

Coactive ‘laddership’: Modelling collaborative and equitable partnerships

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On June 16th, 2016, we had our first webinar, “Practicing Collaborative and Equitable Partnerships and Leadership”, where the [Collaborative Leadership in Practice – Leadership collaborative en pratique \(CLiP-LCP\)](#) team discussed our experiences practicing collaborative and equitable partnerships. The diverse team included both core CLiP-LCP teammates and partners from across Ontario, including [Health Nexus](#), [Ontario Public Health Agency](#), [Lawrence Heights Inter-Organizational Network](#), [Middlesex London Health Unit](#) and [City for All Women Initiative](#).

Amidst this discussion it made me think about what can be possible if we strive for healthy collaboration. To realize this though, what does equity in collaborative practice really look like?

Across sectors equitable partnerships are an important function for the healthy flow of projects/organizations/institutions to achieve deliverables. Results from our poll even alluded to how important it is to communities and non-profit organizations, in particular, for creating and evaluating equitable partnerships (50% of webinar participants stated that this is the action area that is of most interest to them). Within partnerships we need to recognize who makes up this group/team/partnership and how fully involved all members can be when intersectional barriers (such as racism, ableism and heterosexism, to name a few) influence the power both within and between partnerships. In recognizing that all humans are saddled with lived and inherited experiences, varying social locations, and unique thoughts and desires that determine an individual’s ability to participate fully; how do we create alternative models to allow for the full participation of individuals and allow for equitable and inclusive partnership development?

‘Coaction’ came up in the literature review covered by one of the presenters, Roberta Timothy, as a concept that captures this vision of full participation. Coaction recognizes that every member in the group is a cooperative leader in the process. Recognizing this

can mitigate the structural dimensions that create barriers to participation. Coaction requires:

- that we resist oppression collaboratively,
- attend to the process and not simply outcomes, and
- deconstruct power structures to establish more egalitarian relationships.

By truly recognizing that barriers exist we can then [create better ways of collaboratively creating ladders to successful participation](#).

What this webinar left me with is the uniqueness of this project. We are learning to ‘walk the talk’ while sharing growing pains and learnings so that we might assist others with their own work. The **CLIP-LCP** team works hard at supporting equitable partnerships by honouring a coactive, collaborative and equitable approach. It recognizes that we are all human, with social locations playing out respective power dynamics (whether intentional or not), making space for new and adapted ways of practicing collaborative and equitable partnerships – one that has built in anti-oppressive and anti-racist practices. In thinking of the notion of ladders as facilitators to overcoming barriers, and ladders as levels of engagement, I like to think of this project as creating non-hierarchical, equitable and collaborative ‘laddership’ models for supporting coactive partnerships.