and reproduced (Dailey and Browning 2014). Lotia and Hardy (2008: 366-389) have suggested that it is usual both when partners moralize about each other and when they do so about other people. These moralizing descriptions often contain dichotomous terms (e.g., passive/active or friends/enemies).

Hardy, Lawrence, and Grant (2005) analyzed what significance identities have for inter-organizational collaboration. The conversations of the involved actors are emphasized as important to the creation and recreation of a shared collaborative identity. An important result is that in conversations, the cooperating parties construct and reconstruct the social phenomenon of collaboration. The collaborating parties refer to themselves as collective, rather than as separate individuals or as representatives of a profession. According to Hardy, Lawrence, and Grant (2005), collaboration identity represents the link that binds parties together in constellations of individuals that do not belong to the same profession. The design of inter-organizational collaborative identities appears to be the basis for a successful collaboration (Hardy, Lawrence, and Grant 2005; Lotia and Hardy 2008: 379). Inter-organizational interactive identities are constructed and reconstructed in discursive practices through joint efforts, everyday routines, conflicts, and alliance formation. These interactions can provide a sense of belonging that is occasionally portrayed as a contrast to the other parties (Lotia and Hardy 2008: 366-389). Several researchers have noted the professionals' experiences of a clearer professional identity through cooperation with neighboring

professions. (Hjortsjö 2006). The actors in these studies argue that their professional identity is clarified because the different professional roles complement each other.

Organization members conducting “joint efforts” or collaborations can be perceived as alliance partners by other entities in a collaboration (Dacin, Reid, and Ring Smith 2008: 90-117). Hibbert, Huxham, and Smith Ring (2008: 400-402) stated that alliance formations do not have to have a negative effect on a collaboration. Successful interaction is dependent on members’ interests, previous collaborations, mutual trust, clear organizational roles and goals, open and frequent communication between entities, shared vision, time, and skilled professional leadership. Belonging to an alliance is particularly common in administrative organizations (Dacin, Reid, and Ring Smith 2008: 90-117; Hibbert, Huxham, and Smith Ring 2008: 400-402).

Coherence between collaborating parties can be achieved through regular meetings, discussions, and education. Successful collaboration is also characterized by mutual respect of organization members for each other’s regulations standards and targets. Dacin, Reid, and Ring Smith (2008) and Hibbert, Huxham, and Smith Ring (2008) suggest the following essential conditions for successful collaboration: that the actors have decision-making authority from their respective organizations; that the collaborating parties are interested in the success of the collaboration; that collaborative partners learn each other’s laws, strengths, and weaknesses; and that all involved parties be willing to take initiative and suggest other ways to work. It seems that the collaborating parties should communicate more regarding roles, responsibilities, and authority.

Even shared visions appear to be an important contributor to collaborative success (Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi 2013). The question is how the organizations in a collaboration develop a shared vision. A project, for example, provides the framework for a vision through the project description and other official documents; however, the actors must have input into those documents for a shared vision to be created. A shared vision or goal cannot be centrally administered or adopted from a single involved organization; it must be jointly constructed or reconstructed by the collaborating entities (Hardy, Lawrence, and Grant 2005; Lotia and Hardy 2008: 379).

Actors’ trust in each other, clear organizational and operational goals, clear roles within organizations, and a shared vision or goal appears to be important for a successful collaboration (Hibbert, Huxham, and Smith Ring 2008: 400-402; Lindberg 2009: 55-59, 64). If cooperation occurs on equal terms and with balance between the professions involved, then difficulties during the collaboration can be avoided (Hjortsjö 2006, Lindberg 2009).

The participation of juveniles and their parents is a key dimension for successful collaboration, according to Willumsen (2007: 192-197), who studied children and adolescents in the Norwegian equivalent of Swedish youth care. Willumsen stresses the importance of the professional seeing the family and young people as a whole, even though treatment is primarily exerted on the juvenile. The client’s role in human service organizations is critical to bringing about effective and tailored treatment, which requires an organization that is flexible and can change its structure when necessary (Willumsen 2007; Johansson 2011: 77).

Bolin (2011) and Hjortsjö (2006) analyzed an interesting form of collaboration in which collaborative practices were located under one roof. The expectation is that members who collaborate among clients daily, in a context that is defined by physical barriers such as walls,

doors and windows, becomes more influenced by the social control of the situation. The term “social control” refers to the monitoring that the active practitioners visit on each other’s actions and behavior. Previous research shows that co-location of activities increases the tendency for cooperation between social workers and health personnel. Bolin and Hjortsjö discovered that collocation also fostered a positive attitude towards collaboration. The partnership became easier and more efficient; partners were able to reach each other more quickly, and knowledge was found and gathered in one place. Hjortsjö’s (2006: 189-196) analysis demonstrated that openings for cooperation between members belonging to different occupational categories occurred when there were tasks that everyone was able to perform, regardless of profession, such as sharing responsibility for making coffee or providing refreshments. Another type of situation in which an opening for collaboration can be distinguished is when there is a problem. The personnel then tend to subordinate to a relief effort, and for the moment let go of their organizational turf. These assistance efforts tend to be limited, and only occasionally lead to the opening of organizational turf. Finally, the openings for the workers appear when they become emotionally or personally involved (such as in the lunchroom). Hjortsjö observed that the members of the examined family center were personally integrated but professionally segregated.

Bolin’s (2011: 126-152) analysis of interaction processes between teachers and social workers in a so-called resource school shows that different professions are forced to work together to keep their jobs. There are examples in the study in which these professionals work together mutually and systematically by splitting tasks, and thus develop profession-specific identities and common collaboration identities (Bolin 2011: 211-235; Lotia and Hardy 2008: 379). One example is that the social workers performed tasks that were not included in an ordinary working arsenal for a social worker; they were involved in lessons with students, preparing breakfast for students, preparing the table at lunch, and participating in students’ leisure activities. In Bolin’s (2011: 126-152) study, active practitioners could not avoid helping the other professional category (e.g., by attending a meeting or making a call as expected) without consequences. They worked in the same house and clearly exerted mutual social control.

### **Analytical starting point and method**

The analytical starting point of the study is generally interactional, but is influenced by an ethno-methodological perspective regarding how people represent their social reality. Ethno-methodologists do not want to explain what the social reality is, but how it occurs (Gubrium and Holstein 1997). In light of this perspective, the informer’s descriptions and the analysis of those descriptions can be considered meaningful activities (Blumer 1969/1986; Gardinkel 1967/1984). Descriptions are interpreted because they try to describe the world, but in time, the descriptions must be analyzed so that different analytical dimensions can be discovered. This study connects with the narrative traditions within sociology, in which verbal descriptions are considered both bound to experience and discursive (Riessman 2008, 1993; Potter 1996/2007; Dailey and Browning 2014). Interaction and the comprehension of the social reality constructs and reconstructs relationships between actors within the couple relationship (a dyad) and among three actors (a triad). Beyond this general starting point, the concepts of “dyad” and “triad” are especially relevant components in the specific descriptions I have analyzed (Simmel 1950/1964; Simmel 1902; Simmel 1908/1955).

Silverman (1993/2006: 109-152) argued that during an interview, the participants convey and utilize the everyday knowledge of the social context. The researchers in the present study had this in mind when the interviewers sought to give interviewees space to bring up related topics

that they themselves found relevant (Basic, Thelander & Åkerström 2009). Our goal was that the interview itself unfolded in a conversation-oriented style in which we as interviewers took on the role of interlocutors rather than interrogators. Holstein and Gubrium (1995, 1997/1998: 113-129) called this type of interview, in which the interviewer appears in the role of interlocutor, an “active interview”. In practical terms, this means that the interviewers took the role of interested listeners who wanted to know more about youth care, the project, and the coordinators. One such way to conduct interviews is partly as a conversation, and partly as the interviewee’s presentation and the production and reproduction of identities (Rapley 2001). In this interaction, one interviewee presents himself or herself as knowledgeable about the social context – youth care – and the interviewer is presented as an interested actor who wants to know more about the context.

This study has been conducted through qualitative interviews with 147 actors in youth care. The interview group consisted of juveniles and their parents, social service representatives, institutional staff, coordinators, and a supervisor. Follow-up interviews were conducted with 23 members of the original interview group.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the interviews were conducted individually, although some were completed in a group setting. Some follow-up interviews were conducted over the telephone. A dictation microphone was used at all interviews where the interviewee and interviewer met personally.

Before the interviews, an interview guide was designed in which different topics that the interviewer wanted to address during the interview were noted. The guide’s contents were usually reviewed prior to each interview, and the interviewer attempted to address all of the topics of interest during the conversation. In other words, the interviews were casual, semi-structured interviews, during which a number of relevant topics were discussed (Holstein and Gubrium 1995, 1997/1998: 113-129).

Researchers who take the role of passive listeners (i.e., researchers who only ask questions of informants, do so in the same way in every interview, and do not comment at all on the responses during the interview) were criticized by Wetherell and Potter (1992). Such research inaction contributes to the creation of a formal situation that is not conducive to the conversation. In contrast, during this study the researchers actively participated in the informal discussions by briefly saying “mm”, “yes”, or sometimes providing additional comments. This method of conducting the interview created a relaxed atmosphere that promoted conversation (Rapley 2001: 312-314). To illustrate how the interaction generates statements, empirical examples of the interviewer’s speech are also shown.

The analysis section of the report contains direct quotes from the interviews in order to facilitate the reader’s understanding of what is analyzed and to provide analytical fuel for the

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<sup>1</sup> Below is a chart of the various groups interviewed:  
Juveniles: n=41 (13 young people were interviewed twice).  
Parents: n=10 (four parents were interviewed twice).  
Social Services staff members: n=37 (28 social workers and nine unit managers).  
Institutional staff members: n=26 (12 treatment assistants, six research assistants, six department managers, a family therapist, and a former substitute).  
MVG-project employees (managers and coordinators): n=31 (28 coordinators and three project managers; six coordinators were interviewed twice).  
HVB staff members (HVB = home for care and housing [i.e., institutions under private management, not managed by SiS]): n=2.



study's analytical reasoning. Potter (1996/2007: 8-9, 233-234) brought attention to the advantage of accurate transcription: that the analysis is made visible to the reader when the availability of the interviewees' speech increases. An important point here is that this approach opens doors for additional interpretation of the material and the study's results.<sup>2</sup>

The collected material was not directly transliterated; it was transliterated a few days or a few weeks later. To reduce the negative effect of the time lag, field notes were written during the interviews (field notes are analyzed in Basic forthcoming 1 and 2). The field notes described the social context in which the interviews took place, the observations and reactions that researchers experienced as essential during the interview, and the interview content (in a short summary text).

The above approach provided good opportunities to document and comment on the details of the printed material in the empirical analysis. By commenting in the prints "a categorization of data" was completed (Ryen 2004: 110-112, 123-127). Empirical sequences presented in this study were categorized in the material as "vision triad", "accepted moral triad", and "exclusive triad". By coding statements and notes, markers for successful cooperation were identified in the material. The choice of empirical examples was guided by the study's purpose and the ability of the examples to clarify the analytical points.

### **Coherent vision triad**

The social worker Anna<sup>3</sup> represents a coherent triad by talking about the vision of a collaborative project. Anna welcomes the coordinator to "go in and look at" what active practitioners do in youth services, because she is aware that there are gaps in youth services. Through "routines", Anna and the coordinator developed a description of collaboration between social services and institutions. The error that arises during work with juveniles is distributed between social services and institutions. According to Anna, social services does not always clearly state the missions to the involved institutions, and the institutions do not describe what is being done during the juvenile's time in the institution. By pointing out these errors, the social welfare secretary also highlights the flaws in cooperation that she believes exist within the youth welfare system, and therefore the coordinator's presence is welcomed. This is what emerged during the interview, when I asked Anna a question about the idea with the project:

Anna ((social welfare secretary)): Mmm, well the thing ... Idea with the MVG-project eee I think that it is a good idea. (3) Eee placements and what is going to

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<sup>2</sup> The transcription characters used, inspired by Jefferson (1985), are as follows:

?	Questioningly
.	Concluding
,	Continuous
/.../	Some citation excluded to shorten
(.)	Short silence (up to approximately 2 seconds)
(3)	Long silence (approximately 3 seconds or longer)
us	Reproduction or emphasis on what is said (part of the word, or the whole word)
US	Louder than surrounding
°us°	Quieter than surrounding
(( ))	Explanatory note. For example, "((coordinator))" means that the operator in question is the coordinator, and "((laughs))" means that that speech is accompanied by laughter
"never"	Informant who quotes someone else or himself

<sup>3</sup> All names of persons and places mentioned have been changed.

happen after the placements is an important question I feel eeh (.) and it is eeh ... It is good that there is someone else, a third party that goes in and watches. We, social services and institutions have built up certain routines about this but (.) sometimes there is good ... Some are better on it and some are worse on it, regarding the social services and the institution, eeh, from the outside perspective we might not be clear with the assignments to them and (.) not really always good at knowing what we are supposed to ask when we follow up (.) and the institution is naturally in its treatment maybe not always (.) or describe what they do ...

Goran: Mmm.

Anna ((social welfare secretary)): So I think it has been a big change I think that they have gotten better because we have consciously been looking eeh but I like that it is a third party involved. You get more... And you learn... And then new ideas arise.

Anna appears to think that the project might benefit the project, that it could improve institutional relationships. Implicitly, it seems as though the coordinators can help influence social services to set clearer standards regarding institutional treatment. This can be seen as a shared collaborative vision (Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi 2013).

The vision's external framework was produced by the government and project management. The government wrote in the assignment to the SiS: "The forms of cooperation between SiS and the social services shall improve. Exchange of experiences and knowledge between social services and SiS shall result in the efforts for juveniles and their families and network to become more effective" (Government Office, Ministry of Social Affairs 2006). The cooperation agreement between the municipalities and the SiS states that the "treatment plan is regulated by a written agreement between the juvenile and parents, social services, and the special youth home" (Swedish National Board of Institutional Care 2009, Supplement II: 2). The vision exemplifies collaboration in the triad, which consists of the social services, youth homes, and the youth and parents as a united entity. In my opinion, it is simplistic to regard young people and parents as a unified party. Basic (2012) provides clear examples in which juveniles and parents crystallize into two parties in a conflict.

In any case, the vision's external framework was produced when the project management described the role of the coordinator and mentioned (among other things) that the coordinator should: (a) be a "support for the juvenile" ; (b) be "a link between the juvenile, social services, and the institution"; c) "ensure that the youth home and social services, together with the juvenile and her/his parents and the remaining network, agree on placements as early as possible"; d) focus in particular on the transfer between SiS institutional care and other forms of care"; e) "participate in meetings in which the time after the SiS placement is discussed"; f) "track the efforts that have been made"; g) "should show a genuine interest for the juvenile and his/her family, and assure them that the needs of juveniles shall not be placed behind those of the adults" (Swedish National Board of Institutional Care 2006: 1-3).

The coordinator role is portrayed as complex in the document, but Anna appeared to mostly be inspired by the expectation that coordinators shall "have special focus on the transfer between SiS institutional care and other forms of care". Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi (2013) mean that the vision's external framework must be performed by members in the interaction to create a collaborative success. Hardy, Lawrence, and Grant (2005) and Lotia and Hardy

(2008:379) stated that the shared vision shall be structured and restructured during interaction between the participants. Anna relates one such interaction.

Anna's wording "and then new ideas arise" can be considered a vision of collaboration that is mutually structured and restructured during the interaction between the coordinator, social secretary, and institutional personnel (Hardy, Lawrence, and Grant 2005; Lotia and Hardy 2008: 379). Willumsen (2007: 192-197) points out the importance of young people's and parents' participation for successful collaboration. The importance of these actors is toned down in Anna's description. Parents are not mentioned and juveniles are referred to as "placements".

According to Lipsky (1980:50-60), interaction in the organizational context is eased if the individual is transformed into a manageable linguistic category for the organization. Through categorizations in the language that is used within the organization, Anna transforms the category "youth" into the category "placements". Replacement of the individual identity ("youth") with the bureaucratic identity ("placements") creates the specter of youth exclusion in relation to the idea of interaction and the interactive collaborative triad (Simmel 1950/1964: 122-125, 174-177).

### **Coherent morally accepted triad**

Successful cooperation during a group interview is structured by the coordinator, Sandra, regarding a concurrent triad consisting of coordinator, social secretary, and juvenile. During the interview, Sandra was the only coordinator that expressed a belief that there was successful cooperation; the other coordinators' attention was mainly focused on problems and barriers to collaboration. Through her rhetorical appearance, Sandra created and recreated the collaboration between organizational identities. I asked the following question: "Can you tell us a little about your collaboration with social services?"

Sandra: I have one person where it went really good and I have been there very, very long time because she wanted to, so I have been there since April and I'm still there. During this time °her° ((clears her throat)) social secretary has been on the sick list so that his or aaa social secretary's head of unit has been included for a couple of months and on the last meeting there was a new social secretary present and IT GOING very good. I was there during that time. (.)

Goran: Mmm.

Sandra: Because of the continuity. It has been working WELL but it was two social welfare secretaries that switched and also, one head of unit.

Goran: Mmm, mmm.

Sandra: It has been good, as I have said I have been present the whole °time°.

And now it is time to finish. And we have used the agreement that we have revised PLENTY of times, and I have said to the social worker ((laughs)) if you are still going to use it then °you° have to do it yourself. So it is about planning, you have to prepare so that something does not go missing.

Goran: Mmm, mmm.

Sandra: It actually works great both in terms of collaboration and °agreement°.

(3) And it is going well for the girl, as well.

The description above shows three satisfied members. Sandra is content that the collaboration is working with the help of the coordinator's working tools, "writing agreements"<sup>4</sup>. The social worker is content because the coordinator helps when a crack appears in the coverage provided by social services. The juvenile is also content, according to Sandra ("it is going well for the girl, as well").

Examples of actors that are outside of the triad are parents and personnel within institutions. Even Sandra's colleagues, the other coordinators present during the interview, are outside the triad, because during the interview they mostly talk about problems and barriers to collaboration (Simmel 1950/1964: 122-125, 174-177).

Sandra describes a successful cooperation by example, speaking in a louder voice. Does this create a reinforced picture that intends to persuade the audience to adopt Sandra's perspective? The powerful description appeared to have a connection with the previously described problems and barriers to collaboration. The establishment of a successful cooperative effort appeared to demand that the argument be strengthened.

Goffman (1959/1990) stated that interactions between individuals are characterized by both the conscious and the unconscious management of impressions. He means that individuals define different situations, and those definitions govern what action is considered appropriate; also, individuals try to manage the perceptions that other individuals form about them. Therefore, individuals *present themselves* in different contexts when they meet various other individuals. Every definition of a situation tells us what we should do, it provides a moral character. The definition of a given situation is also dependent on the behavior of the participant and the audience. Sandra's action during the interview can be interpreted as a presentation and a quest to persuade the audience (remaining coordinators and interviewer). Sandra's rhetoric, both her words and her tone, demonstrates a description of successful cooperation.

Sacks (1992: 205-222) analyzes how categories are used in conversation and how conversation generates categories. Through categorization, the individual creates meaning in what he/she sees and does. The process enables conversation (or, more exactly, the individual's capacity to pursue, develop, and complete a conversation). What is known about a category depends on the social context of the individual. In other words, the content of a category is culture-dependent. A set of categories consists not only of the individual, but also of rules for how it should be applied. Through categorizations, participants in a conversation monitor the moral implications of what is said. The point that Sacks raises is in line with Goffman (1959/1990), that individuals do not speak simply to transmit information to each other; rather, how individuals formulate their speech also depends on how it is received by an audience (or the listener). Potter (1996/2007: 107-108, 121, 166) emphasizes that rhetoric can defend a particular description against alternative interpretations. During her presentation, Sandra chose a particular version in which the "right" morality was visible, and conveyed a morally "right" reality in the interview above. Successful cooperation between coordinators, social workers, and juveniles during the interview is a morally acceptable constellation.

Particularly powerful narratives create a more colorful image because the metaphorical character imbues such representations with more intensity than a "paler" version, according to

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<sup>4</sup> During the project, the document "written agreement" was more of a living document in which the parties agreed on more long-term planning for the youth's future, recorded details, signed the document, and updated it over time. Documents gave rise to several conflicts analyzed in Basic (2012).

Potter (1996/2007) and Drew and Holt (1988). In other words, the rhetorical production can be presented with varying degrees of intensity. According to Ibarra and Kitsuse (1993: 29-38), the purpose of rhetoric is to convince those who are not convinced and preserve the conviction of those already convinced.

Sandra's statements above may be considered particularly powerful. In her description, the category "collaboration" is related to such expressions as "very, very long time", "IT GOING very good," and "It has been working WELL". Sandra's emphasis and tone of voice when she describes the collaboration are used to create a colorful picture that aims to convince the audience. A successful use of agreement appears to be an example of successful collaboration. When Sandra uses agreement in her description, it is being connected with such expressions as: "revised PLENTY of times", "It actually works great both in terms of collaboration and °agreement°".

Sandra appeared to try to convince the audience, and the colorful image that she presented seemed to be associated with the previously discussed lack of collaboration. To produce a new reality that is in contrast to the conflictual reality usually described in the project (Author 2012) requires its own special tools. In this case, the tool is a stronger argument that is created by the strong image.

Sandra's powerful description and her reinforcements of arguments were made with the aim of persuading the audience of the existence of successful collaboration. Sandra appeared to express the struggle for collaboration, a struggle that seems to be needed in order to construct an interaction between organizational identities (Hardy, Lawrence and Grant 2005; Lotia and Hardy 2008: 379). Several researchers have emphasized the importance that collaboration partners be interested in collaboration and willing to collaborate. In that regard, Sandra has provided a rhetorical example of such a desire.

### **Coherent exclusive triad**

Interaction between organizational identities is a dynamic process, and the coherence of the triad in the relationship can depict the exclusion of key players in youth care services, such as juveniles.

The ability to concretize is an important rhetorical tool in the conversation (Potter 2007/1997: 162-173). A treatment assistant, Philip, embodies a coordinator's collaboration with social workers, institutional staff, and the family, with the help of two examples. Successful collaboration requires that the borders between involved categories be erased (Hjortsjö 2006: 189-196).

Goran: Mmm. Do you have any ((deep inhale)) information on how the social services are experiencing the coordinators? (.) Or how the cooperation between them is?

Philip: EEH (.) I think that, eee Gert as the social secretary's name is, think it is good eee. He gets eee he gets support from Tobias (coordinator) and even helps with contact with the family and us ee in different ways. I'd like to think that. (.) eee then we have had Tobias here... On family nights and such... When we've invited all families we also invited him aaand he got really excited... We did some barbequing as well, he was a part of the team, and it was really good.

Goran: Yeah, yeah ((laughter)).

Philip: So he was out and barbequing also...

According to Potter (2007/1997: 162-173), is concretizations important as rhetorical tools to a description made convincing. Examples can be used rhetorically to illustrate and summarize a selected portion of an opinion in relation to something that is vague, general, or abstract, according to Wästerfors and Holsanova (2004: 38) who write:

The functions of examples are numerous. They specify things but restrict them at the same time. They may serve as objectifications of an argument, providing a rhetorically powerful quality of “out-there-ness”. They may also be used to mobilize associations, display attitudes, or indicate “types” of persons or items. Some examples are “virtual”; they exemplify what could happen, or what never happened.

In Philip’s description above, two examples of successful collaboration can be deduced. The first is collaboration in the relationship between the coordinator, social worker, and family. The social worker above received “support” from the coordinator, Tobias, who was also in contact with the “family”. The second example of successful collaboration can be seen in the relationship between the coordinator, institutional staff, and family: Tobias also helps the institutional staff and gets invited to a barbeque with institutional staff and family.

In both examples of successful collaboration, there is a missing key player that should have a starring role – the juvenile. The entire concept of the so-called juvenile care services exists for these actors and I find it interesting that young people do not appear more often in the described examples of successful collaboration. As mentioned previously, cooperation between the various categories of professions seems to be facilitated if there is a personal relationship between the involved actors. In the report by Author (2012), a social worker creates a personal relationship between several coordinators using the phone, “many meetings”, and car sharing, all of which appear to facilitate cooperation. Similar can be said about Philip’s description, in which his institution has invited the coordinator Tobias to a barbecue. When successful collaboration is reproduced by persons in authority, sometimes the importance of actors acts as a signal to accept each other; this phenomenon can be personal in appearance. Hjortsjö (2006: 189-196) says that boundaries between professions can be broken down when there are tasks that everyone can perform, regardless of profession. Grilling, car sharing, or talking on the phone are tasks that most can carry out. The personal interactive aspect of collaboration is constructed as important by some officials, and that aspect appears to be important for producing and reproducing the interaction between organizational identities. The production of inter-organizational collaboration identities is a dynamic process. Conflicts are common in interpersonal interactions (Simmel 1908/1955), and triad consensus often results in the exclusion of one or more parties (Simmel 1950/1964: 122-125, 174-177). If collaboration between social workers and institutional staff is poor, the social worker may experience triad coherence in the relationship between the coordinator, institutional staff, and family as an association united against the social worker, which can negatively affect the collaboration.

### **Concluding remarks**

Previous research on collaboration shows that conflicts between authorities and organizations that are expected to collaborate and include cooperating actors are common. In this study, I have analyzed the dimension that contribute to the phenomenon of successful collaboration. The overall aim of the study is based partly on published literature regarding collaboration, and partly on my own materials that describe examples of successful cooperation in Swedish youth care.

Based on my empirical material, I have described how and when the actors in youth services produce a successful collaboration. To achieve this end, I analyzed the discursive patterns that are involved in the construction of the phenomenon of successful cooperation.

A shared vision appears to be important for successful collaboration. This aspect is usually reproduced as morally accepted by the professional actors. The personal interactive aspect of collaboration between actors in youth care services (e.g., phone calls, “many meetings”, car sharing, and barbecues) also appears to be important, particularly for producing and reproducing joint collaboration identities (Lotia and Hardy 2008: 366-389; Hornby and Atkins 2000/1993). The production of joint collaboration identities and triad coherence in analytical triads often result in the exclusion of key actors in youth care, such as young people and parents.

Successful cooperation seems to depend on actors’ social and moral production, for which rhetoric is widely used. In the empirical material, the actors tended to portray themselves as competent and suggest that the consistency of the triad maintained a certain normative and moral order in the situation. Inter-organizational collaboration identities are created and re-created alongside the professional’s work identity. It seems that the professionals’ work-related identities are constructed and reconstructed both through interactions with others and through distinction over the other – by exclusion of parties outside the triad. In other words, aside from juveniles and parents, other actors in the human service organization are at risk of dropping out of successful collaborations.

Construction and reconstruction of successful identities for collaboration is an ongoing, narrative process. Success points of interest and the right morality, created and recreated during interactions, emerge from the myriad of everyday interactions.

An interesting question raised during the conduct of this work is who is responsible for creating a successful collaboration. In a situation in which there are expectations that the actors A, B, and C shall cooperate and achieve a beneficial goal for a client, there must be one or more responsible parties. Is there a single actor who shall be accountable to ensure that all actors are satisfied and that the end result of the situation is beneficial for the client? Are there more actors (or even all involved in the situation) that should share the responsibility? Different scenarios appear to require different strategies. Finally, tailored strategies are required to cope with professionals’ territorialism, which does not necessarily promote the production of collaborative identities.

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