COLLABORATION AMONG HIGHLY AUTONOMOUS PROFESSIONALS: COSTS, BENEFITS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – *This chapter examines collaboration among highly autonomous, powerful, professional peers to explain why the benefits of teamwork that scholars typically find in traditional teams may not apply. The chapter analyzes the perspectives of individual professionals to show that, in this setting, collaboration is often seen as more costly than rewarding for the individuals involved. It presents a conceptual framework exploring this paradox and suggests directions for future research to elaborate an underlying theory.*

Methodology/approach – *The chapter draws on extensive qualitative data from surveys and interviews in three professional service firms, including a top 100 global law firm, a boutique executive search firm, and a large, US-based commercial advisory firm. Findings are married*

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integrated with organizational theory to develop testable propositions for future research.

Findings – *Because senior professionals collaborate with peers who have the autonomy to choose to work collectively or independently, power and authority are not means to create a team or make it effective. Findings show how professionals interpret the relative costs and benefits of collaboration, and suggest that in most cases, senior professionals will not attempt it or give it up before collaborations can reap important benefits. Thus, short-term costs prevent opportunities to experience longer term benefits for many professionals. Yet, some professionals have figured out how to use "instrumental collaboration" to shift the balance in their favor. The chapter's conceptual framework uses a longitudinal perspective to resolve this seeming paradox.*

Research implications – *The chapter presents a nascent theory of instrumental collaboration, including five testable hypotheses, an emergent conceptual framework, and suggestions for specific future research directions.*

Keywords: Peer collaboration; autonomous professionals; teamwork costs and benefits; senior professionals; instrumental collaboration

The greatest asset in any knowledge-based organization is the expertise of its professionals. In recent decades, professionals across nearly every knowledge domain have focused on specialization in order to keep current with the rapidly changing knowledge. As Hazard (1997, p. 387) wrote, "In all professional fields, research and practical experimentation yield new knowledge and new methodologies by the minute … there are limits to the depth of knowledge and skill that can be achieved by anyone, except an occasional Renaissance Man, so that we all must specialize to stay abreast."

Concurrent to this trend of specialization, several forces are also creating a demand for the integration of experts' deep knowledge across various boundaries. First, the growing complexity of issues demands that experts collaborate with others who each have the complementary specialization to handle multi-disciplinary, sophisticated issues. These trends are intensifying in fields ranging from medicine (Gardner, Bedzra, & Elnahal, 2011) and Big Science (Esparza & Yamada, 2007) to law (Hia, 2002) and social science (Wuchty, Jones, & Uzzi, 2007). Further, the continuing globalization of business means that the clients and customers are demanding seamless, multinational service from their suppliers, which needs professionals to collaborate with colleagues across geographic boundaries. Finally, knowledge-based services are at a continual risk of commoditization (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2001); to avoid this trap, professionals must work collaboratively to generate, integrate, and diffuse market-valued knowledge that arises from the novel combinations of cross-discipline expertise (Adler, Kwon, & Heckscher, 2008).

Prior research has shown that collaboration promotes collective outcomes (Edmondson, 2012; Gardner, 2012a; Hansen, 2009; Silversin & Kornacki, 2000). More or better collaboration produces broad performance benefits for teams, units, and organizations including satisfied customers and better quality deliverables (Gardner, Gino, & Staats, 2012; Haas & Hansen, 2005; Hackman, 2002; Vinokur-Kaplan, 1995). For individuals, researchers have uncovered myriad benefits of "teaming" (Edmondson, 2012) such as making work more interesting, enriching, and meaningful. The decision of whether or not to collaborate seems, then, to be obviously yes.

In reality, however, the choice is far more complicated and nuanced for many individuals. This chapter examines collaboration among highly autonomous, powerful peers in the setting of professional service firms (PSFs). PSFs are an ideal setting for exploring professionals' choices to collaborate because PSFs embody the competing trends of specialization and integration highlighted previously. Professionals are hired, rewarded, and promoted for their specialized expertise (Galanter & Palay, 1991; Von Nordenflycht, 2010), but increasingly face a performance imperative to integrate their expertise across disciplines (Leicht & Fennell, 1997). As this chapter will show, a professional's decision to collaborate with powerful, high-autonomy peers is significantly less straightforward than teams researchers have acknowledged so far.

The chapter proceeds as follows: First, we define the nature of professional collaboration and distinguish it from more traditional types of teamwork. Then the chapter draws on literature from the sociology of professions and from organizational behavior to explore the perceived outcomes of collaboration from an individual professional's point of view. It reports findings from surveys and interviews in three PSFs showing that most professionals see the costs of collaboration as outweighing its benefits. Even for those who value the camaraderie of collaboration, the performance pressure of their professional settings often leads them to take decisions that prioritize short term, more certain gains over long term more speculative returns from interdependent work. Yet, we find, a small minority of professionals seem to have shifted this balance such that collaboration is highly advantageous for them personally. The majority, while observing these strong collaborators, tend to see collaboration as somewhat mysterious rather than as a potential strategy for them to achieve professional success. The next part of this chapter builds on these findings to present theoretically grounded propositions exploring the association between collaboration and its long-term benefits.

Then we draw together the prior findings to derive a conceptual framework explaining the relative costs and benefits from the perspective of individual professionals who are considering whether to move from more individualistic to more collaborative working. It shows that, despite the many benefits of teaming identified by scholars, individuals in this setting are often actually correct that collaboration's costs initially outweigh its benefits – at least in the short term. Because the reputational benefits accrue slowly and are somewhat uncertain, many professionals tend to give up before they reach the point where the benefits outweigh the costs. Their tendency to return to their more individualistic ways of working creates a feedback loop that reinforces the negative perceptions about collaboration's costs and risks. The framework thus helps to resolve the tension between what scholars have found about collaboration's benefits versus what professionals experience when they attempt to collaborate with high-autonomy, powerful peers. The only people who reap significant rewards from collaboration are those professionals who make the longer term investment in collaboration; for the majority of professionals, those rewards fail to materialize.

The chapter concludes with a set of proposed research directions for reaching a deeper understanding of the increasingly important issue of collaboration between highly autonomous, powerful peers in knowledge-based environments.

DEFINING COLLABORATION AMONG PROFESSIONAL PEERS

The term collaboration has been used to refer to many different ways that people interact to work together. For the purposes of this chapter, we adopt the definition of collaboration developed by Bedwell et al. (2012). Collaboration is "an evolving process whereby two or more social entities actively and reciprocally engage in joint activities aimed at achieving at least one shared goal" (Bedwell et al., 2012, p. 130). This definition draws distinction between other ways of interdependent working, like sequential or reciprocal interdependence (Van De Ven, Delbecq, & Koenig, 1976), or delegation or work through hierarchy (Adler & Borys, 1996). This chapter focuses on the evolving process whereby two or more powerful, high-autonomy peers actively and reciprocally engage in joint activities aimed at serving their clients. In a typical professional firm, these powerful peers would include partners, senior-level content experts, and executives such as the Chief Financial, Technology, or Marketing Officer.

Collaboration Contrasted with Traditional Project Teamwork

Project teams are the primary way that client work gets accomplished in PSFs (Morris, Gardner, & Anand, 2012), and research on teamwork in this context has typically focused on this sort of traditional team (Gardner, 2012a; Gardner et al., 2012; Haas & Hansen, 2005; Huckman, Staats, & Upton, 2009).

Traditional project teams in PSFs typically have both clear boundaries and a clear hierarchy. First, project teams' boundaries are typically delineated in terms of their membership, time, and responsibility. That is, a defined group of teammates work together for a set period of time to achieve a certain goal or carry out a specific task (Sydow, Lindkvist, & DeFillippi, 2004). When the assignment is complete, classic project teams disband before each member is allocated to another project (Edmondson & Nembhard, 2009). Second, project teams typically have a hierarchical structure, including a formal leader and junior members whose roles generally align with their organizational tenure. In professional firms, team members are usually either selected by the partners in charge or assigned by a firm's staffing director in an attempt to match each member's knowledge and skills with the requirements of the project, given availability constraints.

Both these structural features of project teams – the boundaries and the hierarchy – are becoming more fluid in contemporary professional firms, in line with trends in the broader environment (for general reviews, see Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, & Cohen, 2012; Wageman, Gardner, & Mortensen, 2012). For example, professionals increasingly work on multiple projects simultaneously (Cummings & Haas, 2012;

O'Leary, Mortensen, & Woolley, 2011), and these overlapping memberships blur the boundaries of each team. Further, as career mobility has heightened (Leicht & Fennell, 1997) and changes in project requirements happen more rapidly, teams often experience membership changes because of staff turnover or transfers (Huckman et al., 2009), and these shifts make team boundaries even more porous. In addition, advances in communication technology that allow teams with geographically distributed members to work together more efficiently have given rise to more "virtual" teams (McDonough, Kahn, & Barczak, 2001). Finally, professional work that would historically have been conducted by a single team in one firm is increasingly broken into parts that are each done by specialized providers who can perform them better or more cost-effectively (Sako, 2015). In sum, research shows that multi-team membership, frequent compositional changes, geographic distribution, and disaggregation are aspects of teamwork in contemporary professional firms that make boundaries less clear and less stable than in traditional project teams.

All four of these factors are likely to be magnified when senior professionals such as partners or senior-level content experts work together, which is the focus of this chapter. For example, partners often collaborate to develop new business opportunities, and such efforts often stretch over time and across clients; meanwhile each partner needs to devote time to serving his or her existing clients. Multi-team membership is therefore likely to be the norm for most senior-level collaborations. The composition of senior teams will typically change repeatedly because most partners will be involved only in the parts of the initiative that directly relate to their area of expertise. Furthermore, client service teams comprise professionals from various disciplines and departments across a firm who work together to develop a coordinated approach for handling the client's needs and to generate additional business through cross-selling others' specialty services. Overall, then, collaboration among senior professionals is likely to be considerably more dynamic and distributed, and the boundaries are less clear than in traditional project team structures.

Research also suggests that the power dynamics in senior-level collaborations will be far more complex than in traditional project teams. Unlike associates, who are typically staffed on a project team, participants in peer collaboration have a much greater degree of choice about getting involved in a given project (Galanter & Palay, 1991; Lazega, 2001). Senior professionals also work together more as equivalents. As Bedwell et al. (2012, p. 134) write in their definition of collaboration, "One party dictating and controlling another party [as in the case of a partner and his/her subordinate associates] cannot be considered collaboration as this type of interaction would be better defined as delegation of work … Although the engagement or participation from each party [in a collaboration] does not need to be equal, it is critical that all involved entities work interdependently and contribute sufficiently toward reaching their joint aims." Although partners may differ in social status (e.g., "rainmakers" have greater prestige than "service partners," see Maister, 1993), they often have similar formal authority (Empson and Langley, 2015). Lazega (2001, p. 5) sums up the political dynamics involved in collaboration between powerful, high-autonomy professional peers, who often use their social relations to gain control over valued resources such as knowledge and access: "… collegial is not a synonym for congenial and nice. Partners can manage their interdependencies in informal but truly Machiavellian ways."

Thus, in contrast to traditional project teams that typically have relatively clear hierarchy with a defined leader to facilitate smooth working, senior-level collaboration requires peers from different disciplines with different sub-cultures to establish task allocation, credit recognition, and decision-making norms. These working arrangements need to be continually renegotiated as people who lead one engagement may need to defer to their former followers on the next. Reordering the status hierarchy is often a difficult, politically charged act (Sutton & Hargadon, 1996). Further, integrating highly specialized expertise is not only cognitively complex (Dougherty, 1992), but can also generate competition and conflict when experts represent different organizational units (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967).

These differences challenge traditional conceptualizations of the benefits of teamwork. Research shows clear performance benefits of project-based teamwork such as higher client ratings (Gardner, 2012a; Gardner et al., 2012), more successful sales efforts (Haas & Hansen, 2005), and successful implementation of new processes and technologies (Edmondson, Bohmer, & Pisano, 2001; Tucker, Nembhard, & Edmondson, 2007). Yet, in all of these cases, the benefits tend to flow to the collective, such as the team, department, or medical ward, rather than the individual. Although we can imagine that a better team outcome ultimately rewards individual team members, this more diffuse outcome may be harder to prioritize in the professional firm setting that has such a strong emphasis on individual achievement. Especially when considering that collaboration is less bounded, it may be harder for individual contributors to feel assured that their efforts will be associated with team-level success.

Benefits of collaboration for individuals have been identified in various research traditions. The evolutionary psychology literature uses the emergence of hunting groups, for example, to suggest that groups are "an inevitable aspect of human evolution" (Van Vugt, & Schaller, 2008, p. 1) because they allow individuals to accomplish tasks they could not have done on their own. Further, research on both advice networks (e.g., Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001) and team diversity (e.g., Van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004) suggest that collaboration gives individuals access to resources, talent, and information that they may not have had on their own. Yet, we need to consider what happens when people have a viable, tested alternative to collaboration (i.e., individualistic work) that has been serving them well, and the autonomy to decide whether to pursue a new way of working that appears risky. In short, the context of professionals collaborating with high-power, high-autonomy peers should make us re-examine the applicability of some prior findings about the presumed benefits of teamwork.

Why Peer Collaboration Is Increasingly Important

Despite the challenges of collaboration in knowledge-based environments, the need for senior-level collaboration in PSFs is likely to grow increasingly important in the near future for three main reasons. First, as professionals have focused their own expertise on increasingly specialized areas (Hazard, 1997), their firms have created organizational structures with narrowly defined practice areas and have rewarded professionals for developing reputations in increasingly narrow, atomized professional niches (Ariens, 1993; Hia, 2002). The collective expertise in such firms has therefore become distributed across partners and between departments. Second, clients are facing increasingly complex, multinational issues (Palmisano, 2010) as they engage in an increasingly interconnected global economy. Their projects are too complex, uncertain, and nonroutine to be managed by a single, specialist expert. Clients demand seamless service across borders (Boussebaa and Morgan, 2015). Professionals must therefore collaborate with others throughout the firm and often around the world who have the complementary specialist expertise necessary to develop and serve clients. Third, with increased competition, firms must find exceptional ways to integrate and apply their diverse and distributed knowledge resources as a source of competitive advantage. Bringing together professionals with different types of expertise has the potential to develop outcomes that are customized to the specific needs of the client, thereby increasing satisfaction and loyalty (Adler et al., 2008; Gardner, 2012a; Maister, 1993) and to take on increasingly sophisticated client work, which in turn lets them charge higher prices (Gardner, 2013, 2015).

PROFESSIONALS' VIEWS OF COLLABORATING WITH HIGH-POWER PEERS

Although research has found that teamwork is associated with a number of benefits in general, a close analysis of an individual's perspective in contemporary PSFs suggests that researchers need to reconsider the applicability of prior findings in this particular context. Because they are in a strong bargaining position relative to their firms, senior professionals command tremendous latitude in how they carry out their work (Teece, 2003; von Nordenflycht, 2010). In sharp contrast to this individualistic orientation, however, professionals are now being driven by clients and competitive pressures to work collaboratively, as described above. The performance imperative for collaboration clashes head-on with a professional work ethos that remains highly specialized and focused on individual achievement. Professionals thus confront the dialectical position of needing to succeed as individuals while collaborating with peers. We propose that this dilemma warrants research attention to explain how highly autonomous knowledge workers understand this tension.

This section reports findings from a multi-method study inside three highly varied PSFs. Survey results tease out professionals' contrasting view of the advantages versus disadvantages of collaborating with highly autonomous, powerful peers in an environment increasingly characterized by commercial pressures. By integrating literature from the professions and from organizational behavior with context-specific findings, we develop a theoretically grounded account of the perceived outcomes of collaboration from an individual professional's point of view.

Research Approach

We conducted surveys and interviews in three PSFs that were selected to represent varying degrees on three dimensions: (1) size, in terms of numbers of partners, (2) geographic reach, and (3) degree to which the workforce is "professionalized," in the sense of having both explicit ethical codes and strongly developed internalized preferences that often stem from professional training (for a review, see Von Nordenflycht, 2010). The first is a top 100 global law firm in terms of its gross revenues, number of partners, and profitability (ALM, 2014); such firms are "classic PSFs" (Von Nordenflycht, 2010). The second is a boutique executive search firm with fewer than 50 partners in North America's highest value cities; this sector lacks a professional association that self-regulates, but this particular firm has a strong heritage of exhibiting responsibility to protect the interests of clients and/or society in general (i.e., conflicts of interest, Nanda, 2003). The third is a commercial advisory firm with hundreds of partners located in offices throughout the United States; it is the least professionalized of the three, but partners, nevertheless, espouse an ideology consistent with classic professional norms. Table 1 summarizes the details of the sample firms.

During a six-month period, we surveyed and interviewed partners in each firm. We focused on partners only, rather than including more junior professionals, because we were interested in professionals who have significant autonomy in deciding how and how much to work interdependently. After briefly defining professional collaboration, the survey asked several open-ended questions, and here we focus on the responses to two of them: (1) "What, if any, advantages or benefits have you personally received from collaborating with your peers on client-related projects?" and (2) "Now consider any impediments to collaboration in your daily work. What, if any, are the biggest barriers inhibiting you from doing more collaboration with your peers on client-related projects?" The first author coded the survey data into discrete categories that were coherent with prior theorizing, and these detailed codes were combined into higher level categories as reported in the findings sections below.[1] Responses that included multiple discrete ideas were divided into their components, with each labeled separately. To test its reliability, two additional coders classified all responses using our coding scheme. Their overall agreement was acceptable (Krippendorff's alpha >.8).

Table 1. Surveys and Interviews by Firm.

Firm	Firm Size (Partners)[a]	Survey Response Rate	Partner Interviews
Law	>100	39%	16
Executive search	<50	52%	13
Consulting	>300	64%	10
Summary	*Varied*	*Mean = 58%*	*29*

[a]For confidentiality, only general size ranges can be given.

Within each firm we then used purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) to identify interviewees who would help up to balance our sample on several theory-driven dimensions such as organizational tenure, geography, career track, and professional specialization (Gardner, 2012a; Hitt, Bierman, Shimizu, & Kochhar, 2001; Von Nordenflycht, 2010). We began each interview by defining collaboration (many people recalled the definition from the survey), and stated that our purpose was to understand more about the benefits and barriers in their firm as they personally had experienced them. We used probing techniques to ask interviewees to clarify their responses, especially to distinguish their general beliefs about collaboration versus those they had personally encountered.

We also relied extensively on a technique known as informant feedback (Miles & Huberman, 1994) or member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We confirmed our understanding of key concepts, both during interviews and sometimes in follow-up phone calls or emails. In addition, we tested our emerging interpretations by presenting and discussing summaries of our coding and analysis with larger groups of professionals during follow-up workshops. Table 2 summarizes these formal verification events. During the workshops, we presented our findings and encouraged participants to challenge their accuracy, validity, and completeness.

Reported Advantages of Professional Peer Collaboration

Knowledge and Learning

In the survey responses, the most frequently mentioned benefit of collaboration (34 percent of responses) related to participants' ability to learn from their peers during collaborative work. Respondents reported gaining "Knowledge about what other parts of the Firm are up to, as well as

Table 2. Formal Verification Events to Interpret Findings.

Location	Number of Attendees	Professions Represented	Participants' Countries of Work
London	125	Law	8
Boston	65	Accounting, asset management, consulting, engineering design, healthcare, law	16
Chicago	40	Accounting	1
Naples, FL	<50	Executive search	2

market opportunities," "A broader understanding of what our client's business is, and which individuals to target for a particular business proposition," and "Learning more about nuances of other colleagues' business lines." These sorts of information benefits of wider collaboration echo findings in the networks literature (Cross & Cummings, 2004). Beyond knowledge, some responses are related to developing capabilities through collaboration, such as enhanced skills in problem solving, preparing for client pitches, and communication.

In interviews, however, partners were more circumspect about the learning benefits of collaboration. They recognized that cross-discipline collaboration would help them learn about complex issues outside their specialization, but worried whether there would be enough demand for repeat work using that specific knowledge to warrant the investment in learning it. Across firms, only the most senior and highest earning partners (i.e., rainmakers) suggested that learning the process of cross-discipline work, rather than the content itself, was important enough to justify the effort.

Client Outcomes

In survey responses, the second most frequently mentioned benefit of collaboration (29 percent) related to improved client outcomes are as follows: winning new clients, increased work from existing clients, referrals by clients for additional work, tangible client outcomes like successful verdicts or favorable press mentions related to the work, or positive client feedback. Representative responses included, "Led to client being satisfied," "Higher level of service provided," "Teams 'win' more business than individuals," and "It has allowed me to win business from a broader pool of contacts." This set of responses differed from all the other categories in the survey data in terms of their concentration with a smaller group of respondents; whereas other data were typically widely distributed across respondents (i.e., each idea a person contributed fell into a sub-category that rolled up into different higher level codes), individuals who reported client outcomes often contributed multiple sub-categories that were related to this higher level code. That is, the same individual would report that collaboration benefitted him/her by helping to win new business, providing better service to existing clients, and helping clients obtain tangible advantages. The answers for the majority of respondents did not include items related to client outcomes.

In interviews, we explored this dynamic further. We found that for complex client issues, professionals generally acknowledged that collaboration would produce a better result for reasons outlined above: multiple experts' inputs were required to solve the problem because it crossed boundaries where professionals had specialized knowledge, such as disciplines (e.g., litigation and tax), sectors (e.g., consumer products and high tech), or geographies. Whether interviewees had had this experience personally, or had heard about colleagues' experiences, they believed that working together could produce a better outcome (e.g., more satisfied clients, higher success rate in business development efforts) than any of them could individually. We also found, however, that only a small segment of partners appeared to be reaping rewards themselves. For the remaining interviewees, the advantages of collaboration they articulated were often somewhat uncertain and long term. For example, partners acknowledged the relational benefits of "keeping clients happy" by bringing in requested additional resources, but they were generally unclear if these actions translated into tangible outcomes such as additional work for them.

Relationships with Colleagues

Seventeen percent of survey responses fell into the category which captured sub-codes for meeting new colleagues or deepening existing relationships. For example, respondents wrote "Benefit of meeting interesting people and hearing their stories" and "Camaraderie that comes with working as a group." Interviewees also mentioned that they valued the opportunity to work with peers, even on virtual teams. As one suggested, "Being a partner can feel quite lonely sometimes."

Intrinsic Motivation

The final category of collaboration benefits constituted 15 percent of survey responses and related to the psychological benefits of collaboration. Some of them confirm prior research suggesting individual effects of collaboration such as making work more interesting, enriching, and meaningful (for a review, see Edmondson, 2012). One wrote that by "working together as a team your sense of pride and accomplishment is much higher," and another answered, "I'm more engaged as part of a team." In surveys and interviews, many partners referred to recognition from colleagues and clients.

Reported Barriers to Professional Peer Collaboration

Threat to Personal Success

Twenty-six percent of responses related to partners' beliefs that collaborative work undermined their individual success because they received less credit (financial or intangible) from collective than individual work. As one survey respondent wrote, "Our 'entreprenurial' culture favors successful individual/silo practices. As a result, for many attorneys, unless they can realize a high individual/personal return on investment for devoting time to collaborative efforts that may not personally benefit them as much as time spent in other endeavors, they simply won't make the effort. And, when some attorneys do collaborate, there oftentimes is a reluctance to share credit or recognize everyone's contributions – which, in turn, serves as a further disincentive to collaboration." Literature about the professions supports the idea that professionals are hired, rewarded, and promoted for their individual achievement and specialized expertise (Galanter & Palay, 1991). Professional firms tend to celebrate individual achievement through their "star cultures" (Groysberg, 2010; Lorsch & Tierney, 2003), wherein professionals operate as "chieftans" in territories defined by their particular expertise (Maister & Walker, 2006). Many respondents specifically mentioned the need to get credit for their work, which they noted was harder in collaborative than individual efforts – sometimes because their contributions were harder to identify in a group effort, and other times because of deliberate actions, such as "Others taking credit for my contribution." Relatedly, numerous comments suggested that their colleagues would "hoard" work in order to get more individual glory. Representative remarks included "They are only collaborating for personal gain" and "sticky fingers (people who selfishly control work flow to their benefit and not to the benefit of the firm or clients)."

Insufficient Knowledge of Others' Expertise

Twenty-one percent of responses suggested that partners' lack of understanding of others' knowledge and experience represented a significant barrier to collaboration. For example, one partner wrote, "Knowledge of lawyers outside our practice area with regard to their (1) clients and (2) unique skill sets/qualifications." In interviews, partners suggested that this deficiency affected collaboration in two ways. First, professionals without a broad understanding of colleagues' expertise were reluctant to seek cross-discipline work in their own clients, not knowing whether any colleagues could help them. Second, even if they were aware that the capabilities existed somewhere in their firm, they thought that locating the right expert who was interested and available for collaborating was overly time consuming and prevented them from initiating collaborative work.

Trust – Cognitive and Relational

The concerns that senior professionals expressed about working with their peers map closely to two kinds of interpersonal trust that researchers have found to be essential underpinnings of cooperation in organizations: cognition- and affect-based trust (McAllister, 1995). Together, trust issues constituted 19 percent of survey responses. A commonly expressed fear was that collaboration could risk introducing an incompetent partner to a client. For example, respondents noted a "lack of trust/confidence in value and quality of work outside of your own," "partners [are] concerned that their clients may have a bad experience with [my colleagues]," "If you refer business and it does not work you can jeopardize an important client relationship," and "Possibility of appearing LESS qualified or capable if colleague/collaborator is under-prepared or weak." Beyond the possibility that colleagues they introduced might make a technical error, partners worried about others' standards. For example, one wrote, "Trust that your partners will care about your clients the same way that you do and make sure that they are well taken care of and given the highest level of service."

In addition to worrying about collaborators' competence and professionalism, partners also expressed concern about their peers' intentions or character. People worried whether they could confidently introduce peer partners to their clients for fear that the newcomer might encroach on the original partner's relationship. For instance, one wrote about the need to "defend my territory [against] partners who try to plant their flag" at his/her client. Similarly, interviewees noted that their peers were switching firms more than ever before and increased interfirm mobility presented opportunities for collaborators to take clients with them during a switch.

Inefficiency and Messiness of Collaboration

This category represented 16 percent of survey responses. Some focused on the contrast between working alone versus on a team, such as "Time – choosing to work on own as a quicker alternative," and "The involvement of too many people can sometimes result in duplication and lack of decision making." Other responses echoed findings in the organizational behavior literature that highlight the challenges of integrating diverse expertise (e.g., Dougherty, 1992): "Dealing with different styles and approaches to executing business."

Beyond mere coordination costs, many survey respondents and interviewees described the arduous, time-consuming process of trying to lead peers who were unaccustomed to following others. They noted that few professionals truly work alone, but coordinating with peers across departments is significantly harder than delegating to junior staff in their own department whose skills were similar but inferior to their own, and whose advancement depends on pleasing the partner. Some wrote of a "disconnect on expectations" and the "Fear of bothering/getting shut down – some people are not very approachable and everyone is busy so the environment is not always conducive to collaborating."

Lack of Capabilities and Confidence

Finally, the last major theme in survey responses, representing 9 percent, was related to partners' lack of collaborative capabilities and confidence as a barrier to more interdependent work. Some bluntly wrote, "I don't know how to approach client issues where I'm not the clear expert," or "I won't venture conversations outside my core knowledge, which is what it takes to collaborate." Others wrote that they required "better knowledge of client needs and what it would take to address them." Some focused on their lack of teamwork or leadership skills and highlighted how little formal training they had in those areas.

Effects of Performance Pressure

The predominant theme that emerged in our interviews is that senior-level professionals are facing significant stress associated with the changing priorities in their firms. Beyond the survey data wherein respondents reported concrete behaviors and outcomes, many interviewees focused on the psychological effects of the increased use of financially driven performance metrics and other bureaucratic controls in their firms. Specifically, many interviewees mentioned that they were under intense pressure to perform exceedingly well or otherwise face severe consequence, which increased their anxiety and sense of insecurity. Through our analysis, we found that this heightened sense of performance pressure (Gardner, 2012a) tended to make the risks of collaboration appear even greater. The more pressured the professional, the more they worried about maintaining control over their client work, which in turn made the risks of collaboration more salient. Prior research shows that team interactions tend to be less effective under heightened performance pressure (Gardner, 2012b), and the strained interpersonal interactions may have reinforced professionals' sense that collaboration was particularly time-consuming and ineffective. Overall, the effects of performance pressure tended to amplify the perceived costs and risks of collaborating with high-power peers. Even for those who valued the camaraderie of collaboration, the performance pressure of their professional settings often led them to take decisions that prioritized short term, more certain gains over long term more speculative returns from collaborative work.

Myths to Explain Extraordinary Outcomes

After unearthing each interviewee's specific examples of collaboration's positive and negative outcomes, we sought to understand how they made sense of the discrepancy between known advantages of collaboration versus all the downsides. For the majority of interviewees, collaboration was mysterious. They couldn't understand how "mere mortals like me" (the words of one interviewee) could achieve such greatness. Indeed, from the explanations offered by interviewees, we surmised three sorts of myths that were widely used to explain the extraordinary collaborators. First, the *Hero Myth* chalks up collaborative success to the self-made rainmaker's characteristics like inimitable charm and charisma, peerless intelligence, and superhuman stamina. Second, the *Midas Myth* suggests that successful collaborators have been granted extraordinary gold-generating powers by the omnipotent gods. In the most common version of this myth, storytellers believed the rainmakers inherited an institutional client that continued to produce riches for them by demanding huge teams of lawyers to handle sophisticated issues.

Finally, the *Myth of Serendipity* explained collaboration in ways similar to the ancient tales of the princes of Serendip, in which these three mythical travelers constantly made unexpected and wonderful discoveries through sheer luck and happenstance as they progressed on their journey. In interviews, partners' tales suggested that an almost magical confluence of events, timing, clients, and market conditions allowed a rainmaker to begin serving clients with large teams of lawyers. Collaboration, they thought, couldn't be designed or deliberately pursued, but rather "happened" because of good fortune. As with myths in the classical sense, partners use these stories to articulate ambiguous situations and explain events which were otherwise difficult to understand – namely the way that some rainmakers benefitted extraordinarily from collaboration, while such rewards eluded the majority.

To recap this far, our survey data and initial qualitative findings reveal that professionals hold asymmetric beliefs about the costs versus rewards of collaboration: whereas they can readily understand how working interdependently involved more costs and risks than working alone, most are unclear whether, when and how exactly they would personally benefit from collaboration. Yet, a small group of professionals reported that they were enthusiastic about collaboration. We explore this dichotomy in the following section.

BENEFITTING FROM "INSTRUMENTAL COLLABORATION"

To investigate professionals' sharply contrasting views of collaboration, we returned to the field for additional interviews, using purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) to focus on individuals who frequently worked on collective projects. Given that the surveys had been anonymous, we could not simply interview professionals who had responded favorably about collaboration. Instead, we used each firm's project records to identify partners who had worked on a relatively very high number of collective projects. (For more on this research approach, see Gardner, 2015). This data-driven approach was preferable to identifying interviewees through others' recommendations, which would likely have been biased toward people who fit the characteristics of those in the myths. Because only the law and executive search firm had such archival data, we excluded the commercial advisory firm from these auxiliary interviews.

Our purpose in this second round of interviews was to explore professionals' perspective of collaboration's benefits. Given that they worked in the same environment as those who were skeptical about collaboration's benefits, we focused on understanding how they made sense of their context and on exploring how these interpretations affected their behaviors. Interviews typically lasted 30–45 minutes, and we did not reveal the reason we had selected them for to interview. We used primarily open-ended questions. We began by reminding interviewees of our research project examining the costs and benefits of working collectively versus individually to serve clients, and asked if they could help us understand their own specific approach and decisions in this regard; we avoided using the term "collaboration" out of caution that it might connote create demand bias, and instead we asked, "When serving clients how do you decide whether to do the work yourself or involve others?" Most offered an explanation of the disadvantages of collaboration as part of the above answer, but if not, we asked, "Are there any downsides to that approach?"

We first coded the data with reference to the themes that had emerged in the surveys and first-round interviews. Our second pass through the data refined the initial codes with suffixes to indicate whether statements supported (+), contradicted (−), or elaborated (&) prior themes. For example, the statement, "I'll only take seasoned lawyers along to pitch for work from a new client; it's too risky to bring an unknown entity" was coded as [*Trust − cognitive,* +] because it supported the idea that trusting others' competence was essential for collaboration. The same interviewee's follow-on statements explaining how he used recommendations from fellow partners to determine the level of unfamiliar colleagues' capabilities were coded [*Trust − cognitive, &*] because it elaborated how he developed cognitive trust in his colleagues. Overall, our analysis showed that these partners' readily acknowledged the potential risks and downsides of collaboration previously identified in our qualitative work, but that they had had found ways to mitigate the downside through strategic actions. In summary, what we found is that even for complex client work where professionals realized that collaboration would produce a better result, they, nevertheless, engaged "instrumental collaboration" that involved (1) a highly rational decision process to understand whether collaboration would produce sufficient personal rewards to warrant the risks and (2) strategies aimed at shifting the cost−benefit balance in their favor.

This section integrates those findings with existing theory and research to generate testable propositions about the potential benefits of collaboration among powerful, high-autonomy peers. By pointing to existing research streams that support and extend our qualitative findings, this section suggests concrete ways for scholars to develop a theory of "instrumental collaboration" to explain why some professionals are more likely than their peers to benefit from collaboration in this setting where the outcomes of traditional, project-based teamwork are unlikely to apply.

Developing a Personal Reputation with Teammates

Partners in our second batch of interviews reiterated one core findings from our survey: a significant barrier to collaboration was the lack of interpersonal trust among high-autonomy partners. When professionals consider collaborating with peers to serve their clients, they worry deeply about finding a colleague who is both competent and well intentioned. The new perspective that interviewees revealed is how highly successful professionals used collaboration in a calculated way both to enhance their own reputation and to develop a trusted cadre of colleagues. For example, one interviewee said, "When given the chance to work on a high-prestige client for a high-profile partner, I choose to over-invest in that project to display my professional skills at their best. It will certainly mean sacrificing somewhere else, usually giving up nights and weekends, but it's worth it to develop standing as a go-to guy."

On the flip side, when considering whom to invite onto one's own projects, interviewees talked about using lower risk projects with existing clients to "audition" unfamiliar partners. Experience working together on a project establishes faith in a coworker's integrity and competency, thereby helping to overcome many of the trust-related barriers identified in the survey. The more partners a professional works with, the more people who feel comfortable sending him or her work. One partner, Amir, explained, "I got to know the quality of Susan's work when we were both working a deal for Matthew's client. She impressed me with her sharp insights, so when my own client was facing some restructuring issues, she was the obvious one for me to ring up."

This strategy is consistent with existing research on reputation (e.g., Zinko, Ferris, Blass, & Laird, 2007), suggesting that the most effective way to establish a personal reputation as a trustworthy individual is through a direct experience. Previous collaborators thus know a professional's competence, character, and expertise from having worked on the same team with a professional (Schulte, Cohen, & Klein, 2012); when an opportunity arises to sponsor a collaborative project, previous collaborators are therefore likely to refer work to their known partners.

To advance theory in this area, it will be important for scholars to make a conceptual distinction between reputation and reciprocity. Whereas a reciprocity mechanism would become apparent through collaborators repeatedly sending each other work out of a sense of mutual obligation (Gouldner, 1960), the reputational effects of collaboration would be evident from *first-time referrals* from a colleague. In the example above, Amir got to know Susan when they worked on a joint project for another partner, Matt. Whereas afterward they may have felt obliged to return Matt's work referral because it was he who offered them the opportunity to work on his project, neither of them owed each other. That Amir later referred work to Susan thus stems from her heightened reputation with him, rather than dyadic reciprocity. In general, first-time referrals are likely to reflect reputation rather than a favor directly owed.

Proposition 1. Collaboration enhances a professional's reputation with her direct collaborators, such that the more partners a professional collaborates with, the more *first-time referrals* she will receive from *previous teammates* who had never before sent her work.

We note that it would be crucial to test this proposition, as with others in this chapter, using longitudinal data that allows for results (i.e., referrals) to emerge long after the initial collaboration takes place. As we discuss in the section "Conceptual Framework" below, after a colleague learns about a professional's reputation through direct experience or word-of-mouth recommendations, they can only refer work when a client opportunity arises that requires the professional's expertise, and these situations are unlikely to happen immediately.

Spreading a Professional Reputation throughout the Firm

Whereas survey results and initial interviews revealed that a significant barrier to collaboration was insufficient knowledge of their colleagues' expertise, second-round interviews with highly collaborative partners revealed strategies that successful players used to increase their personal benefits from collaboration while reducing costs. For example, they cultivated relationships with high-profile partners who brought them onto collaborative projects with prestigious clients, knowing that the higher the status of their network the more influence those people had on others' perceptions.

In this way, professionals who work collaboratively establish their reputation not only with previous teammates, as discussed in the lead-up to Proposition 1, but also with third parties who learn about them via word-of-mouth recommendations. Across all interviews, we found that when professionals have the opportunity to sponsor new work, they often asked for references from a trusted colleague – most frequently, another partner with whom they had previously worked. Professionals who collaborate with more partners will thus have their name and reputation known in more diverse and far-reaching circles.

This strategy relates to the broader network literature that recognizes that organizational actors are embedded in networks of interconnected social relationships that offer opportunities for and constraints on behavior (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004), including the possibility of spreading a focal actor's reputation depending on his degree of connections to others in the social network (Raub and Weesie, 1990). In our context, the more that professionals collaborate with colleagues on joint client work, the more their reputation is likely to spread to colleagues throughout the firm.

> **Proposition 2a.** Collaboration enhances a professional's reputation beyond her direct collaborators, such that the more partners a professional collaborates with, the more *first-time referrals* she will receive from *new collaborators*.

We also discovered in second-round interviews that professionals with successful records of collaborating were very careful about deciding whom to collaborate with. They recognized that high-status collaborators were likely to be able to spread their reputation further, faster, and more credibly than others in the firm. "Rainmakers" – partner who generate exceptional amounts of revenue based on their ability to develop and maintain client relationships – are especially of high status in PSFs (Maister, 1993). These kinds of high-status collaborators will likely have outsized influence within the firm, meaning that many people will seek and accept their advice. Collaborators of rainmakers may earn reputation by association such that their work is more broadly known and easily trusted, resulting in more work sent from strangers.

The focal professional (who collaborates with the high-status professional) is the "tertius gaudens" (the third who benefits), meaning they indirectly benefit from the ties between the high-status professional and his other partners (Burt, 1992, 2005).

> **Proposition 2b.** Collaboration with high-status collaborators leads to more first-time referrals sent from new collaborators.

Leveraging a Firm-wide Reputation for Financial Gain

As discussed above, we had uncovered a puzzle in our survey results and initial interviews: whereas the most frequently reported barrier to collaboration was professionals' perceived threat to their own individual success, we also found that a small minority of professionals respondents believed that collaboration enhanced outcomes with their clients in a way that was certain and direct. In our second round interviews with highly collaborative professionals, each interviewee was able to point to multiple, specific examples of ways that collaboration had unambiguously led to client success and ultimately to better financial outcomes. One partner, for example, drew a diagram that resembled a family tree, showing how teamwork on specific client project of one year had branched into subsequent projects, with the relationships spreading year on year to involve work on both existing and new clients. Another was able to pinpoint multiple, specific client opportunities that had arisen because she had developed linkages to other practice groups through initial contributing to their projects.

We can combine these findings with research on professional work to explain how collaboration can, over the time, benefit professionals' individual productivity because they receive more work from peers. Professionals tend to "own" their clients, meaning that they are responsible for finding them, providing current services, and retaining them for future work (Briscoe & Tsai, 2011). Professionals expend considerable resources selling work directly to clients, but as discussed above, they can also execute work that comes through referrals from other professionals. Sent work has low finding costs for the professional, which can improve their personal productivity and allow them to efficiently generate additional revenue (Kotler & Connor, 1977), which is one of the most important measures of a professional' performance (Maister, 1993).

Proposition 3a. Collaboration is associated with increased individual performance.

Proposition 3b. First-time referrals from (1) prior and (2) new collaborators mediate collaboration and performance.

Developing and Leveraging a Marketplace Reputation

As we found in our surveys and interviews, professionals are concerned that collaborating will not allow them to establish and signal their own specialized expertise to clients and therefore that they will be penalized in the market. Another set of barriers was related to their underdeveloped capabilities for teamwork and their lack of confidence in discussing and selling opportunities with clients that would require cross-practice collaboration. And despite the surveys finding that partners' biggest perceived benefit of collaboration was knowledge and learning, first-round interviews had revealed that many partners – especially when facing high performance pressure – we not certain that these outcomes of collaboration were important enough to pursue when they might otherwise spend their time on individual endeavors.

What we uncovered from second-round interviews is that highly collaborative partners could clearly articulate the knowledge-related benefits they got from collaboration: for them, learning *how to sell* and *what to sell* were important outcomes of collaboration. Apparently because they were clear about what they received, they also had a much longer time horizon for appreciating those kinds of benefits.

Learning "How to Sell"

Interviewees suggested that by collaborating across specialty areas, they developed the ability for identifying and delivering more sophisticated, higher value work for clients. Many discussed their incremental approach to developing capabilities to sell increasingly sophisticated work that required larger, cross-disciplinary teams. As one said, "Virtually nobody scores a major victory the first time they try to cross-sell a big project. It requires patience – starting small, then building up the client's trust in you and your team."

Another addressed the costs associated with collaboration: "It gets easier over time. Getting together the right [client service] team is never routine, but at least now I know who to turn to, what it'll take to entice them onto the pitch, how to work with them once we've landed the mandate. It now takes less investment, but the returns are higher." In other words, the experience of collaborating helped to mitigate one of the barriers that had surfaced in the surveys – the perceived inefficiency and messiness of collaboration. Once professionals develop a way to overcome coordination costs, they can deliver higher quality work more effectively to clients, thereby enhancing their reputation.

Learning "What to Sell"

The second-round interviewees were also clear that another knowledge-related benefit of collaboration helped them to learn the content of the work better, and they used specific strategies to make sure they were learning as much as possible from their experience. For example, they cultivated relationships with high-profile partners who brought them onto collaborative projects with prestigious clients, and then used that experience as a selling point to win more complex work with their own accounts.

An analysis of the professional marketplace helps to explain their hunch about the value of what they learned. That is, cross-specialty work is likely to be of high value for clients and less subject to price-based market competition. First, cross-specialty work is complex, making high-quality work both more difficult to achieve and also harder to judge (Von Nordenflycht, 2010). In contrast, within-specialty work is more subject to price-based market competition: because clients can more easily identify straightforward within-specialty tasks (e.g., a simple tax issue), they can treat such expertise as a commodity and select on and monitor the price for value. Cross-specialty work may be less subject to these pressures and professionals will be able to earn a higher market value for their cross-specialty work. Second, complex projects tend to be commissioned by high-level executives who have more responsibilities and also larger budgets with more authority on how to spend that money. As one partner in our study said, "If I'm doing work just in my specialty, then I'm almost certainly talking to clients with a narrow scope and more limited responsibility. Once I move into more sophisticated work, I move up toward the c-suite, and that's when conversations get interesting."

The more that professionals can become the "trusted advisor" (Maister, 1993) to their clients on complex matters, the more valuable they are to the clients. Thus, the more experience that a professional accumulates identifying, selling, and executing cross-specialty collaborative work, the higher the rate they will be able to charge in the client market. Relatedly, cross-specialty work is especially likely to yield strong financial performance because it is complex, valuable, and its quality is hard to judge. These properties mean clients will rely on reputational signals about who can reliably deliver complex work and will be willing to pay top dollar for the professional with the right reputation.

Proposition 4. Experience with cross-specialty collaboration increases a professional's market value.

Collectively, these propositions offer scholars a tractable way to begin examining some of the ways that collaboration might benefit individual, high-power, high-autonomy professionals.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

So far this chapter has suggested a fundamental disconnect between many professionals' (negative) perceptions of working collaboratively and the (positive) outcomes that might be expected from collaboration. We began by theorizing how peer collaboration among powerful, high-autonomy peers is more complex than project-based teamwork and may not obviously or directly connect to benefits traditionally found in prior research. We found strong support for this theorizing in the surveys and qualitative interviews with professionals. We countered these themes with additional theorizing which proposed that the popular wisdom from teams research and from professionals themselves actually misses the ways that collaboration would benefit individuals even in this setting where individual achievement is so highly valued. We drew from network theory, small groups research, and other management literatures to offer several propositions about how collaboration likely benefits individual professionals. Given the increasing market and client demands to collaborate more, as outlined above, why do rational professionals find it so difficult to see the potential benefits of collaboration?

One aspect of this paradox is that many professionals are simply not used to working in teams; their reluctance is not merely a question of motivation but also one of capabilities and confidence. Indeed, the vast majority of professionals in our sample had far more experience working in competitive, individual settings than working in teams, as heard in one interviewee's description of his career progression: "I've always won on my own: my [college] grades and LSAT [standardized test] scores got me into law school, my law school [grade] ranking got me hired here, my associate review score got me to partner. I haven't played on a team since high school lacrosse, why would I be a team player now?" This finding may come as a surprise to readers who are familiar with a standard business school curriculum that typically involves team-based project work and other team-building skills. But it is still quite rare to have such experiences offered in other types of professional schools like law, medicine, or architecture (e.g., Coates, Fried, & Spier, 2014). Professionals who are weighing the costs versus benefits of collaboration are therefore often in a position of needing to move from more individualistic to more collaborative working.

For such individuals, it is logical that the apparent costs and risks usually overshadow the perceived benefits. Given today's extreme competitive pressures and the increased use of financial metrics to measure individual performance, many partners are hard-pressed to spend time and energy on collaborative ventures that they could otherwise dedicate to building their own practice – even if they value the camaraderie of collaborative work. Furthermore, the tangible rewards of collaboration accrue slowly. For example, a professional reputation takes time to spread; even if someone learns about a professional's expertise through direct experience or word-of-mouth recommendations, they can only refer work to the collaborative individual when a relevant client arises, which is unlikely to happen immediately. Individuals in this setting are thus actually correct that collaboration's costs initially outweigh its benefits – at least in the short term. Fig. 1 depicts these relationships in a conceptual framework.

As professionals gain more experience with collaboration, however, the costs tend to fall because people discover how to coordinate efficiently, and the risks lessen as they develop a cadre of go-to collaborators whose competence and character they trust. At the same time, we propose the benefits do increase, albeit slowly: through collaboration, partners build a firm-wide reputation that attracts increasing amounts of work from other partners, earn a marketplace reputation for doing complex work that translates into higher rates, and learn enough about others' expertise that they can have more substantive cross-discipline conversations with clients that lead to more sophisticated, higher value work. Even under high performance pressure, professionals with significant collaborative experience will see collaboration as a logical choice because they understand that it is less risky and more rewarding than perceived by less seasoned professionals.

Eventually, if these trends continue through a professional's ongoing collaborative efforts, then the benefits will outweigh the costs. After this point, collaboration becomes a more logical choice for the professional who is weighing the instrumental, personal tradeoffs. What our qualitative

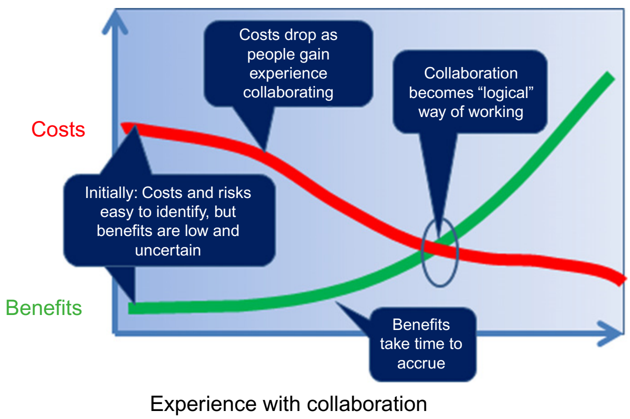

Fig. 1. Conceptual Model of Collaboration's Relative Costs and Benefits over Time.

study suggests, however, is that many professionals tend to give up before they reach the point where the investment pays off. We suggest that professionals' tendency to return to their more individualistic ways of working creates a feedback loop that reinforces the negative perceptions about collaboration's costs and risks. Professionals who give up, or see others giving up before reaping rewards, can justifiably claim that "collaboration wasn't worthwhile."

For those observed to be benefitting, it seems that professionals succumb to the fundamental attribution error: they explain others' collaborative behaviors and outcomes with undue emphasis on their internal characteristics, such as charisma, pedigree, etc. In contrast, the theory presented here suggests that "superstar collaborators" are the ones who tried collaboration and stuck with it long enough that they are now observed to be reaping outsize rewards. Admittedly, such individuals may have drawn on some personal characteristics – grit, charm, or even luck – to help them reach the point where the advantages offset the sacrifices. But our research suggests that a path exists for "mere mortals" (in the words of one of our respondents, quoted above) to get to the point where collaboration is a profitable way of working.

The conceptual framework presented here thus helps to resolve the tension between what scholars have found about collaboration's benefits versus what professionals experience when they attempt to collaborate with high-autonomy, powerful peers. The only people who reap significant rewards from collaboration are those professionals who make the longer term investment in collaboration; for the majority of professionals those rewards fail to materialize because they stop collaborating at the point where the costs still outweigh the benefits.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Collaboration is an increasingly prevalent and important way that professionals work. As noted above, the majority of research examining collaboration has focused on project teamwork. We argue that rigorous empirical research is needed to examine the inputs, enabling and constraining conditions, detailed processes, and individual- and collective-level outcomes of instrumental collaboration (see Bedwell et al., 2012 for a conceptual framework delineating these different aspects of collaboration).

As an example of studying *inputs*, small groups' research suggests that when entities differ in meaningful ways, it can often be difficult for them to work together effectively (for a review, see Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). In addition, teams' research shows that differences in terms of language, knowledge, and backgrounds can lead to a lack of common understanding (Cronin & Weingart, 2007). Given the strong trends toward increased professional specialization, covered above, research could investigate how partners' different areas of focus affect their ability to develop a shared approach and mutually agreeable goals for effective collaboration. Given the difficulties experts have in bridging across different bases of knowledge, research could also explore whether generalists (i.e., individuals whose knowledge bases span multiple domains) could play important roles in helping specialist professionals collaborate more effectively.

A significant opportunity also exists to study the *outputs* of professional, senior-level collaboration. This chapter has proposed ways that collaboration benefits individual performance outcomes such as revenue and hourly rates, and the survey and interview data suggest specific kinds of costs associated with collaboration. Hansen (2013) likewise takes into consideration not only a firm's financial benefits of collaboration but also the direct costs of collaboration (e.g., additional efforts to coordinate across units) and the opportunity costs (i.e., gains that could have been captured had the professionals used their efforts to improve solo work). Much scope remains, however, especially for longitudinal research design that captures effects that are likely to accrue only over the long term. Research tracing the long-term impact of collaboration on work referrals could answer questions about how reciprocity – both generalized and direct – plays out over time, how the trust-building effects of collaboration spread and whether they decay after a certain amount of time, how the costs of maintaining a collaborative tie relate to the long-term benefits, and so on.

Beyond the financial outcomes, however, collaboration is likely to have less tangible effects that are nonetheless important to consider. Lazega (2001), for example, examines collaboration as a means of negotiating power dynamics inside professional firms and argues that the exchange mechanism associated with collaboration "helps collegial organization to solve the problems of endless deliberation about norms and values, and thus about firm management policies regarding issues such as work intake and assignment, compensation, marketing and peer review. […] In effect, regulatory decisions are also made from within the organizational exchange system" (p. 15). Given that Lazega based his research on a mid-sized US domestic law firm in the early 1990s, additional exploration in contemporary firms could help us to understand how these effects change with firms' rapid growth where the effects of collaborative exchange might be diminished or unevenly distributed, or in merged firms where political coalitions might cross-cut the collaborative network to result in less efficient negotiation of firm-level issues.

In fields outside PSFs, collaboration has been linked to higher levels of innovation. For example, teams of academic researchers are becoming not only more prominent but also achieving greater impact than individual researchers (Wuchty et al., 2007). A similar finding applies to scientific research, where the sole "renaissance man" inventor is now inferior to a team of specialists collaborating on research initiatives (Gardner et al., 2012; Jones, 2009). Given that professionals have likewise become increasingly specialized in their domain of expertise, they will likely also produce greater innovation through collaboration (Cromwell & Gardner, 2015). Research focused on the innovative outcomes of collaboration could help to specify and quantify the magnitude of the effects, identify boundary conditions, and uncover more precise mechanisms that link a collaborative approach to specific kinds of innovation (e.g., novel delivery channels vs. creative solutions).

Naturally, these suggested directions are only a sample of the many ways that scholars could advance research in this area. This chapter has suggested that senior professionals are unique in important respects that make their decision to collaborate with peers being far more ambiguous than existing research on teamwork acknowledges. Although client demands might move them toward greater collaboration, they often believe that doing so has significant costs and risks. Because senior professionals are typically powerful in their organizations and value autonomy, they not only have the power to choose whether or not to collaborate, but the colleagues with whom they might work are also calculating the costs and benefits. Further theoretical development and empirical research is needed to help us understand professional collaboration among high-power, high-autonomy peers who must navigate these tensions.

NOTE

1. Readers are encouraged to contact the author for full details of the coding procedure; space constraints prevent further discussion in this chapter.

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