

Collective Intelligence: Collaboration or Collusion?

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In recent years, the concept of collective intelligence has gained considerable traction. There are even several research projects demonstrating that performance by a well-functioning team on a specific problem-solving task is often superior to the average performance of team members or even the most “intelligent” member of the team. We also know that for collective intelligence to be successfully engaged the team members must be able to communicate effectively with one another: information silos clearly hinder collective intelligence. The team members must also forgo their competitive spirit (at least with one another) and a culture of individualism and individual gain must be discouraged. On the positive side is the critical role played by a culture of collaboration. Members of the team must be willing (even eager) to work with one another, finding gratification in the relationships established with other team members and enjoying the collegiality that comes with “winning” as a team rather than as an individual.

While collaboration is to be encouraged and rewarded when seeking to increase collective intelligence, a dark side to collaboration must be acknowledged. In some settings and under certain conditions, collaboration is interwoven with collusion and this interweaving can be quite destructive regarding not only collective intelligence, but also morale of the team and the mental health of those working on the team. This essay concerns the distinctions between collaboration and collusion, as well as ways in which the interweaving of collaboration and collusion occur. I focus first on the fundamental nature of collaboration and competition, using the work of Riane Eisler, and then turn to an analysis of the roots of both collaboration and collusion, relying heavily on the work of Manfred Kets de Vries, an author, educator and consultant who applies psychodynamic (neo-psychoanalytic) concepts derived from the therapy office to the functioning of organizations and those who lead organizations. I conclude with a brief examination of narcissism in the organization-- a particularly powerful and often negative way in which collaboration and collusion are interwoven.

The Chalice and the Blade

More than twenty five years ago, a remarkable book called *The Chalice and the Blade* was published, the author being Riane Eisler. (Eisler, 1987) She described two powerful forces operating in the world. One of these forces (the blade) is focused on competition and domination, the other force (the chalice) is focused on collaboration and containment (the chalice). The blade is designed for control and, if

necessary, wounding, while the chalice is designed for holding, supporting and nurturing. Fifteen years later we can still see both forces operating in our country and in our world. I propose that collective intelligence requires a whole lot of chalices and fewer swords. The issue, however, goes even deeper than this. While collective intelligence requires collaboration and support—the world of chalices—it also requires a thoughtful analysis of a “false” and often form of collaboration known as collusion.

Much of the power of the sword comes not from the actual use of the sword, but rather from the threat of its use and the collusion that occurs among leaders and followers to ensure that the sword remains dominant as a threat and as the primary instrument for resolution of differences. We might be finding a shift in the power of the sword, relative to the contributions being made by the chalice—and this shift could be related to a decline in the power of collusion in many groups and organizations. A recently-published book entitled, *The End of Power*, by Moisés Naim (2013), speaks to the decline in formal (and informal) authority throughout the world. On the one hand, this can be considered a good thing: people throughout the world are beginning to exert some of their own authority and wresting power away from the traditional power-brokers. This could provide a strong foundation for expanded collaboration and increases in collective intelligence. On the other hand, this shift can be considered a bad thing: we are thrown into chaos and uncertainty. Will new sources of authority and power emerge from chaos (as it did in Germany following World War I) that are even less thoughtful and humane than the authority and power that recently reigned supreme in the nations, corporations and even religious institutions around the world?

There is another way to frame this shift in power that Naim has identified. If formal power is dropping off, then perhaps there is greater opportunity for cooperation and for the emergence of an enlightened collective intelligence. Perhaps the blade has been placed back in its scabbard or at least is not as sharp or threatening as it once was. On the other hand, what might be going on now is the collapse of long-standing collusive arrangements between the powerful and powerless, between the leaders and followers. This collusion has served as the “glue” in many human systems. It keeps the conflict going. I am reminded of the poignant scene in the movie, *Robin and Marian*, when an aging Robin (played by Sean Connery) is doing final battle with the Sheriff of Nottingham (played by Robert Shaw). Neither man has the strength any more to lift up the heavy (and rusted) swords. They swing vainly at one another and enact an old ritual. After the battle is concluded (and Robin wins in essence by default), Marion (played by Audrey Hepburn) tends to Robin’s wounds. Robin is ecstatic have found victory one more time.

The myth of villains and victorious battle is retained by Robin for one more moment. Marian realizes that this falsehood cannot last for very long, so decides to poison Robin. He will die with the myth intact.

Clearly, Robin Hood, Marian and the Sheriff are all colluding in sustaining the role of battle and the sword. Only Marian can bring the collusion to an end by terminating the life of Robin Hood. Are the collusions of contemporary times just as difficult to terminate? Who needs to die in order for the collaborative shift to occur? Do all the “old white guys” like Robin and the Sheriff have to pass away in our contemporary institutions for there to be a shift from the blade to the chalice and from isolation and competition to collaboration and collective intelligence? It is hard to believe that the collusions will simply go away; rather, there are likely to be new collusions as we “escape from the freedom” to be found in a world without formal power and turn instead to newly-invented and newly-formed sources of power and restraint. So a fundamental question emerges: Will there be new and even more powerful forms of collusion between leaders and the led in many institutions? Will new forms of collusion trump the emerging opportunities for collaboration and collective intelligence?

To address these fundamental questions I turn, in particular, to the remarkable insights offered by Manfred Kets de Vries (2003, 2010). I first examine the dance of collaboration. What are the roots of collaboration in the lives of those who seek to promote collective intelligence? I then turn to the dance of collusion, identifying the roots of collusion among those working in organizations and the different ways in which collusion takes place in organizations and sometimes interweaves with collaboration. I conclude by considering Kets de Vries’ analysis of narcissism in leadership—which is one of the most powerful and virulent ways in which collusion occurs.

The Dance of Collaboration

The roots of collaboration are to be found in the processes of socialization in societies. Clearly, some societies encourage collaboration more than other societies. We find high levels of individualism and a strong desire for autonomy in many Western societies and a major orientation toward collective identity in many Nonwestern societies. (Rosinski, 2003) Even within a specific society, such as the United States, we find that socialization plays a key role. The feminine roots of collaboration (at least in Western societies) are to be found in the tradition of children being raised primarily by the mother rather than the father. As Nancy Chodorow (1999) noted, in such a setting it is harder for girls to differentiate self from mother than it is for boys. As a result, Chodorow asserts that girls are more likely to live with an undifferentiated sense of self than are boys. As they grow up, young women are more likely to seek out collective identity and collaboration, whereas men are oriented in youth toward separation and individualism. How does this impact on the leadership offered by women in organizations? One immediate answer is that women might be more likely to collaborate in solving problems and engaging in change initiatives. I can offer one example of this collaborative tendency. In her recent interview

(conducting by Valeri Lapinski for Time) (Lapinski, 2013), Nobel peace prize winner, Jody Williams, recounted that she joined with the seven other women who have won Nobel peace prizes in creation of the Nobel Women's Initiative. None of the many men who have won this prize have ever gotten together for a joint project—and they are the peace prize winners!

It is also important to note that this tendency toward collaboration might come at a price. Women who are socialized as Chodorow postulates, might face the problem of establishing boundaries in their work life and in their home life. They might confront the issue of workaholism and an unbounded sense of responsibility. I worked with a female CEO several years ago who often pointed to research indicating that male CEOs in the contemporary world are usually able to set aside their weekends for family, while the female CEOs would be more likely to bring their work home and try to balance or blend work and family. Though the traditional stereotype is of the man who lives only for his work, my female CEO client talked about the greater struggle today for women to live only for their work or living with the myth that they can do everything well (as “superwoman”). While work-life balance might be a major challenge for women who have not established clear boundaries, this lack of boundary definitions and orientation toward collaboration might also provide the answer: these superwomen might be more inclined than their male colleagues to turn to other people for assistance in dealing with the work/life challenge—unless they have bought into the male orientation toward individual achievement.

I wish to dig a bit deeper into the dynamics of collaboration and the role of gender. There may be a physiological basis for the differences in social orientation of men and women. While men (especially in their youth) tend to be saturated with testosterone (which often tends to activate an aggressive and competitive orientation), women (especially during the child-rearing years) tend to be saturated with oxytocin and other hormones (which tend to activate an orientation toward bonding and nurturance). (Brizendine, 2008) While we need to be careful about over-generalizations and about the overemphasis on neurobiological origins of behavior, it is important to keep these hormonal differences in mind—especially when considering members of organizations under stress (when these bio-chemical factors tend to be even more influential).

We find yet another important factor related to the differences between men and women in their orientation toward collaboration: women have often been socialized in Western societies as contextual epistemologists (that is as people who tend to think and reason by considering specific issues within their specific setting or context). As Carol Gilligan (1982) and Mary Belenky and her colleagues (1986) have observed, women tend to look at specific issues within the specific context surrounding the issue, whereas men (at least European/American White men) tend to look at specific issues in terms of abstract principles

that are applied to understanding and resolving the issue. This would suggest that women tend either to be influenced as leaders and team members by the context in which they are working and making decisions, or they tend to be more effective than men in working in and leading in settings that are complex and challenging with regard to context. It also means that women are more likely than men to feel comfortable in working collaboratively—which is a much more complex environment in which to work than that of autonomous, isolated work. It also may mean that the sharing of information and the promotion of collective intelligence is more important for many women, given the value they place on identifying and analyzing the environment and context in which they are operating—information that is typically only available from multiple sources and validated only from multiple perspectives.

To better understand the role of women in promoting collaboration, I will return briefly to Eisler's metaphor of the chalice and speak about the holding environment that is critical to the creation of a collaborative culture. Kets de Vries (2010) identifies the role of leaders in providing a "holding" environment for their followers. This connects with the original Object Relations model of the "holding" environment in psychotherapy and the psychodynamic proposal that effective leaders often provide a holding environment in which they hold or contains the anxiety of their followers for a period of time until the followers can handle the anxiety or until the leader has transformed the anxiety (often, I would suggest through the organization's culture) into something that is manageable, actionable or at least understandable. This holding function operates for the leader much like the parent holds or contains the anxiety of her child until the child can handle it or until the anxiety is transformed (catalyzed) by the parent. To what extent, are women as leaders more likely than men to provide the container for organizational anxiety – to hold the tensions of the organization until they can be effectively addressed by others in the organization? Riane Eisler speaks to this same function when she writes about the chalice (in opposition to the blade). While the leader plays a critical role in providing this chalice to contain the anxiety of her followers, I can't help but wonder about the psychological costs associated with holding the anxiety for other people – does this lead to psychological (or physical) burn-out among women (and men) who are the containers?

The Dance of Collusion

Collusion is a complex and often subtle process typically involving all parties in a relationship or group. Even if a participant is not actively involved in the collusion, the mere acquiescence to the collusion will exacerbate the collusive process. No one observing the parade route said anything about the emperor wearing no clothing. It was only the child who spoke up. This is a key point. To simply not say anything about what is happening in front of one's own eyes is participation in the collusion. We find this

operating, for instance, among those people who witness a crime. All too frequently, no one steps up to interrupt a crime—or even call the police to prevent the crime or enable the police to apprehend the criminal. Researchers have found that when a large number of people observe a crime there is even less likelihood that any one person will attempt to break up or report the crime. The sense of responsibility is distributed among many people and no one person accepts enough share of the responsibility to precipitate action. Everyone is colluding (and in some sense collaborating) in non-action.

Collusion is usually a dynamic involving everyone in the relationship, group or organization. The collusion is typically driven by fear: (1) fear that one will be ostracized from the relationship or group for disrupting the collusion by making an inappropriate comment or violating the norms of the system, (2) fear that confronting the collusion could lead to psychological or physical retribution, (3) fear that there will be tit-for-tat (if you reveal something about me, then I will reveal something about you) or (4) fear that I might be wrong and that what I see is really more about me than about what is happening in the relationship or group. At other times, the collusion occurs because no one is really aware that the collusion is in operation. It is assumed that the collusive process is simply “the ways things are done around here” or even more broadly “the way nature works.” This “natural” rationale is prevalent when the collusion involves race or gender, while the rationale regarding the way things are done around here is typically found in a setting with a very “thick” or “enmeshed” culture (where most of the behavior is dictated by a set of implicit and strongly enforced norms).

This lack of awareness tends to be closely interrelated with and enhanced by the dynamic of fear. We are most likely to be driven toward unawareness with regard to that which is ultimately most fearful. Sigmund Freud (1990) pointed this out many years ago in his book, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, noting that at some level we are aware of that which we are unaware—for we have to know in some manner that something exists and is very scary (anxiety-provoking) if we are to “repress” and become unaware. To point back to an obvious example, the crowd must have been aware at some level that the emperor was naked and that to comment on the nudity could get them in trouble. They would not have been fearful of making a critical comment if they were not aware of both factors. The child wasn’t the only one to see that the emperor was naked; however, the child was the only one not to know (or at least not to assume) that it would be a bad thing to comment on the emperor’s nudity.

With this overview of the collusion process in place, I wish to dig a bit deeper, use some psychodynamic terminology. Basically, collusion begins to take place through something called projective identification. In an organizational setting, collusion occurs when members of the organization project different “objects” (images, assumptions, personality characteristics) onto their leader. These are aspects of

themselves (“internal objects”) that they refuse to recognize: their own fears, their own competencies, their own anger, their own arrogance, etc. They don’t accept it in themselves, because to do so would make them anxious, make them feel personally responsible for some decision to be made or action to be taken, or make them feel bad about themselves (“I don’t want to be an angry woman.” “I don’t want to be an arrogant man.” “I don’t want to feel afraid or appear to be a fool or coward.”) By placing the praise or blame on their leader, members of an organization can take it off themselves.

Furthermore, the leader usually has some personal reason to accept this projection. The identification is, in other words, “sticky.” The leader is not a velcro don on whom nothing adheres for very long. The leader feels a bit afraid himself, and thus readily accepts assumption made by other members of the organization that he is very much afraid. The leader at some level believes that she is very competent and courageous (or would at least like to think of herself as competent and courageous). Thus, she welcomes the admiration and assumptions of competence and courage made by other members of her organization. This acceptance of praise and assumed mastery is particularly prevalent (and destructive) among those leaders who are narcissistic—as I will note in more detail later in this essay.

The collusion is further reinforced by the overall culture of the organization. Commonly-held projections on leaders (as dissenters, visionaries, fight leaders, flight leaders, jokesters, etc.) in the organization will reinforce projections onto any one person in the organization. “All the executives in this organization are corrupt and self-serving!” “He is just another one of those damned fools that they promote in this organization.” “You know, engineers always operate this way.” “All of those accountants are nothing more than numbers crunchers.” These culture-based (and systemic) clusters of assumptions and expectations are known as role suction: certain functions (both formal and informal) in the organization lead to certain repeated patterns that are sustained (self-fulfilling prophecies) by certain projections. “Actors” are assigned a specific role in the organizational “play” and cannot easily shift to a different role. Other members of the organization readily join in the play, as supporting characters, colluding with the principle actor in sustaining the play. As Kets de Vries (2003, p. 75) notes in dramatic fashion, the role player (particularly the imposter) “like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, seems to weave a magic spell, and people are only too ready to follow. Imposters [and other role-suctioned actors] seem to be able to awaken otherwise dormant tendencies within us by which we can be carried away, blinded to reality.”

It is something of a vicious circle with regard to culture, collusion and projective identifications. The organization tends to attract and hold employees and leaders with certain “favorite” projections. Furthermore, there are what psychologists call secondary gains associated with the collusions and projective identifications. It is not just that members of the organization feel less anxious or less

responsible when they project certain characteristics onto their leaders or other role players, it is also often the case that something constructive (for at least some members of the organization) is gained from this collusive process: “the Boss pays more attention to me (us) because of the praise.” “It is important for Joe to always be the realist, otherwise we are likely to move in the wrong direction.” “Thank goodness, Susan brings up the issues of sexual discrimination whenever the HR Committee convenes.” The only problem with these secondary gains is that one person is often stuck operating in a specific role and assuming responsibility for some problem. Furthermore, the organization gets stuck: there is no growth on the part of organizational members and not much collective learning (let alone much genuine growth in collective intelligence).

I want to conclude this analysis of collusion by mentioning several other outcomes of the collusive process. Many years ago, the noted social analyst, Gregory Bateson (1987) wrote about something he called schismogenesis. This big word refers to the tendency for two systems (organizations, tribes, nations) to relate to one another in a manner that drives the two systems further apart from one another or that leads to escalation of similar activities in both systems. One type of schismogenesis is called complimentary, meaning that as one system goes in one direction, the other system goes in the opposite direction. For instance, as one tribe becomes more belligerent and active, the other tribe becomes more passive and withdrawn. We see this occurring in many organizations, with the leader becoming more assertive and his employees becoming more compliant. Both parties are colluding in making the leader’s assertiveness justifiable and acceptable. This complimentary form of collusion tends to be long-lasting and it is deeply-embedded, as a rule, in the culture of an organization.

The second type of schismogenic collusion identified by Bateson is called symmetrical. As one system exhibits higher levels of a specific behavior, the other system will try to match this level. For instance, if one nation builds more rockets, then the rival nation will also have to build more rockets—the classic arms race. In an organizational setting, this symmetrical dynamic operates when both the leader and the employees tend to become more assertive (or more passively-aggressive). This symmetrical process of collusion is often what we mean by the “vicious circle.” It is characterized by exponential growth (the “power law” of contemporary chaos and complexity theorists) and will lead quickly to explosion and collapse. We typically, don’t find symmetrical collusion to be long-lasting in organizations. Rather, we are likely to witness escalation, collapse and then a renewal of the symmetrical collusion with new parties being invited to engage in this very dangerous and destructive dance of symmetrical collusion.

Up to this point, I have focused primarily on the impact of collusion on the dynamics of groups and entire organizational systems. I want to conclude this analysis by describing something of the impact of

collusion on the individual participant in the collusive process. This analysis will also serve as a segue into my concluding comments about narcissistic collusion. At the heart of the matter is control. The collusion is in control. The participants in the collusion are not in control. They are caught in the spell of the collusion. As Kets de Vries notes, we get carried away as participants in a collusion. We are blinded to reality. The dynamics of projective identification, role suction, and enmeshment cultures all lead to what Wilhelm Reich (1980) described many years ago as character armor. Men and women become stuck in the armament of collusion. What they hope will protect them from their own fears, challenges and diminishing sense of self—the collusion—comes at a great price. There is no room for either movement or growth when encased in collusive armament.

Using another metaphor, participants in collusions are frozen—much as the narcissist (as I shall note shortly) is frozen in the ongoing admiration of his own reflected image. I suggest that this frozen state occurs at three progressively more destructive levels. Level one concerns the freezing of Implicit and Explicit Expectations about oneself and other people in the organization. There is an orientation in most organizations to existing patterns of behavior—this is one of the critical roles played by organizational cultures. It is also one of the outcomes of collusive dynamics operating in organizations. If the patterns are not reinforced and expectations are not constantly being met (through the power of self-fulfilling prophecies) than members of the organization are likely to become disengaged (lower morale and involvement) and may even leave the organization.

If a member of the organization tries to shift the expectations (“is the emperor going to appear without clothes again?”) or if she publically identifies what is really happening (“the emperor is naked!”), then one of the fears I enumerated above is likely to be realized. At the very least, she is likely to be isolated in the organization or forced out. A penalty box is often employed to ensure that all members of the organization fully and deeply understand the implicit as well as explicit expectations and resultant behavior patterns. The penalty box might consist of social shunning (I’m never invited to anyone’s home!), the loss of influence in the organization (“No one ever listens to my suggestions anymore”) or even the moment-to-moment plopping in meetings and interpersonal relationships (“He/they don’t even acknowledge that I have said something. Even disagreement would be better than the lack of acknowledgement I am getting . . . I would rather be criticized than ignored!”).

The second level of personal freezing that occurs when collusion is rampant concerns what Edgar Schein (1978) calls the psychological contract. This contract concerns the fulfillment of semi-conscious assumptions on the part of organizational members with regard to fulfillment of their own psychological needs via their work in and contributions to the organization. The contract can be renegotiated, but at

great cost to the employee (and the organization). Psychological contracts are often part-and-parcel of the collusion: “I will provide the leader with unconditional allegiance and the organization will, in turn, provide me with job security.” “I will speak up on behalf of the downtrodden in this organization and will expect, in return, the admiration and loyalty of the other rabble-rousers in this organization.”

The third level of personal freezing and the main architect of personal armor is something I have labeled the psychological covenant. While a psychological contract can be renegotiated—admittedly often at great cost—the psychological covenant is permanent. It is a deeply held, profoundly person and pervasive belief that the organization must meet certainly psychological needs and that I (the employee) will sacrifice something(s) (perhaps everything) (time, money, status, other relationships, etc.) in exchange for the meeting of these needs. The covenant is not to be broken. If it is, then the consequences are depression, anger, and even violence. The workplace violence we have witnessed in recent years and the mass-killings that have become all too common in the United States are founded in the shattering of a covenant. We might even conceive of terrorist actions as involving the breaking of a covenant (often of a religious nature).

Collusion is very difficult to identify and analyze (let alone disrupt or eliminate) if psychological covenants are in operation and if the anxiety that exists in an organization is pervasive. With my colleague, Michael Cassatly (Cassatly and Bergquist, 2011) I have written about the psychological covenant existing in contemporary health care systems—especially among physicians. Collusive dynamics operate with great power and persistence among physicians, between physicians and other members of the medical staff, and (in particular) between physicians and their patients. These dynamics are of even greater intensity and are even more embedded in contemporary health care organizations that are going through major challenge (hence are more anxiety-ridden) and in the daily tension-filled challenges of treating illness and healing wounds. Suzan Guest, Terrence Rooney and I (Bergquist, Guest and Rooney, 2003) have written about the wounding of the healers and attribute much of this wounding to the impact of sustained anxiety and uncertainty on the medical staff and the frequently shattering of psychological covenants embraced by medical staff as they confront managed care, shifting government policies and procedures, and changing relationships with patients and other health care stakeholders.

Similar analyses could be offered with regard to other sectors of American society and with regard to many other societies in the world (where psychological covenants might be even stronger and reinforced by long-standing traditions and religious sanctions). While the presence of psychological covenants, and the other two slightly less virulent forms of collusive freezing, might lead one to lose all hope that collusions can be broken up, it is important not to abandon the effort. At the very least, as coaches and

consultants we must help our clients recognize the existence of these dynamics. We must be careful when promoting collaboration and collective intelligence not to collude ourselves and contribute to our client's collaborative collusion. We must be sure not to provide a new rationale or create a new myth regarding the need for team commitment. We must encourage our client to avoid any collaborative process that fails to be reflective and self-critical. Ultimately, collective intelligence is not just about shared knowledge of the world or about the generation of new ideas and creative solutions to seemingly intractable problems. It is also about social intelligence: the capacity (and willingness) to be smart about ways in which one's own team is operating. This is particularly important when a team is facing the challenging collusion involved in narcissism—the topic to which I turn in concluding this essay.

The Narcissistic Challenge

Narcissism is one of the most powerful forces operating in many contemporary organizations. This is not only the narcissism of the leader but also the broader narcissism of the organization's culture. Furthermore, there is ample evidence to suggest that narcissism tends to increase when leaders or organizations are experiencing threat, elevated levels of stress, or (in particular) sustained trauma. The psychodynamically-oriented clinicians and those working with teams and whole organizations speak of this as “regression” to a more primitive state of development. Sometime this regression “is in the service of the ego” (that is to say it is temporarily adaptive, releasing creativity, commitment and character), but in most instances it is destructive. Neuroscientists similarly describe the impact of threat, stress and trauma on the limbic system of the human body—leading to the classic fight/flight response (particularly among men) that is mediated by elevated levels of testosterone and adrenaline. This is the sword-response and often leads to narcissism and collusion. There is also a chalice-response to threat, stress and trauma that is more commonly found among women. This is the immediate, limbic move toward protection, containing, holding, nurturing—the ingredients of collaboration and collective intelligence. This socially-oriented response is often mediated by elevated levels of estrogen and oxytocin (as well as a variety of other hormones).

Let me try to pull all of this together by focusing on narcissism and its relationship to the dynamics of both collusion and collaboration. First, we need to be clear about the nature of narcissism. The term comes from the Greek myth regarding the handsome young man (Narcissus) who sees a reflection of himself in a pond and immediately is transfixed by this image, falling in love with himself and remaining in this state for the rest of his mythic life. The narcissistic leader is someone who is not only “in love with himself” but also believes that the primary role to be played by other people in the organization is that of supporting, justifying and expanding on this self-love. This is where the process of collusion comes in.

The followers are primarily in the business of ensuring that the image in the pond is never disturbed (as in the Emperor's New Clothes). They will distort reality, provide inaccurate or warped feedback to their narcissistic leader, and defend their leader against all outside attacks (the fight response). If the narcissistic leader is shown to be a fraud or impersonator, the followers will first be in massive denial (the flight response). (Kets de Vries, 2003) If this doesn't work then the splitting function is likely to kick in (as it often does when collusion is taking place). Rather than identify the narcissistic leader as all good, the followers will now see him as all bad and will attack him and even attempt to destroy him and his image (as we witness frequently in the violent death of a once-beloved narcissistic dictator).

When the narcissistic leader is in charge, there often is confusion among his followers with regard to the norms and values of the organization—this is where collusion and collaboration can become confused. The followers of a narcissistic leader will collaborate with one another in defending their leader against outside attack. This is where the sword and flight response are fused with the protective response: testosterone meets oxytocin. There is a more subtle form of intermixing between collusion and collaboration. The narcissistic leader is often quite charismatic and visionary—extolling the virtues of cooperation and selflessness. We see this often manifest among those narcissistic leaders who serve as gurus and create communes and other utopian communities.

The collaboration in this case is centered on emulation of the leader's espoused collaborative values (even if the leader himself is actually self-centered and selfish). The oxytocin is alive and well, but it ultimately is bringing about the binding of commune members to reinforcement and accentuation of the self-centered image of their leader. Rather than the collaboration being engaged on behalf of the organization's (commune's) welfare, it is being engaged on behalf of the leader and his own welfare. This reversal of responsibilities parallels that of a narcissistic family: the child of a narcissistic parent comes to believe that he or she exists primarily for the welfare of the parent rather than the other way around where the parent believes that they are there to promote the welfare of the child. (Donaldson-Pressman and Pressman, 1994)

Those working under the narcissist (whether in a family or an organization) remain immature themselves. Men and women who are working for a narcissistic leader have often been working with this leader for many years and are absolutely in awe of her. They grow very little over many years in terms of their own proficiency, self-confidence or self-awareness: "little grows under a great tree". They have been frozen in their own development—just as they are frozen in their expectations, contracts and covenants in the organization. This freeze might produce a false sense of collaboration and a strong sense of commitment to the mission of the narcissistic leader. In promoting collective intelligence, we are looking for much

more in terms of genuine collaboration. We wish not only to enhance performance of the team and organization, but to encourage the continuing growth of each person participating in this collaborative relationship. I suspect this is what all of us want. We just need to discern the difference between collusion and collaboration—and act upon this discernment.

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