A Discussion of:

How To Work With Other Without Losing Your Friends or Your Mind

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HOW TO WORK WITH OTHERS WITHOUT LOSING YOUR FRIENDS OR YOUR MIND

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PART I: Challenges of collaboration

PART II: The biggest mistakes collaborators make

PART III: How to collaborate without losing your friends or your mind

PART IV: Post-workshop resources
Today’s Facilitator: David Cook-Martín, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Sociology at Grinnell College and director of its Center for International Studies. His work as a political sociologist focuses on understanding migration, race, ethnicity, law, and citizenship in an international field of power. He is author of *The Scramble for Citizens: Dual Nationality and State Competition for Immigrants* (Stanford University Press 2013), and co-author with David FitzGerald of *Culling the Masses: The Democratic Origins of Racist Immigration Policy in the Americas* (Harvard University Press 2014). He has published articles and chapters on transnational religious networks, ethnic return migration, and Latin American migrations to Europe, and is a member of the Scholar’s Strategy Network. David has collaborated with colleagues on research grants and writing projects at each stage of his career, learning a thing or two about what makes for good collaboration and what does not. He has also learned a great deal about collaboration from participants in the Faculty Success Program.
noun

1 the action of working with someone to produce or create something: *he wrote on art and architecture in collaboration with John Betjeman.*

• something produced or created by collaboration: *his recent opera was a collaboration with Lessing.*

2 traitorous cooperation with an enemy: *he faces charges of collaboration.*

- *Oxford Dictionaries*
Why collaborate?

The lightning spark of thought generated in the solitary mind awakens its likeness in another mind.
—Thomas Carlyle
A knotty puzzle may hold a scientist up for a century, when it may be that a colleague has the solution already and is not even aware of the puzzle that it might solve.

— Isaac Asimov, *The Robots of Dawn*
PART I:
CHALLENGES OF COLLABORATION
Collaborations only work under specific circumstances

Co-laboring has the qualities of other social activities & relationships

Corollary: subject to the same categorical inequalities

Logistics

Disciplinary norms for or against collaboration
PART II:
BIGGEST MISTAKES
COMMON MISTAKES

✓ “Hangover” collaborations: you just wake up in them
✓ Not specifying roles, expectations & outcomes
✓ Magical thinking
✓ No plan, no work flow
✓ “Head in sand” when collaborations aren’t working
✓ Limiting belief: nothing can be done about bad collaborations
Emotional anguish & misery

Mediocre work

Loss of relationships

Decreased productivity

All of this can lead to...
Questions & Discussion
PART III:

How to collaborate without losing your friends or your mind
Friendly and sane collaboration

1) Know how collaboration contributes to your creative process
2) Have a detailed plan which specifies roles & responsibilities
3) Understand that collaboration is like any relationship: power differentials and trust issues
4) Feed the relationship, foster complementarity
1. When is collaboration effective?

- When it builds on the strengths of each participant
- When it involves a small number of principal collaborators
- When the process alternates solitude and uncensored interaction
  - Avoids groupthink
Few things in life are less efficient than a group of people trying to write a sentence. The advantage of this method is that you end up with something for which you will not be personally blamed.

-Scott Adams, creator of Dilbert
Elements of Creative Collaborations
(Susan Cain, Quiet)

- Space for solitude
- Minimize mutual interruptions
- Keep groups small, preferably 2 (except online brainstorming)
- Consider virtual rather than face to face collaborations
Collaborations that work...

...professors who work together electronically, from different physical locations, tend to produce better research that is more influential than those either working alone or collaborating face-to-face.

-Susan Cain, *Quiet*, p. 89
2. Plans, roles, and responsibilities

- Have a clear plan with S.M.A.R.T. goals
- Distribute responsibilities
- Specify who will take the overall lead
- Talk about outcomes, authorship, and credit
- Assume conflict and build in a mechanism for resolving conflicts in a healthy way
  - See FSP tele-workshop, How to Engage in Healthy Conflict
3. Power, trust, and conflict

- Most human relations are asymmetric
- The more unequal the relationship, the more important trust & clarity in roles and expectations
- Don’t ignore the inequities, recognize and make them explicit
- Learn to manage conflict
- “Politeness is the poison of collaboration” (Land)
4. Feed the relationship, foster complimentarity

- Know yourself and your collaborator(s)
- What do you each bring to the table?
- What do you each need/want?
- What will make each of you happy?
- If you want your collaboration to endure, build on what you’ve done, but mix it up.
People enter collaborations for reasons different from those that keep them in these relationships.

- People start collaborations due to proximity and common interests.
- People stay in collaborations because of inertia.

Collaborations last when they foster complimentarity, add skills, and alternate roles.
Three collaborative scenarios

1. Starting a collaboration
2. Ongoing, effective collaborations
3. Collaborations gone bad
1. If you are thinking of a collaboration

- What do you want out of it?
- What do you each bring to the table?
- What is the power differential?
- What are potential points of competition and complimentarity?
- How will you manage conflict?
- Develop a checklist like this and discuss with partner
2. If you are in an effective collaboration

- What is working?
- How can you nurture continued success?
- How can you give each other space to be your best selves?
- What isn’t working and how can you fix it?
- How will you know when/if it’s time to part ways?
3. If your collaboration isn’t working

- Diagnose the problem
- Communicate!!!
- Pursue 1 of 3 options:
  - Redefine and rework the collaboration
  - Cut your losses and stay under new conditions
  - Plan an exit
- In all cases, you will encounter conflict
- Engage conflict in a healthy way
The key to successful collaborations

Go into a partnership with eyes wide open, nurture the relationship, take risks, and enjoy the ride!
Questions & Discussion
PART IV:
POST-WORKSHOP RESOURCES
Resources

- The Secret to Happy Collaborations, Daniel McFarland
- Quiet, Susan Cain, Broadway Books
- The Powers of Two, Joshua Wolf Shenk, forthcoming
- The Power of Two (on Paul McCartney and John Lennon), Joshua Wolf Shenk
- The Atlantic, August 2014, Creativity and Collaboration issue
- How to engage in health conflict, FSP Teleworkshop, Kerry Ann Rockquemore