This chapter explores the nature of after-school partnerships and sets forth a theory and typology describing the way in which the intersection of partners creates a unique intermediary space.

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After-school as intermediary space: Theory and typology of partnerships

Gil G. Noam, Jodi Rosenbaum Tillinger

WE LIVE in an era of partnering—of joining institutional forces to accomplish complex societal changes.[1] Whether it is the local YMCA that works with a school to serve children during the after-school hours, a university connecting with its surrounding community, or a city government convening funders and businesses, we are moving into increased institutional networking and shared social responsibility. Programs and services for youth, families, and communities have experienced a need and even a requirement to establish partnerships among agencies and organizations.[2]

These partnering trends permeate most fields of service, particularly those affecting the needs of children and youth. There are, for example, few prevention specialists who will argue that we can reduce youth crime rates without an integrated approach that connects many community stakeholders. In order to support a child's academic achievement and psychological well-being, we must work together to best create healthy and productive environments and relationships.[3]

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Although there are many potential benefits, developing a successful collaboration is extremely difficult to achieve; the belief in partnership is far stronger than the theoretical and empirical understanding about how to make these working relationships productive. The myriad of challenges relating to partnership efforts has been underexplored and may threaten the success of many initiatives. Crowson and Boyd explain:

> Whatever the ultimate promise of community-connections experimentation, the full potential is unlikely to be realized without a better theoretical and practical understanding of the organizational, administrative, and implementation issues associated with such ventures. What conditions and governance arrangements foster or impede coordination, integration and community connections? What incentives and disincentives operate? What are the dynamics of interorganizational collaboration?[4]

After-school programs are based almost entirely on partnering, yet there is little literature that deals specifically with the characteristics of collaborating within this rapidly growing field. There is an urgency to make sense of the ways that organizations have come together to provide programs and opportunities for youth during the after-school hours, and there is a need for models that can aid in practice, research, and evaluation.

After-school programs are typically constructed as collaborations, making them an especially interesting case of what is becoming a phenomenon in many sectors of society. What makes after-school settings so fascinating is that they represent a new social space, defined as much by what they are not as by what they are. After-school programs are typically the meeting ground of multiple partnering organizations that combine a set of practices such as recreation, homework, project-based learning, sports, arts, youth leadership, and so on. Even the program content is often not unified but consists of diverse offerings from collaborating institutions and groups.

Many funding sources across the United States, such as the George Soros-initiated Afterschool Corporation in New York City and the U.S. Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Center Grants, stipulate the formation of partnerships.

But these intermediaries and foundations are not the inventors of this trend; they reflect and reinforce a dramatic change in attitude in organizations serving children and families.

In the first section of this chapter, we show that the nature of most partnerships in after-school education create what we call "intermediary environments." We introduce this term as a way to develop a heuristic and a beginning line of systematic research. In this section, we describe some of the special features of after-school programs that arise from and are governed by collaborations.[5] In the tradition of developmental psychology theory, we define these intermediary environments, especially when they work well, as contexts for significant child development.[6]

Second, we provide a brief overview of frameworks that have captured the varying forms of partnerships. We think critically about how the existing literature on partnerships relates to the developing field of afterschool. The unique qualities of the afterschool field demand that we begin to think about models that consider the particular collaborative characteristics that define most after-school programs and initiatives.

In an effort to both expand the existing theoretical frame and provide a practical tool, we introduce a typology of partnerships that produce intermediary spaces. Our approach to this typology is that of developmental psychologists interested in using natural ecological contexts in which children spend part of their life. For each of the four types we introduce in this chapter, we offer an example that can prove useful for program leaders, policymakers, and researchers.[7] The model is designed for use as a research and evaluation guide and can help partnerships reflect on their own development.

Partnering to create after-school programs

Policymakers, along with both the public and private sectors, recognize the importance and need for quality after-school programs and have forged numerous partnerships in order to meet the immense

demand for programming. Deich points out that "public-private partnerships have emerged as an important strategy for meeting the needs of school-age children and youth."[8]

San Francisco and Boston are leading examples of cities where funders representing diverse interests have aligned their resources to collectively find solutions.[9] The Boston Afterschool for All Partnership, a fourteen-institution, $26 million partnership under the leadership of Mayor Menino and Chairman Chris Gabrieli, is a promising example of citywide after-school collaborations.

Although these developments are impressive, efforts are in response to a dire need to meet the overwhelming demand for after-school programming, often making partnering an immediate necessity. The Forum for Youth Investment states:

> No matter who the players and which sectors are involved, relationship building efforts are fueled by the same intention. In a landscape so new that it lacks basic infrastructure—advocacy horsepower, physical infrastructure and the rest—organizations have no choice but to combine resources in order to meet individual and collective needs.[10]

The afterschool field has attracted broad-based stakeholder involvement and investment, and despite the continuum of partnership models found within the field and at multiple levels, many partnerships are struggling with issues of mismanagement and lack of coordination. Many cities have erected impressive structures to improve after-school opportunities through collaboration. However, they do not always succeed in attaining the tangible improvements desired. Some citywide collaborations meet regularly but without any definitive agenda to affect positive change; others lack the necessary resources, and, disturbingly, some partnership efforts are thwarted by individual participants.[11] Tolman and colleagues, with The Forum for Youth Investment, found in their Greater Resources for After-School Programming (GRASP) report that every city they examined indicated that "convening, collaboration, networking, coordination" were the most pertinent challenges in building stronger after-school opportunities for youth.[12]

Knapp explains that as we construct frameworks for understanding collaborative partnerships, we will need to "draw on the concepts of different social science disciplines."[13] He identifies fields, including organizational theory, professional work, multicultural interaction, power and influence, policy process, human development, family dynamics, and group process as areas of potential support. This perspective is especially true for the emergent field of afterschool.

It is striking but certainly not surprising that such frameworks are far more common in the business sector than in the social sector. Austin explains:

> In the business world, strategic frameworks abound, and new ones emerge with great frequency. This is not merely technical faddism; such frameworks usually emerge from empirical scrutiny of what businesses are doing and managers are thinking. Insofar as a conceptual framework represents a distillation of the complexity of practice, it can be particularly useful to managers, helping them see complex phenomena more clearly and think more systematically about strategic paths and choices.[14]

If the afterschool field is to think more systematically about strategic paths and choices in order to establish a geography of current and developing partnerships, then, like the business sector, it must benefit from strategic frameworks that consider and align partners' missions, goals, and management.[15]

Understanding after-school as intermediary space

In this section, we introduce an organizing idea about the special nature of after-school that we call *intermediary space*.[16] We are developing this framework to help shape the afterschool field into a significant scholarly endeavor and to guide partnering activities. Such model building can serve as a foundation for future research. This chapter integrates our experiences from community-based interventions and research with observations and evaluations of

numerous after-school settings to form a typology. In a future step, we will conduct systematic research around these concepts, including the study of partnerships and their effect on after-school programming over longer periods of time.

Developmental theory supporting the concept of intermediary space

The work of British child psychoanalyst W. W. Winnicott has influenced our understanding of these new organizational spaces found within after-school programs.[17] He has provided a great many insights into what he called "transitional phenomena" and the "holding environment"—terms that have greatly influenced clinical programs for children. Winnicott viewed transitional phenomena as holding environments that are essential for early child development. The very young child develops anxiety when parents are temporarily unavailable. At that time, the "transitional object"—typically a teddy bear or blanket—begins to play a very large role in the life of the child. Winnicott views these transitional objects as part of a transitional playspace—a world that is not quite reality and not quite fantasy. He views it as a safe space for learning and mastery, as well as a way to soothe the self during separations.

Winnicott's theory about the transitional space reveals much about the way after-school programs and community collaborations create intermediary environments that offer unique opportunities for children to develop. Related developmental work reveals that we actively construct many intermediary environments throughout child, adolescent, and even adult development, and other environments are created for us.[18] The preschool pretend playspaces or dress-up corners are intermediary environments for the young child to try on roles such as mother and father or the monster that inhabits her nightmares. The adolescent requires a safe place for experimenting, forming an identity, solving crises, and making choices.

We call these environments intermediary because they are "between spaces," not owned by any one party, and they are pursuing goals that typically are based on compromises in program practices and content. It is through this process of negotiation and compromise that we often see great potential for partners to amplify their strengths to best serve youth. After-school serves as an intermediary space that is often developmentally appropriate for youth in ways that school and other environments are not. Many after-school programs offer an opportunity to bridge the multiple worlds of youth, creating a safe space that is generally more accepting and supportive. Within this lower-stakes environment, youth can find the support and acceptance in crossing cultural worlds that may not be validated or integrated within the school day.

Afterschool, as a field, is not purely academic, and neither is it entirely recreational. After-school programs provide a transitional and developmental space in which youth may be able to bridge the many worlds they traverse. For many late adolescents, college represents such an intermediary, transitional learning space. And in the transition to the professional world, mastery is often gained through transitional relationships with career mentors and coaches. Although each of these intermediary environments and relationships is quite different, they all possess most of the traits that we outlined earlier. In addition, all of these environments take into account the fragility of growth and the need to provide the right conditions to protect personal development. Intermediary environments are developmental contexts; they imply the outgrowing of these environments after a period of maturation and learning. Because of the unique climate of after-school schools, they hold the potential to be psychological, social, and educational; they are protective, challenging, and age-appropriate.

After-school programs can support informal learning of academic and life skills because they are less performance-based than school, offering a variety of ways for youth to experience and demonstrate knowledge and skills. Some programs employ staff members who are representative of the community; others provide

personalized support through mentorship, and some are able to successfully connect and communicate with families.

Programs are often more accessible to parents than schools because they operate during more convenient hours and do not pose some of the same threats many parents perceive within the schools. After-school programs can serve these roles as intermediary environments for youth because they represent a new social space that is not school, home, or the streets. As intermediary spaces, after-school programs also hold the potential and great challenge to bridge to families, thus supporting the learning and development of the children served. Programs, by their very nature, tend to fall somewhere between the worlds of school and home. Children whose home and school worlds are incongruous may find that their after-school program has the capacity to serve as a bridge between the two. Because of the more relaxed and informal nature of the environment, parents may find an increased ability to speak with staff about the challenges and progress of their children.[19]

Partnering to create intermediary spaces after school

In order to create such developmental intermediary spaces for youth, after-school programs require partnerships. Programs, particularly those operating within the confines of school spaces, often need to build bridges in order to effectively serve the same youth during the out-of-school time. If forged together successfully, such partnerships provide a developmental space not just for the children served but for the partnership itself. When partners come together to deliver programming, they create a synergy that amplifies the positive qualities of each of the partners. We have found that most intermediary spaces maintain certain qualities. Specifically, they

- Are always evolving; they live in a realm of both productive tension between and nurturance from collaborating organizations.
- Are usually creative and innovative.

- Define themselves as different from traditional structures and organizations and derive their identity from being nonbureaucratic.
- Are typically participatory and in a position to foster and model democratic ideals.

Although powerful because of the development and learning that can take place, intermediary environments also hold significant vulnerabilities as a result of their unique collaborative nature.

Vulnerabilities and challenges within intermediary environments

Intermediary environments entail deceptively simple ideas, but schools—our most important institutions for children—have not fully appreciated their significance. Young adolescents, as Eccles has shown so convincingly, are typically in large and anonymous schools that do not foster what they need—a sense of belonging, a way to be recognized, and a place for productive peer-based social and learning experiences.[20] It is partly because schools are failing many children that so many people dedicate themselves to after-school programs and to the idea of intermediary developmental environments. These programs combine support, child development, fun, and learning in ways that many wish schools could achieve. If schools could accomplish the task, we could extend their hours instead of needing to develop separate intermediary environments.

Alongside the tremendous opportunities, after-school intermediary environments typically grapple with four major vulnerabilities, largely stemming from the high, and often competing, expectations placed on them:

1. *Intermediary spaces are often fragile because they do not fully belong to any one organization and thus are often endangered with regards to funding, space, and personnel.* Intermediary spaces are vulnerable to

potentially low-quality services and programming if no one takes ownership or effective management systems are not designed among the partners. The program may potentially lack the ability to see the "big picture", that is, to define and maintain the mission of the partnership and the quality of the program. Intermediary environments are vulnerable to potential power struggles, as one collaborating group or another may vie for control.

2. *To be creative and innovative, programs need to allow for a great deal of child and family participation.* After-school programs, if they are to truly reflect a developmentally appropriate intermediary space, should not only program for children but should encourage child-initiated projects at all levels. Intermediary environments are about development, and development occurs not just through instruction but, often most authentically, through discovery. However, many after-school settings struggle with too few or undertrained staff members who tend to fluctuate between overstructuring activities and allowing activities to become chaotic; striking an appropriate balance is not easy. It is the flexibility and the participatory nature of collaboration—the process nature of the work—that provides a great potential to evolve settings that foster the development of children. Institutions that experiment and show flexibility are often equipped to respond flexibly to changing developmental needs of children. What undermines this potential is when flexibility combines with a lack of structure or even chaos.

3. *Intermediary environments need partnering entities and organizations to remain fluid and responsive to the needs of the participants, yet most institutions do not remain flexible.* Allowing for openness can easily be misinterpreted as a lack of leadership and invite a struggle between partnering organizations. There exists a tension between the need to structure a partnership so that there are clear roles, responsibilities, and structures for service delivery, and the simultaneous need to adapt and change in order to best serve children.[21]

Looking at after-school programs, the context, including the facility in which the program operates and the specific partners involved, influences the degree of structure and flexibility necessary for success. We have found, though, that leadership and control frequently play a powerful role in determining the nature of

after-school partnerships, primarily because of the intersecting nature of the multiple organizations and stakeholders. Although there may be an after-school leader or director charged with the management of the program, if the program is situated in a school, as is often the case, issues of leadership and control become front and center. After-school directors operating programs in school buildings often find that decisions, channels of communication, requirements, space and resources allocations, as well as the degree of buy-in and initial and ongoing support, rest largely on the leadership of the school.

In order to function, after-school programs require the coordination of various stakeholders who are able to establish a strong and guiding infrastructure while simultaneously maintaining flexible management structures and decision-making strategies. Such flexibility can pose some risks to programs centered around competing interests, but it can simultaneously offer a productive tension that spurs creativity in programming and use of time.

4. *Intermediary environments easily come to be everything to everyone.* The inevitable result of bringing multiple stakeholders together to maximize the intermediary space of after-school is that competing interests arise as to how the time and space should best be used to support the development and learning of children. As with any partnership, after-school initiatives must be careful to spend the time dialoguing about the intended outcomes of the partnership so they can be evaluated effectively. If partners have conflicting agendas, which may be natural when different sectors and disciplines come together, time should be spent clarifying the specific goals of the partnership.[22] To some members of a partnership, the goal of an after-school program or initiative may be improved academic achievement measured by improved test scores, whereas others may be concerned with safety and supervision, art, music and enrichment, service learning, or character development.

Especially within the pressured climate of education reform, there exists some danger of overwhelming the emergent culture of after-school with the agenda of school-driven goals and preparation for

high-stakes testing. The challenge with regard to content and programming is to effectively bridge school learning while protecting after-school programs' ability to provide differentiated developmental opportunities that build young people's competencies in ways that complement the learning of the school day. Stakeholders increasingly expect programs to use their time for supervised completion of homework, to expand learning opportunities, to raise test scores, and to provide tutoring. Although after-school programs have great potential to bridge to schools and support the formal curriculum of the school day, it is crucial that programs do not become strict extensions of the school.

Programs can also create a supportive youth development context to increase moral and ethical development.[23] They are often looked upon to counteract the school's reduction in arts education. Many develop projects and community service, and some aim to counteract the trends toward obesity in children through exercise and sports. The large number of potential goals decreases the chances that the program can successfully attend to any of them.

A look at partnership research

The intermediary nature of after-school collaborative partnerships renders many of the existing frameworks and models of partnerships somewhat deficient in their ability to capture the particular characteristics of this emergent field. The models do raise, however, many important considerations that can inform aspects of after-school collaborations. Among the models, many capture some of the developmental qualities we are positing for after-school partnerships. These models recognize that with time and trust, partnerships can progress from one type to another, often becoming more complex and capable in reaching their goals. This evolution, from a state of quasi-selfishness and self-protection to that of closeness, intimacy, and trust is one that resonates within the afterschool field. However, the intermediary space of after-school, because of its potential for creativity and fragility, does not typically produce neat steps in the

progression toward trust that is described in much of the existing literature. A model applicable to the afterschool field must take the specifics of this social space into consideration rather than superimposing existing frameworks from outside.

Existing partnership frameworks

Lewis describes eight conditions for trust, which he asserts are the core foundations of successful partnerships found in the business sector.[24] Relationships within after-school partnerships can follow along the continuum of trust development described in much of the literature. However, after-school programs are often continually challenged to demonstrate their efficacy in the eyes of their partners, including and especially the school. Program staff often express frustration with their sense that the teachers and administrators within the school do not recognize the impact and value they provide in supporting the learning and positive development of youth. The development of trust often requires an infrastructure that enables the individuals within the partnering organizations to interact with one another in ways that build understanding and support. Increasingly, designated staff are working to "bridge" the school and after-school by spending time during the school day with teachers and staff and then carrying over into the after-school time. The development of trust needs to be nurtured, which requires that time and personnel be available to build the relationship between partners.

Sagawa and Segal describe the successful development of cross-sector partnerships, based on the presupposition that an organization will first assess its management, financial strength, and program or product in order to ensure it is appropriately positioned to engage in a partnership.[25] These outlined stages seem to have great applicability to the afterschool field on a systemic level, perhaps when funders, city officials, and corporations come together to build capacity, raise awareness, and cull funds. On the ground level, most after-school programs do not have the infrastructure

and resources to thoroughly explore ideal partners and test and document their partnering efforts. Many programs do not have full-time staff designated to maintaining and growing partnerships. Often programs are without choices, forced to operate in the small and often unsupportive confines of a building that happens to be available. Organizations may work together to develop programming and coordinate volunteers, but these collaborative relationships may be difficult to nurture for the long term. The nature of after-school also entails that partners may have varying intensities of collaboration, based on particular aspects of the partnering arrangement. For example, a program may arrange a short-term partnership in order to facilitate a field trip within the community for the students in a program, whereas it may simultaneously cultivate a long-term arrangement with a business or university to enlist volunteer mentors.

Coordinating and sustaining relationships frequently rests on the initiative of individuals rather than on strong interorganizational arrangements. The business model for building ideal and mutually beneficial partnerships requires resources, time, and staffing that are simply not realistic for most in the afterschool field. This business model is one to which the afterschool field and the entire nonprofit sector are increasingly aspiring.

Barnett and colleagues have set forth a detailed typology that reflects the way in which partners can evolve over time into a more closely linked entity, including a newly created organization.[26] They explain that partnerships evolve through stages over time.[27] The level of involvement may progress from cooperation to collaboration, and the structure may develop from simple to complex, becoming more interdependent. As this happens, partners generate more shared goals and dedicate an increasing amount of resources. Although we share this same developmental focus on partnerships, we are less convinced that organizations (or people) progress in a stepwise progression from stage to stage. Although systems develop, they continue to use earlier techniques and methods and complicate the array of tools and strategies they use. The structural model, which stressed that earlier systems transform

entirely into ever more complex ones, has been questioned in developmental psychology.[28] Our own recursive-developmental method posits continued development without superseding earlier forms of organization. We will return to this issue when we introduce our typology.[29]

The existing frameworks described, although offering an important context, have not focused on the afterschool field and the specific characteristics of intermediary spaces. What is still lacking is a set of theoretical principles that can help guide our practical steps in developing the best conditions for organizational partnering to support children, youth, and families during the after-school hours. Developing such guiding principles is a critical step, as small and large partnerships are springing up everywhere, and their success is essential for the building of a whole new sector.

Primary challenges of partnerships

Engaging in partnerships is far from easy. In fact, many organizations may make intentional efforts to steer clear of collaborative arrangements in order to avoid the many challenges they pose. If partners are mindful and intentional in addressing and moving past the roadblocks, there are potentially significant and powerful results to be gained. Among the many challenges, a primary problem is often the lack of resources that are dedicated to supporting and sustaining the partnership. Specifically, partnerships often struggle to commit dedicated staff to engage in the in-depth collaborative work that is required. Compounding the lack of staff is also the frequent lack of support and involvement by key leaders in the organizations.[30] It is also problematic if each partner does commit a fair share of resources, which inevitably influences the degree of buy-in.[31]

Once different organizations are in place, some partnerships fail to spend time and energy engaging in thoughtful planning. During the initial phase, it is crucial to craft a shared mission, goals, roles, and responsibilities, as well as mechanisms for communicating and

making shared decisions.[32] Some partnerships often neglect to ensure that partners are operating with a shared vocabulary and may also overlook important cultural barriers and differences in norms.[33]

Especially in cross-sector alliances, business and nonprofit partners need to pay special attention to the inevitable differences in language, culture, status, worldviews, competitive dynamics, incentive and motivational structures, and "bottom lines" that may exist.[34] Standard operating procedures that may work when collaborating among peer organizations will not be successful in cross-sector partnerships; a "strategic perspective" must be incorporated to ensure the partnership is achieving each participant's mission.[35]

Evaluating partnerships

Engaging in successful partnerships implies that we are also able to measure and evaluate the success of such partnerships. The research that has examined the efficacy of partnerships, however, has not offered substantial evidence that forging partnerships makes a difference in outcomes.[36] This is not to say that partnerships are not successful at improving outcomes but that it is challenging to capture such effects in evaluations.

Knapp identifies some of the barriers to effectively evaluating the work of partnerships and explains that when multiple partners from different disciplines come together, they bring with them their respective understanding of what the partnership aims to accomplish.[37] Depending on the partner, the goal may be academic achievement, improved school climate, youth development, or simply a strong collaborative process itself. Extensive communication and planning are imperative for setting clear partnership goals and objectives.[38]

Partners may also hold differing theories of change, making it important for someone to facilitate a process that allows for all partners to share their belief structures for affecting change, particularly for children, youth, and families.[39] Discussing these under-

lying attitudes and philosophies is especially important in shaping the way in which the partnership will evaluate success. The presence of the individuals or clients the partnership is striving to serve (children, youth, parents) can compound the complexity of negotiating these varying theories in a respectful but authentic manner.[40] Knapp is careful to point out that it can be extremely difficult to know whether a specific outcome can actually be attributed to the work of the partnership.[41] Chavkin asserts, "We need to go further than just finding out if school, family, and community partnerships are helping education; we also need to know how, when, and which parts of the partnership are improving education."[42]

Four types of intermediary spaces

Our work has led us to identify four primary arrangements that capture the types of partnerships found within the afterschool field. Our model is developmental, however, we are careful to differentiate it by explaining its recursive nature. It is not uncommon for programs to progress from earlier levels without overcoming them entirely, because partnerships may continuously return to these earlier levels. Each type generally builds on the others, but most partnerships function at different levels and use different strategies for different tasks. It is unlikely, though, for a predominantly early developmental type to use tools found within the more complex ones, whereas it is very likely that more evolved partnerships will use aspects of the simpler ones.

In our efforts to provide a heuristic of key aspects of developing systems, we emphasize that the boundaries around these types are not strictly drawn. As a first step, we define *partnerships* as systems and the *spaces they develop* as intermediary. The points at which the partners intersect make up the system. Second, we view these partnership systems as dealing with all issues and themes that are present in the other types as well. Whether a partnership is located in one or another type primarily depends on the set of issues and solutions that are in foreground, as well as those in the background. Most partnerships try to form a strategic alliance, develop a true

collaboration, begin a trusting relationship, and cultivate a certain intimacy among its members. At each point in the development of the intermediary space, all of these elements are present, but it is still important to locate a primary set of operating principles. We have found it very important for partnerships to figure out where they are and where they want to be, that is, to create a developmental road map for themselves. One should not leave these matters to chance. But one should also not use this heuristic as a straitjacket. It is an approximation of typical processes we have observed and captured in a model. Every use, whether for practical purposes or for research and evaluation, should take the specific nature of each living collaboration among diverse organizations and people into consideration.

The intermediary framework is dedicated to the study of partnering institutions, primarily in the afterschool field. The framework focuses less on each individual and contributing system than on the intersection between them. The framework, furthermore, is concerned with describing and explaining "intermediary environments"—those settings that typically get created at the intersection of collaborating. Some programs across the country are making progress; however, there is great need to provide groups with a more refined language and strategies to create productive and sustainable partnerships, one of the most significant issues in after-school education. Although the types can be stable over long periods of time, this typology has elements of how systems can develop over time. Note that many partnerships in real life combine different types, similar to individual development wherein people can function at various developmental levels at the same time.[43] Crises and opportunities will bring out different types of partnering.

The following is an ideal typology of different kinds of intersections that can be found in the afterschool field:[44]

1. Discovering overlapping interests (functional)
2. Joining forces (collaborative)
3. Developing an inclusive system (interconnected)
4. Changing all partners (transformational)

Intersection 1: Overlapping interests (functional)

Leaders in youth development and education frequently receive last-minute grant applications requesting partnering organizations to submit a joint plan for after-school programming. If there is sufficient time, some meetings are arranged and ground rules are established. But the formation of a partnership is often done under great time constraints and is based on common interests of programming and funding requirements. Each participating organization recognizes benefits and participates out of its own mission and strategic plan. The type of collaboration is clearly functional, as it leads to the following ends: to make programming possible; to gain access to children, families, and funds; or to gain access to previously closed settings such as schools or communities. This type of partnership typically leads to an intermediary space with separate program elements run by each institution in a subcontracting arrangement. Each partner is eager to maintain autonomy and be efficient in providing services. Partners are often concerned that too much collaboration will undermine efficiency and that it will create confusing lines of reporting.

A few years back, as part of an evaluation of a national after-school consortium, one of us visited a number of sites throughout the country. Each program was based in a school yet coordinated by a youth development organization and was helped by a variety of other groups. The programs attracted children and families and had interesting program content. However, most programs' components were very fragmented from the others. The links to the schools were tenuous, and though the independent activities were sometimes quite strong, the school and after-school programs usually lacked true integration and a joint mission.

One such program involved a community organization that partnered with a school to implement a school-to-work transitions program after school. The youth development organization worked with the school to select youth to participate in programming that provided experiences to learn about career opportunities. Collaborating with local businesses, the program regularly took the youth

to visit various workplaces and interact with staff, who shared their professional experiences with them.

We had the opportunity to conduct a focus group with young adolescents in this program as part of an evaluation project. The youth told us that they were quite happy with the weekly outings to learn about various work settings. Unfortunately, the organization that provided the vans furnished a vehicle previously used by a preschool and decorated for very young children. The teenagers could not focus in our interviews on much else than the humiliation they had felt each week as they had to enter the "baby bus" in front of their peers who were leaving the school building at the same time. This situation, which could have been easily changed, shows the lack of connection between programs, schools, and youth. The vendor who provided the van and the trips was not integrated into the overall planning of the program; in fact, the after-school program was lacking much overall integration, as well as the staff meetings that could have prevented this year-long humiliation.

The positive aspect of this type of collaboration was the fact that the goals and programming intended through the collaboration were actually very creative. That the collaboration was formed in response to a funding opportunity should not be viewed in a solely negative light; such an opportunity provided significant motivation for each of the partners to get into gear and attempt something they otherwise would not have. The money secured through the grant they received was also leveraged by the partnership to tap into streams of funding within the local business community. Clearly, however, the rushed frenzy around getting the partnership established ultimately meant that many issues were not addressed through a thoughtful planning process. The lack of communication channels and mechanisms to evaluate the work of the partnership resulted in such oversights as the inappropriate use of the van.

Another negative example we encountered was in a school that brought together partners to secure a Federal 21st Century Community Learning Center grant. Almost immediately upon learning about this funding opportunity, the principal of the school

attempted to establish a collaborative partnership with a coalition of community organizations. In addition, in order to fulfill the requirements for collaboration, the principal also enlisted the support and involvement of a youth development organization that was to deliver programming within the school after the formal school day had ended. Without much in-depth dialogue, the principal also enlisted a local university and health center and described within the application their plans for college students and professionals to serve as volunteer mentors in the program. These arrangements were completed in a rather rushed and cursory way in order to meet the deadline, which is not at all atypical for this type. On paper, the collaboration appeared intact, yet in reality there were few meetings and almost no shared vision as to how the partnership would materialize. Although the school served as the lead agency, there was minimal planning among the partners, and the connection was barely functional. When the funds were secured, the school spontaneously decided to give the grant to the youth development organization to be administered, which inevitably created a great deal of confusion. The shallow connection between the partners was jeopardized further when turnover within the school led to the placement of a new principal. This leadership change exacerbated the already tenuous connection among the partners because the principal was not invested in the partnership and saw the responsibility of the grant as a tremendous burden. Ultimately, the grant was simply given away, revealing how this type of partnering effort is prone to serious misunderstandings because the level of partnering is fairly shallow.

However, such a partnership may be ideal for some situations because it requires fairly low expectations among partners. As long as each organization receives the benefits expected, a functional arrangement can effectively serve all partners. This example illustrates the key vulnerabilities of this type and how shallow and opportunistic partnership efforts can, and usually will, fall apart. Without developing relationships and corresponding structures and procedures for the partnership, there was minimal buy-in from the partners. What was also striking in this example was that what began as

a community process became politically complicated and somewhat competitive once the school received the grant. Issues of control came to the fore, which led to a great deal of fighting among the partners.

Intersection 2: Joining forces (collaborative)

In this collaborative model, partners become accountable to each other in very new ways. They typically begin to identify and explicate their common goals, learn from each other, build on each other's strengths, and experience a sense of collective goal setting. Partners identify themselves as working together in the community and tend to take pride in their collaborations. They create an organizational structure that provides a strong voice for each participant, common operating procedures, a bidirectional reporting system, and a mechanism to resolve disagreements. The programs frequently have full-time coordinators and a management team. Whereas in the functional type of programming the main issue is whether the partners perform their duties and receive expected benefits, such as visibility, funding, and so on, in the collaborative model conflict management comes to the forefront, and there is more engagement and give-and-take between the partners.

The intermediary space that gets created for children and youth is typically one highlighting the importance of responsibility and cooperation. Virtues of punctuality, order, and structure are often stressed. Programs also often create a productive discipline code and procedures. But they often do not do well in creating warm environments, as program management is focused on making things run.

One extended-day partnership in the western United States provides an example of a collaborative arrangement that was an innovative, yet ultimately problematic, model for the planning of an integrated municipal, school, and after-school partnership. With the leadership and initial support of the school district and the mayor's office, the administration of one school began thoughtful plans for a program that would be delivered within the school in collaboration

with a family service center and nonprofit organization. In designing the after-school program, governance and coordination included staff members from both the mayor's office and the leadership of the school, with representation from the other partners. Melding multiple funding streams, the partnership developed far-reaching and innovative goals to deeply intertwine missions within the after-school program. They aimed to bridge the socioemotional development and academic achievement of children in a holistic way during the after-school hours.

The partners designed structures that bridged the school and after-school to support children in a seamless way. Extended-day staff members were integrated into the school activities by attending school meetings alongside regular school teachers. To support coordination, designated regular-day teachers functioned as mentors to extended-day staff. Extended-day teachers were allotted two hours per day for planning meetings, classroom support, and other bridging activities to support learning. Although the process began with thoughtful and intentional partnering, there was a need to define the mission better, to create an organizational and leadership structure that took account of the multiple reporting needs surrounding how the money flowed (that is, paid for by the city yet administered through the school department).

The planning for this initiative took into account deliberate staff integration and establishment of the infrastructure; however, upon implementation, which took place too suddenly, the careful planning and established structures could not be maximized. Mission confusion and poor communication ultimately led the after-school program to replicate the management, content, and practices used during the regular school day. Essentially, one partner—the school—dominated the intermediary space of the after-school program on all levels. Yet this partner was ill equipped to manage the partnership's program and services. This model exhibited enormous potential because it pushed the boundaries regarding what after-school programs could offer. By creating intentional bridging roles and structures, it had the potential to create more comprehensive and supportive experiences for students.

The primary characteristic of this type is that under those circumstances no one owns the intermediary space, and the collaborative

arrangement has to be with a steering committee and joint decision making. An undefined collaborative arrangement that does not represent the power and financial situation will not work. Fortunately, the fact that there were structures and thoughtful plans established at the onset enabled the partnership to weather the storm of the first year of implementation. The partnership was able to withstand many of the ebbs and flows in order to steer the program back on course.

Intersection 3: Inclusive system (interconnected)

Within this interconnected type, there is typically an environment with a great deal of communication and people getting to know each other. Partners go beyond the functional interest and the collaboration to a level of intimacy. In general, this type is organized by being intimate, spending time together, liking each other, and solving problems together. The intermediary space that is created is one of communication, of joint decision making, of ensuring that partners are consulted at all times. This arrangement typically does not have a power- and hierarchy-oriented system, as a great deal is accomplished as a result of key players being part of the intermediary space.

This type of intersection between partners is less concerned with governance and reporting lines. There is a sense of intimacy between the partners and their staff, and organizational issues might be sufficiently worked out to consider the collaboration as a separate, new entity. Partners have fine-tuned the art of communication and often hold multiple events together to highlight their shared accomplishments and work as a team. All of the partners have a sense of comfort and familiarity with each other and take great pride and maintain visible excitement regarding their collaborative work. Differences typically lead to discussions and debates, which in turn can create more closeness. There is a sense of caretaking, not only of the children and families but of the partners. They defend each other from outside criticism, even if it might not be in their strategic interest. We

often observe a strong ethos of solidarity with program leaders asking, "How did we ever serve these kids and families alone?" Program staff members feel enriched by working together. Although the partnership has successfully brought together multiple institutions and organizations, the collaboration is centered around the relationships among the individuals within the organizations.

This type, unlike the other two described thus far, truly begins to recognize and support the intermediary nature of the after-school space. With such a strong focus on relationships and on meeting the developmental needs of youth, the boundaries are far more open and flexible. The community is typically welcomed into the partnership in rather significant ways in order to maximize the ability to support youth and cultivate relationships within the intermediary space of the program.

There are, as with all types, some vulnerabilities within the interconnected framework. Program staff and leaders can become so fearful of damaging the strong sense of inclusion and connection that they avoid addressing differences. As a consequence, programs can unwittingly encourage the formation of cliques that collectively act out differences instead of processing them. Unfortunately, anxieties about governance, money, power, and bureaucratic control make it rare for institutions to reach this level of interconnectedness. The community orientation of after-school programs holds a great deal of promise because the community process can enhance this form of interconnectedness better than institutions acting alone. Program staff members hired by the program itself are often more willing to engage in joint work than are leaders of the participating organizations. This is a very unfortunate problem because, as we have witnessed both here in the United States and internationally, programs that have established this kind of community provide children with a sense of belonging that is essential for their development and their learning.

One of the most warm and inspiring programs we have worked with is also one of the most chaotic and ever-changing, but it is a wonderful and successful environment for children. Managed by a

group of charismatic and dynamic individuals, this community-based program has opened its doors to many community partners and volunteers. A long-term relationship has been nurtured with a local college, which provides technical assistance and volunteer student mentors and tutors. A strong relationship with a mental health agency has also enabled the program to benefit from the support of a psychiatrist, who visits the program to help address some of the mental health concerns of the children and their families. The program is so well regarded within the community that other organizations have also engaged in varying partnering activities in order to provide supplemental programming, field trips, volunteers, and additional resources to the program. The interpersonal connections and caring relationships they have cultivated make both partners and the children they serve feel a deep connection to the program. Within this intermediary space, partners have fostered an environment that truly holds tremendous opportunities for growth and development among the children.

This community feel to the program, however, has resulted in a lack of boundaries, which certainly holds some risks, even at times for the safety of the children. Some might describe a "revolving door syndrome," by which too many people and organizations have entered the program. On one occasion, it came to our attention that gang members were working with the children. Somewhat surprisingly though, because of the warm and caring aspect of the program and the trust it extends to everyone who is connected, the gang members felt welcomed and actually contributed to the life of the program. Troubling, however, was the lack of accountability and plan for consequences if these gang members began to act inappropriately or dangerously. There was also no way to inform parents of this situation. But the interconnected leadership and their care for this small community helped avoid a major problem. We were concerned by the lack of structure, organization, and supervision, yet there were no problems with gang members' presence in the program. The strong relationships and warm atmosphere, largely as a result of the presence of the directors, enabled this type

of arrangement to work effectively. The program maintained minimal governance and oversight, which posed some risks to the sustainability and organization of the program, but the program prevailed despite the chaos. The program was constantly near financial ruin, but because the leadership group was so well liked, there were consistent efforts by the community and funders to help out.

One might ask why this type is developmentally more evolved than the type that has a good collaborative structure in place. Remember, we are not describing types of success but types of systems. The evolution of after-school intermediary spaces (the interconnected one), in which leaders and group members are tied by a common connection and are included in common gestalt that is bigger than each individual member or organization, has grown beyond the constraints of separate organizations. What is important in our typology is how partners influence each other in creating a space. Growing together and creating a space that is not only a meeting place of different organizations but a new unit, is typically a more evolved system. However, as the example shows, the program would be well advised to use some of the strategies from the other types to strengthen itself, such as clearer expectations, roles and responsibilities of partners and staff, and so on. Some inclusive systems are very close internally but have a strong cliquish way against groups outside or organizations that might disturb the internal system. Exclusivity is an important part of the identity of these inclusion-oriented intermediary spaces.

Intersection 4: Changing all partners (transformational)

The fourth type—transformational intersection—is the most complex. Although few programs currently reach this point, we predict more will as the field of afterschool and education matures. In this model, partners are doing more than creating a strong community and a joint mission. They go one significant step further and develop together.

Obviously, there is some growth for each partner in all of the models we just described. Becoming accountable to another group is a form of development, and so is collaborating in a new setting or creating a joint community. But this transformational form of development is different. It is the co-construction of a new framework—a new way of understanding children, families, and communities. The new outlook is also a recognition that the organization will always be transforming and that structures have to be found that do not get in the way of progress. Partnering ends up being less of a strategic tool and more a way of life.

The partners are typically far less preoccupied with their own organizations than they are with the common good. Although many organizations make this claim, it is obvious when groups actually live by these principles. The benefit of this model over the interconnected one is that learning is an essential ingredient. There is no transformation of values and perspective, either individually or collectively, without a process of learning. This premium on growing becomes a value that permeates all of the group's activities. After-school programs also become most effective and can best create a developmental context for children when adults and children are engaged in deep learning together. Anyone who has witnessed the transforming power of an important cause on all participating members and organizations can appreciate the potential. Many transformations in after-school settings will be less revolutionary, but they can nonetheless fundamentally change the attitude of all parties involved.

One U.S. city offers an example in which partners have worked together for a long time to support the development of extended-day art programs. Initiated by the vision of the mayor, this partnership is a rare example in which multiple city departments and organizations worked in partnership with schools to truly transform and create a new organizational entity. The school principals have became highly involved in a collaboration involving a number of other citywide organizations such as libraries, parks and recreation, and schools, along with a sizeable segment of the local art community, in order to establish a comprehensive arts program. What began as a political need to work together, in response to the mayor's strong mandate and

passionate commitment to make this program work, ultimately created a great deal of momentum for each of the participating organizations. Issues of power played a smaller role, because there was trust that there would be sufficient success and funding to go around.

This example reveals how crucial leadership can be in helping to support the success and depth of a partnership. Each participant was not only interested in the money and prestige that came with membership but, through the relationships they developed, genuinely grew to like each other and enjoyed each other's company. Practitioners who may have previously felt their individual work was of little impact within the city overall came to see their role in the partnership as having significant importance to both the mayor and the city. These strong relationships and the mayor's leadership were not enough to ensure success, however. The partnership took great care to establish structures, policies, and protocols that clearly outlined each partner's respective role and responsibility. The majority of management issues had been worked out, and the group felt enriched and excited about their work and began presenting their partnership work to others. Through their collaborative work, the partners actually changed each other and eventually contributed to the establishment of a freestanding new entity within the city, in which youth could access deep and meaningful art programming. Each one of the partners took from this partnership a new understanding of their role in the city, and this influenced the way in which they approached their work, even when it was not directly related to after-school programming. Although following a mission set by the mayor was rewarding, partners began to feel as though their efforts were more than just politically savvy. Each maintained a strong sense of pride for their collaborative work and the way in which they shared resources. The partnership also served as an inspiration for new ideas within each of the separate departments. The result was continuous innovation at the city level, as well as in the neighborhoods and programs. There was a sense that they "got it right" and that success had truly changed every partner.

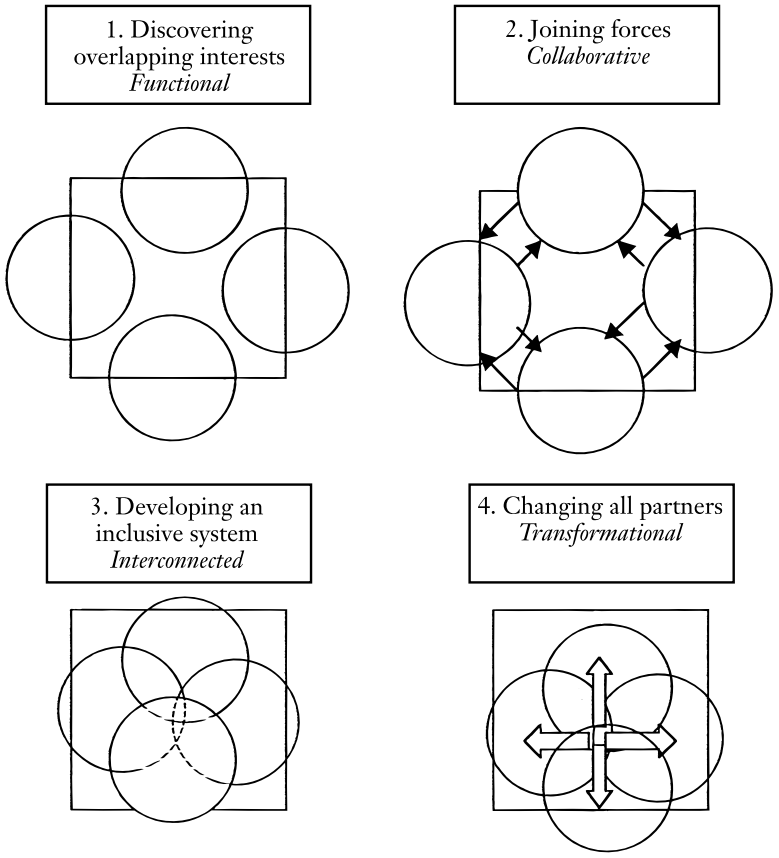
In terms of the intermediary space that got created, the program's success provided a great deal of engagement from the youth.

Table 5.1. Intermediary spaces: Distinguishing features

Partnership Type	*Dimension 1 Coordination or arrangement regarding space and programming*	*Dimension 2 Intersection of partners pertaining to management*
1. Discovering overlapping interests *(functional)*	Parallel programming Separation of participating organizations Minimal joint planning	Resource-driven Power-oriented Secretive
2. Joining forces *(collaborative)*	Joint goal setting Joint use of space	Accountability-oriented Establishment of joint operating system Procedural (for example, conflict resolution, structure, order)
3. Developing an inclusive system *(interconnected)*	Synergistic, accomplishing more than partners can alone Space-oriented toward creating a positive, intimate atmosphere	Communication-oriented Focus on intimacy of partners (for example, caretaking)
4. Changing all partners *(transformational)*	Space is "developmental" and able to accommodate organizational change	Co-construction of new organization that also changes each partner Process- rather than outcomes-oriented

There was a very strong buy-in from staff and students, a great deal of creative activity, and simultaneous structure and discipline. The very nature of the collaboration was also reflected in how the staff treated each other with mutual respect and empowered the kids to participate. Of course, there were many problems to be solved. Competition about resources and decision power existed and become stronger when major budget decisions had to be made. But leadership had also created an intermediary setting that was innovative and less fragile than many other programs. Staff felt protected from the everyday political problems of many other programs, and students and families showed a great deal of buy-in. Table 5.1 summarizes the four types with their key features, and Figure 5.1 shows a visual representation of the four types.

Figure 5.1. Four intermediary spaces



Application of the framework

The types we have set forth are not mutually exclusive, and it is very possible for partnerships to have mixed types when they develop new collaborative efforts that do not entirely supercede the old ones. Rather, the partnership becomes more complex and inclusive. It is only when the partnership attains this more complex level that there is then the opportunity to effect the greatest possible change for the partners. The first type may well be appropriate for

a certain partnership at a certain time, especially when it has to move forward quickly. It will, however, be at a far greater risk for potential deterioration due to misunderstanding and opportunism in which one partner overpowers the others and treats them more like vendors.

An example of this recursive nature of the developmental model is a statewide collaboration in a northwestern part of the United States. Public and private funders, city officials, and large youth service organizations came together to create a new infrastructure for after-school programming. All partners pledged to work together to create the quality and sustainability of programs. The first step of the development of the partnership was strongly guided by a wish to pool money and to create something bigger than each individual organization could produce. The partners, however, soon moved to a level of collaboration that few had experienced before. Mutual respect and joint decision making were partly reached through inclusive leadership. Over the course of eighteen months, enough joint projects and ongoing committees had been formed that a productive atmosphere was established in which partners could share their individual dilemmas and find collective answers. One could even begin to sense an element of transformation, in that partners were beginning to change their own practices within their respective organizations. However, this transforming aspect of the partnership was not much more than a foreshadowing of what could happen if this work progressed well.

What is important for our discussion is not only the fact that the statewide partnership developed quickly and productively but that earlier forms of partnering were not entirely superceded by later ones. For example, at key times when large policy decisions had to be made, partners resorted to a self-protective stance, in which the calculation became that of self-interest for their organization. At other times, the mutual sense of comradery and joint decision making were pushed aside, and the procedural collaborative agreements became much more important than any interest in the overall system of connectedness and joint effort.

Two points are of special importance. First, different tasks require different sets of skills. Sometimes self-interest is appropriate; at other times, a greater sense of collaboration is needed for key decision points in the partnership. It is important to allow for these different registers to be present. Second, there are regression points. Like other systems, when after-school partnerships are under threat (funding crunches, takeover attempts of leadership, bad press, and so on) partnerships can actually devolve into early forms.

Implications of the partnership framework

The efforts to research partnerships must continue to grow and incorporate the developments of the unique and intermediary nature of after-school. At the same time, we must ensure that we bridge research and practice so that our efforts are useful and tangible for practitioners in the field who do the collaborative work for children each day. To understand organizational collaborations, especially those concerned with after-school programming, we need to incorporate the following considerations and questions as we apply this framework and build on it:

1. *Does the framework effectively apply to many different conditions and contexts so as to have some generalizability?* Collaborative after-school partnerships can take place in a myriad of settings, including schools, CBO's, faith-based institutions, clubs, etc. Programs may be enrollment-based or drop-in and may involve a host of different staff, including youth workers, teachers, parents, volunteer mentors, tutors, and university and business partners. Programs may also have to share and occupy the same space and resources as other programs, which may or may not be part of the same partnership.

2. *We must be sure to consider that organizational partnerships evolve as a part of a human system of relationships.* Successful after-school partnerships are often the result of committed individuals who

value and prioritize the collaborative work. As a result, a partnership may be difficult to sustain and may in fact crumble if the individuals involved change.[45] Particularly in light of program staff's part-time status and marginal salaries, high turnover is a significant problem in the field. This challenge clearly affects the ability of partnerships to remain stable over the long term and to take on new developments and opportunities.

3. *We must consider that partnerships need to be sustained through multiple stages.* With such a need for programs to support youth after school, we must be careful not to "declare victory" when we establish new programs and partnerships. Partnerships must maintain the same intensity and involvement to ensure that programs are of high quality and that they seize new and innovative opportunities to advance the field. Successful and sustainable partnerships are dependent on specific individuals and relationships that ensure forward and collaborative movement. After-school partnerships are challenged by the reality that there is frequent staff turnover within schools and community youth-serving organizations. Efforts to improve the compensation and status of program staff will likely have a direct impact on the ability of programs to sustain collaborative partnerships over time and through successive stages. At the same time, the frequent relocation of school administrators may make partnerships with schools difficult over extended periods of time.

4. *Are there ways in which the framework can help prevent breakdowns and stagnations within the afterschool field?* Many programs operate within the school building or aim to work closely with schools, often leading to tension as a result of conflicting agendas, missions, cultures, and the involvement of a different set of actors after the school day has ended.[46] The ability of partners to cultivate supportive and trusting relationships, along with a strong infrastructure for communicating and decision making will ultimately determine their success in getting through the inevitable roadblocks.

Most public-private after-school partnerships struggle to find the time, money, or resources to tend to the partnership. This is similar in the case of social sector partnerships. It is a challenge for

after-school partnerships to secure funding that can be earmarked specifically for supporting the collaborative process.[47] This "glue" money, however, is essential to ensure that the partnership is able to address issues of governance, strategic planning, and evaluation. Intermediaries have become increasingly necessary to play the crucial role of convening, communicating with, and responding to the multiple partners involved.[48]

5. *How can we effectively recognize and incorporate parent involvement in after-school partnerships within the framework?* Just as schools struggle to involve parents in authentic and empowering ways, so too must after-school partnerships reach out to parents to enlist their involvement and support. Parents are clearly stakeholders in both their children's education and activities after school. However, they are not often involved in the governance and efforts of partnerships. Are the challenges and opportunities associated with involving parents in after-school partnerships qualitatively different from those associated with involving them during the school day? In what ways do after-school partnerships ensure that parents are represented within the governance structures?

6. *In what ways does the framework effectively consider the role of intermediary entities or brokers within partnerships?* Increasingly, intermediary brokers are convening some of the partnerships involved in after-school initiatives. Tolman and colleagues explain that these local intermediary organizations are "nearly a necessity if communities hope to sustain the relationships between the range of players working in the out-of-school hours."[49] Although we know little about the nature of after-school partnerships, we know even less about how these intermediaries function to influence and shape those partnerships. How does an intermediary influence the efficiency and success of partnership dialoguing, strategizing, and decision making? In what ways do intermediaries facilitate the partnering process?

7. *Are there ways in which youth voice and involvement in partnerships can be effectively recognized within the framework?* To what extent are children's voices being integrated into after-school partnership strategies and activities? Epstein reminds us that too often youth are "acted on" in the way partnerships provide services, rather than

involved as "doers."[50] Some programs and partnerships have begun to explore innovative ways of better involving youth in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programming, but there is a need for better understanding of how youth are, and can better be, involved in after-school partnerships. Epstein cites Bronfenbrenner to further explain that the "socialization and education should be organized so that, over time, the balance of power is given to the developing person."[51] As we undertake research to better understand how partners manage issues of power and control, we must also explore how youth can weigh in on such important dynamics.

Conclusion

Partnerships have become commonplace among most organizations across all fields, particularly those serving children, youth, and families. It is imperative that as after-school partnerships continue to flourish, we develop strategies and frameworks that can enable us to study how successful ones evolve and what we can learn from those that fail. In order to support the emerging field of afterschool toward that end, we have provided both a critical overview and a heuristic to serve as a foundation for understanding these partnering arrangements and their development. Our heuristic will aid in developing additional research and evaluation strategies. The benefit of looking through our lens is that it may serve as a starting point for looking at partnerships as evolving systems within the afterschool field.

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