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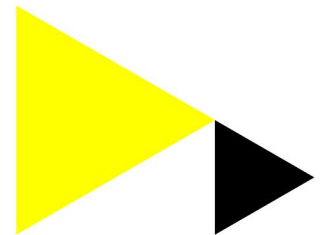
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Collaboration of Youth Social Work Professionals with Volunteers, Parents and Other Professionals

S. M. Rumping¹ · W. A. Manders¹ · J. W. Metz¹

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Abstract There is an increasing attention for youth social work professionals to collaborate with volunteers, parents, and other professionals. Collaboration can contribute to positive outcomes for youth. The present study contributes to understanding differences in the extent to which youth social work professionals collaborate with volunteers, parents, and other professionals. The survey was conducted with Dutch professionals working in youth care ($n = 112$), education ($n = 67$), and youth work ($n = 89$). Index for Interdisciplinary Collaboration was used to assess interdependence in and reflection on the collaboration process. Significant differences were found in the extent to which professionals working in different fields experience interdependence and reflection on the collaboration process with different partners. Future researchers should be aware that the degree to which professionals collaborate with others might depend on the context, work field, and the collaboration partner. Youth social work professionals and local governments can use this study to identify strong and weak collaborative partnerships in order to better organize collaboration between different partners with the final aim of improving support of young people.

Keywords Collaboration · Volunteers · Parents · Professionals · Social work

Introduction

Recently, the responsibility for all youth care in the Netherlands (Van Goor & Naber, 2016), as in most other north-western European welfare states, was decentralized from the national and subnational levels of government to the municipal level (European Cohort Development Project, 2019; Van Goor & Naber, 2016). This change of course in youth policy was a response to a growing demand for specialized youth care, and to shortcomings in the execution of the previous Child and Youth Act. The expectation is that this decentralization will help professionals to work more closely to citizens and identify problems at an earlier stage (Government of the Netherlands, 2013).

As a result of this decentralization, youth social work professionals, such as youth care workers, education workers, and youth workers, have been assigned a new task that demands a new type of professionalism and a different way of working: moving away from an institution-centred and supply-oriented approach and towards operating proactively in and with the community, and offering integrated support and care that is responsive to what young people and families really need (Boendermaker et al., 2016; Hermanns, 2014; Van Goor & Naber, 2016). To accomplish this the Dutch government, like other north-western European governments such as those of the Scandinavian countries, stimulates all youth social work professionals (i.e. professionals in youth care, education, and youth work) to collaborate with volunteers, parents (Boendermaker et al., 2016; Migliorini et al., 2021; OECD,

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2012; Van Goor & Naber, 2016), and other professionals in order to solve problems in child-rearing and youth development (OECD, 2012; Rumping et al., 2019; Van Goor & Naber, 2016). Collaboration of professionals with volunteers, parents, and professionals from other disciplines improves youth and family support (Burbeck et al., 2015; Packard et al., 2000; Viggiani et al., 2002).

Youth social work professionals contribute to the development of youth by working methodically (goal-oriented, systematic, and ethically and socially responsible) using available scientific knowledge, education, experience, and intuition (Metz & Sonneveld, 2018). They work in public organizations and are paid by the local government.

Youth social work professionals work in different fields, such as youth care, education, and youth work. Youth care professionals support parents in raising children and focus on children's health and wellbeing (Nooteboom et al., 2020). They work in or next to children's homes, for example in neighbourhood support teams (Van Goor & Naber, 2016) or as personal supervisors. Professionals in education work in school-related settings with an emphasis on education. For example, they work as teachers or as professionals in an educational playgroup. Professionals in youth work operate in youth's leisure time (Metz & Sonneveld, 2018). Their role is to ensure a positive pedagogical climate, facilitate positive group dynamics, provide information and advice, and support personal development and participation of youth, often in outreach settings and together with the community (Koops et al., 2013).

Within youth social work practices it appears to be hard for professionals, to realize sustained collaborations with volunteers, parents, and with professionals from other disciplines (Migliorini et al., 2021; Oostdam et al., 2014; Van Hattum & Van Hal, 2015; Verhoeven & Van Bochove, 2018). Moreover, professionals from different fields (i.e. youth care, education, and youth work) experience different barriers in collaboration with these partners, which may result in differences in the extent to which they choose to collaborate. Furthermore, there are indications that the extent to which youth social workers collaborate with partners may depend on the type of partner (i.e. volunteers, parents, professionals) (Altshuler, 2003; Brudney & Meijs, 2014; Fabri, 2009; Inge, 1993; Kassenberg et al., 2016; Verhoeven & Van Bochove, 2018).

The aim of this study is to explore whether there are differences in the extent to which professionals from three different work fields (youth care, education, and youth work professionals) collaborate with different partners (volunteers, parents, and professionals from other disciplines). Gaining insight into potential differences in collaboration between professionals from these three work fields and these different partners, is necessary in order to

identify in which partnerships collaboration may be improved. Identifying strong and weak collaborative partnerships may help local governments, volunteer and public organizations, and professionals to better organize collaboration between professionals, volunteers, and parents on one hand and professionals from other disciplines on the other, with the final aim of improving support of young people.

The following sections describe the benefits and barriers youth social work professionals experience when collaborating with specific partners, namely volunteers (first section), parents (second section), and professionals from other disciplines (third section). It is argued that these benefits and barriers may differ between professionals from different fields (youth care, education, and youth work). This is followed by a definition of collaboration, after which the research questions and the method are described. The last sections present the study results, discussion, and conclusion.

The Benefits and Barriers of Collaboration with Volunteers

Volunteers are an important collaboration partner for professionals (Kahana et al., 2013; Hoogervorst et al., 2016; Olivier-Mensah, 2019; White et al., 2020). Hoogervorst et al., (2016) showed that collaboration with volunteers in youth social work can positively influence support of youth and parents. Characteristics of volunteering are altruism and unpaid labour, which may result in equal, flexible, and open relations (Kahana et al., 2013; Hoogervorst et al., 2016; White et al., 2020). The expectation is that an exchange between professional and volunteer results in better support of youth and parents because of the different characteristics and strengths of volunteers and professionals (Hoogervorst et al., 2016; Verhoeven & Van Bochove, 2018; White et al., 2020).

There are several barriers in the collaboration of youth social work professionals with volunteers (Brudney & Meijs, 2014; Metz & Sonneveld, 2018; Southby et al., 2019). Generally, volunteers are involved in more different activities, contexts, and organizations than social work professionals who work specifically from their own professional setting (Brudney & Meijs, 2014). Volunteers also have different skills, knowledge, and backgrounds than social youth professionals who operate from their professional knowledge base (Brudney & Meijs, 2014; Metz & Sonneveld, 2018; Van Bochove et al., 2018). It is important for organizations to pay attention to these differences in order to support collaboration between professionals and volunteers.

However, within social work organizations models of volunteer management differ (Brudney & Meijs, 2014;

Overgaard, 2015). A study by Van der Gaag and Van der Klein (2012) showed several different collaboration forms within youth social work organizations, such as organized and disorganized voluntary work and voluntary work on an incidental or regular basis. Within these different forms identical barriers in the collaboration of professionals with volunteers were found, for example, different expectations of professionals about the collaboration. Professionals and organizations lack skills and knowledge on seeing and managing collaborations with volunteers (Brudney & Meijs, 2014; Southby et al., 2019; Studer & Schnurbein, 2013; Van der Gaag & Van der Klein, 2012).

Furthermore, the extent to which youth social work professionals collaborate with volunteers differs per organization (Bulsink & Van der Klein, 2012). For example, in almost a quarter (24%) of education and youth care organizations in the Netherlands professionals work together with volunteers often. In more than one-third (38%) of education and youth care organizations, professionals work together with volunteers regularly, and in more than a quarter of the organizations (28%) professionals work together with volunteers some of the time (Bulsink & Van der Klein, 2012).

As described above, youth social work organizations differ in the extent to which they collaborate with volunteers. Knowledge about differences in the extent to which professionals from different social work fields collaborate with volunteers seems to be limited, but can help support sustainable collaboration. It is therefore necessary to explore the differences in collaborations with volunteers between professionals from different fields (youth care, education, and youth work).

The Benefits and Barriers of Collaboration with Parents

Parents are also important collaboration partners for youth social work professionals (Bakker et al., 2013; Cheng & Lo, 2012; Migliorini et al., 2021; Oostdam et al., 2014). Research shows that collaboration between professionals and parents can improve the quality of professional support (Cheng & Lo, 2012). Collaboration between professionals and parents results, among other things, in more attention for children's social-emotional skills. These skills are predictors for children's learning performance. Parental involvement also contributes to the development of creative and cognitive skills in children, such as language proficiency (Bakker et al., 2013; Oostdam et al., 2014).

Youth social work professionals also encounter different barriers when collaborating with parents (Kassenberg et al., 2016; Migliorini et al., 2021; Nooteboom et al., 2020). Youth care professionals are encouraged to make decisions together with parents (Hamilton, 2004; Nooteboom et al.,

2020). However, it appears to be challenging to determine the extent to which parents should be included, and what their own role should be in the decision-making process (Migliorini et al., 2021; Nooteboom et al., 2020).

Education professionals also experience barriers in the collaboration with parents (Kassenberg et al., 2016; Williams & Sánchez, 2012). Differences in expectations of education professionals and parents can cause difficulties, as can feedback given by parents to education professionals (Kassenberg et al., 2016).

In youth work, it is increasingly demanded that professionals work with parents in supporting youth until they are 18 years old (Koops et al., 2013; Veenbaas et al., 2011). However, the extent to which youth work professionals collaborate with parents differs. In a youth work study of Koops et al. (2013), only 28% of children in youth work reported that youth workers were in contact with their parents. In the study of Schaap et al. (2017) youth workers reported that parents were involved in 50% of youth work activities.

As described above, professionals from different work fields (youth care, education, youth work) have different reasons for, and experience different barriers in, collaboration with parents. Consequently, differences may exist between professionals from these different fields in the extent to which they pursue these collaborations. It should therefore be explored whether there are differences in collaboration with parents between professionals from these different work fields.

The Benefits and Barriers of Interdisciplinary Collaboration

A third important collaboration type for youth social work professionals is interdisciplinary collaboration (Rumping et al., 2019). Research shows that interdisciplinary collaboration between youth social work professionals can contribute to better youth (and family) support in various work fields. Packard et al. (2006) found that in youth care interdisciplinary collaboration can positively influence the support of families. Viggiani et al. (2002) showed that in education collaboration with other professionals can positively influence a classroom environment. Koops et al. (2013) argued that when professionals in youth work collaborate with other professionals, youth can be more effectively supported in a preventive setting. However, differences in competencies, values, cultures, identities, a lack of trust, and work approach between professionals from different disciplines can create barriers for successful interdisciplinary collaboration (Banks, 2013; Toros et al., 2021). Below, further attention is paid to the barriers found for youth social work professionals from different fields (youth care, education, and youth work).

For youth care professionals, one barrier in interdisciplinary collaboration concerns sharing confidential information (Altshuler, 2003; Nadeau et al., 2017; Nooteboom et al., 2020). Other professionals may argue that youth care professionals do not want to share vital information, while youth care professionals consider this information to be confidential and as such, feel it should not be shared with other professionals. So there is tension between youth care professionals and other professionals regarding confidentiality of information. This tension may create a barrier in collaboration between youth care professionals and other professionals (Altshuler, 2003; Nadeau et al., 2017).

For professionals in education, a barrier in interdisciplinary collaboration is formed by the fact that schools do not always require or do not create supportive environments for professionals to collaborate with professionals from other disciplines (Horn, 2008; Toros et al., 2021). Horn (2008) showed that for education professionals who work in their own classroom, collaboration with other professionals is not a priority. In addition, classroom privacy and norms can be seen as a reason for creating a personal classroom area (Warren Little, 1990) thus creating another barrier for collaboration (Inge, 1993). In youth work, a lack of knowledge of the youth work profession can create a barrier in collaboration (Smits as cited in Fabri, 2009; Schild et al., 2017).

As described above, research shows that different barriers exist for youth social work professionals from different fields (youth care, education, youth work) regarding interdisciplinary collaboration. Consequently, differences may exist between professionals from different youth social work fields in the extent to which they collaborate with professionals from other disciplines. Further insight into the differences in interdisciplinary collaboration between professionals from different work fields (youth care, education, and youth work) should therefore be pursued.

Definition of Collaboration

Collaboration can be seen as a broad concept and can be examined in different forms and fields. The conception of collaboration in this study is based on Bronstein's (2002, 2003) concept of Interdisciplinary Collaboration. Bronstein (2003) described interdisciplinary collaboration as "*an effective interpersonal process that facilitates the achievement of goals that cannot be reached when professionals act on their own*" (Bruner, 1991 as cited in: Bronstein, 2003 p. 299). In this study, it is argued that besides collaborating with other professionals, collaboration with volunteers and parents may also lead to effective interpersonal processes that facilitate the achievement of the abovementioned goals.

In this study, two important components of collaboration are assessed, which are also distinguished by Bronstein (2003). The first collaboration component is interdependence, the interaction behaviour of professionals in collaboration with each partner. When professionals collaborate with volunteers, parents, or other professionals, they are always dependent on the other to achieve goals and tasks. Being aware of, and secure in, your own professional role and tasks is essential for collaboration. Interdependence can be seen as a crucial component of collaboration (Bronstein, 2002, 2003; Mellin et al., 2010).

The second collaboration component is reflection on the collaboration process. Reflection refers to the attention of professionals to the process of working together with volunteers, parents, or other professionals (Bronstein, 2002, 2003). Reflection is an important learning instrument for considering and discussing work relations and collaboration (Atkins & Murphy, 1993; Bronstein, 2002, 2003). Professionals can use reflection to improve collaboration with different partners (Bronstein, 2002, 2003, Rumping et al., 2019) and is essential to sustained collaboration (Bronstein, 2002, 2003; Van Hattum & Van Hal, 2015).

Research Questions

The present study is explorative and is guided by two research questions:

1. Are there differences between youth social work professionals (working in youth care, education, and youth work) in the extent to which they experience interdependence in collaboration with different partners (volunteers, parents, and other professionals)?
2. Are there differences between youth social work professionals (working in youth care, education, and youth work) in the extent to which they experience reflection on the collaboration process with different partners (volunteers, parents, and other professionals)?

Method

Bachelor Social Work students received a half-day training and were involved in the data collection. Over a period of six months, students invited youth social work professionals from three different fields (youth care, education, and youth work), working in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, to participate in this study via online surveys or paper questionnaires. In total, 268 professionals (youth care $n = 112$, education $n = 67$, and youth work $n = 89$) participated. The survey data were collected by means of an online survey program and imported into SPSS 22 for analysis.

Participants were recruited from different public organizations. Most of the participants work in youth care (42%), for example as a supervisor (22%) or a neighbourhood support team worker (12%), with a focus on children's health and wellbeing or parenting support. They work in children's and parents' homes or at institutions in the neighbourhood. A quarter (25%) of the participants work in education, for example as a teacher (11%) or a programme coordinator (6%). Their primary task is to educate or to support children in their education and they work at schools in neighbourhoods. A third of the participants are professional youth workers (33%). They support children in their leisure time with their personal development and participation, for example, through sports or cultural activities. They work in outreach settings, community centres, or at neighbourhood playgrounds.

More than three quarters (76%) of the sample are female, with almost a quarter (24%) being male. Almost three quarters (74%) has a western background, and a little more than a quarter (26%) has a non-western background. Table 1 describes the genders and ethnic backgrounds of the professionals per field. The mean age of participants was 47 years (SD = 16,01). Table 2 describes the age range of participants per field.

In this study Bronstein's (2002) Index Interdisciplinary Collaboration (IIC) was used to gain insight into interdependence and reflection on the collaboration process with volunteers, parents, and other professionals. The IIC is one of the most well-known tools for assessing collaboration in social work (Arthur et al., 2012). The IIC subscales interdependence (13 items) and reflection on (collaboration) process (9 items) were used. An example of an interdependent item for collaboration with volunteers is: "*Volunteers and I rarely communicate*". An example of a reflection item on collaboration with parents is: "*Parents and I talk about ways to involve other professionals in our work together*".

The IIC scales were translated into Dutch to examine the interdisciplinary collaboration of youth social work professionals. In the translated scales the names of "professional from other disciplines" (list 1) were changed into volunteers (list 2) and parents (list 3) in order to also examine the collaboration of youth social work professionals with volunteers and parents. Because not all participants work with volunteers, only 62% of professionals from youth care, 63% of professionals from education, and

Table 1 Gender and ethnic characteristics of participants per work field

	Youth care	Education	Youth work
Female and western background	73.2	79.2	76.4
Male and western background	86.7	85.7	55.9

Table 2 Age range of participants per work field

	Youth care	Education	Youth work
Range			
15–25	10.7	13.4	12.5
26–35	45.6	43.3	38.6
36–45	19.6	17.9	26.2
46–55	15.2	16.4	17.0
56–65	8.9	9.0	5.7

82% of professionals from youth work filled in list 2. A 5-point Likert scale was used with answer categories ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

The IIC subscales interdependency and reflection on the process have shown strong internal consistency: Cronbach's Alpha 0.78 and 0.82, respectively, based on a study involving 462 social workers across the United States of America (Bronstein, 2002). The internal consistency of the translated scales was also tested by using Cronbach's alphas. Cronbach's alpha of interdependence with other professionals, volunteers, and parents was 0.78, 0.84, and 0.80, respectively. Cronbach's alpha of reflection on the collaboration process with other professionals, volunteers, and parents was 0.77, 0.83, and 0.77, respectively. Those results indicate that the items were measuring the same construct and indicate a strong reliability. ANOVA was used to test differences in interdependence and reflection on collaboration process between professionals in different fields of research with different partners. Post hoc tests were used to provide specific information on which fields differed from each other.

Results

Differences in Interdependence

ANOVA was used to test the first research question: are there differences between youth social work professionals (working in youth care, education, and youth work) in the extent to which they experience interdependence in collaboration with different partners (volunteers, parents and other professionals)?

Interdependence with Volunteers

A statistically significant difference was found between professionals in youth care, education, and youth work in interdependence with volunteers ($F(2,182) = 14,27$, $p < 0.01$). Post hoc tests revealed that youth work professionals experienced significantly more interdependence with volunteers than professionals in education and youth care professionals. No other significant differences were found in interdependence with volunteers between professionals from different work fields.

Interdependence with Parents

A significant difference was found between professionals in youth care, education, and youth work in interdependence with parents ($F(2,252) = 14,42$, $p < 0.01$). Post hoc tests revealed that youth care workers experienced significantly more interdependence with parents than youth workers and professionals in education. No other significant differences were found in interdependence with parents between professionals from different work fields.

Interdependence with Other Professionals

There was a statistically significant difference between professionals in youth care, education, and youth work in interdependence with other professionals ($F(2,265) = 4,56$, $p < 0.05$). Post hoc tests revealed that youth care workers experienced significantly more interdependence with other professionals than professionals in education. No other significant differences were found between professionals from different work fields in experienced interdependence with other professionals (Table 3).

Differences in Reflection

The second research question are there differences between youth social work professionals (working in youth care, education, and youth work) in the extent to which they

Table 3 The Extent of interdependence in collaboration per work field and partner

Work field	Volunteers		Parents		Professionals	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Youth care	3.54	0.65	3.94**	0.44	3.93*	0.44
Education	3.56	0.83	3.71	0.47	3.75	0.47
Youth work	3.98**	0.63	3.57	0.55	3.78	0.39

* $p < .05$ ** $p < 0.1$

experience reflection on the collaboration process with different partners (volunteers, parents, and other professionals) was also tested with ANOVA.

Reflection with Volunteers

A significant difference was found between professionals from youth care, education, and youth work in the extent to which they experienced reflection during the collaboration process with volunteers ($F(2,181) = 10,65$; $p < 0.01$). Post hoc tests revealed that youth workers experienced significantly more reflection with volunteers than professionals who work in education and in youth care. No other significant differences were found in reflection on the process between professionals from different work fields.

Reflection with Parents

Significant differences were found between professionals from youth care, education, and youth work in the extent to which they experienced reflection during the collaboration process with parents ($F(2,252) = 7,86$; $p < 0.01$). Post hoc tests revealed that youth care workers experienced significantly more reflection on the collaboration process with parents compared to youth work professionals and professionals in education. No other significant differences were found in reflection on the process with parents between professionals from different work fields.

Reflection with Other Professionals

No significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$) were found between professionals of different work fields in their experienced reflection during the collaboration process with other professionals ($F(2,265) = 1,41$; $p = 0.25$) (Table 4).

Discussion

This study sought to determine whether there are differences between youth social work professionals from different work fields (youth care, education, and youth work) in the extent to which they experience interdependence during, and reflect on, the collaboration process with different partners (volunteers, parents, and professionals). This study found that the extent to which youth social work professionals from youth care, education, and youth work collaborate with volunteers, parents, and other professionals differs per collaboration partner and that there are differences between the youth social work fields.

This study shows that youth workers experience significantly more interdependence and reflection on the collaboration process with volunteers than professionals in

Table 4 The extent of reflection on the collaboration process per work field and partner

Field	Volunteers		Parents		Professionals	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Youth Care	3.23	0.58	3.67**	0.44	3.55	0.58
Education	3.40	0.54	3.48	0.47	3.49	0.64
Youth Work	3.66**	0.55	3.39	0.55	3.43	0.41

** $p < 0.1$

youth care and education. This is in line with findings that in youth work volunteers are often involved in leisure time activities together with professionals (Fabri, 2007), whereas in education and youth care fewer volunteers are involved (Bulsink & Van der Klein, 2012). This finding is even more striking considering the fact that 82% of professionals from youth work worked with volunteers and filled in list 2 on collaboration with volunteers, while 62% of professionals from youth care and 63% of professionals from education worked with volunteers and filled in list 2. In other words, a higher percentage of youth work professionals working with volunteers also reported a higher level of collaboration with volunteers in comparison with a lower percentage of professionals working in youth care and education reporting lower levels of collaboration.

It seems that the context and type of activities carried out in the work field influence the extent to which professionals collaborate with volunteers: youth workers naturally work more within a community context (Koops et al., 2013) than professionals in youth care and education. Local governments and public youth care and educational organizations could use the collaboration between youth workers and volunteers as an example of how collaboration with volunteers can be designed: away from an institution-oriented approach and more towards operating proactively in the community with volunteers.

Youth care workers experience more interdependence and reflection on the collaboration process with parents compared to professionals in education and youth workers. This finding may partly be explained by the increasing attention in youth care for the importance of making decisions together with parents (Hamilton, 2004; Migliorini et al., 2021; Nooteboom et al., 2020). Where previous studies (Migliorini et al., 2021; Nooteboom et al., 2020) show that there can be barriers for youth care workers in working with parents, for example in the decision-making process, this study shows that youth care professionals still experience more collaboration with parents than professionals from other fields. This finding may also be explained by the context in which professionals work. Youth care professionals often work around the home of youths (Van Goor & Naber, 2016), while professionals in education work in school-related contexts (Kassenberg et al., 2016) and youth workers operate in youth's leisure

time (Metz & Sonneveld, 2018). This result shows that it is important to take into account the context in which professionals work when it comes to collaboration with parents and to further explore these kinds of partnerships within professional organizations in order to collaborate more with and within the community.

Furthermore, youth care workers experience significantly more interdependence with other professionals than professionals working in education. An explanation for this might be that there is an increasing attention for youth care workers to collaborate with other professionals (Van Goor & Naber, 2016). This finding is in line with previous studies (Horn, 2008; Inge, 1993; Toros et al., 2021; Warren Little, 1993) which have suggested that professionals in education often work in a school setting, where collaboration with other professionals is not a main priority.

A fourth finding is that there are no significant differences between professionals in youth care, education, and youth work in the extent to which they reflect on the collaboration process with other professionals. Therefore, it can be said that professionals from youth care, education, and youth work experience similar levels of reflection on these collaboration processes. Although youth care workers experience more interdependence with other professionals than professionals working in education, their levels of reflection on the collaboration process with other professionals are the same and somewhat lower than their levels of experiencing interdependence. This shows that it is important to assess both experienced interdependence and reflection on collaboration, because findings may be different. Furthermore, reflection on the collaboration process with other professionals is essential to successful collaborations (Bronstein, 2002, 2003; Van Hattum & Van Hal, 2015).

In summary, significant differences were found between youth social work professionals working in different fields in the extent to which they experience interdependence during, and reflection on, the collaboration process with volunteers, parents, and professionals from other disciplines. Which professionals differ from each other in the extent to which they collaborate with others depends on the collaboration partner and context. This study shows that it is important in research on interdisciplinary collaboration to not focus solely on interprofessional collaboration but to

also take into account collaboration with volunteers and parents.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is subject to certain limitations. First, this study is conducted in Amsterdam and it is uncertain whether the results apply to the Netherlands and other north-western European welfare states. However, participants were recruited from different organizations and work fields which resulted in a varied group of participants of different professions, gender, and cultural backgrounds, which could be representative for the Netherlands and other countries. The three work fields (youth care, education, and youth work) and three different partners (volunteers, parents, and professionals) can also be distinguished internationally. Although the benefits and barriers experienced may differ internationally (Banks, 2013), it is expected that the differences found between the different work fields in collaborating with different partners will also apply to other countries.

Research on (differences in) collaboration of professionals from different work fields (e.g. youth care, education, and youth work) with other volunteers, parents, and professionals is scarce. Therefore, this study has an explorative character and repetition of this study in other countries is needed. As a consequence of its explorative character, this study leads to new findings about collaboration. Qualitative research is needed to identify how and why differences in collaboration with different partners arise.

Another limitation is that the partners in interdependence and reflection on the collaboration process were not defined in the survey, which means that professionals could have interpreted these in different ways. For example, volunteer work takes many different forms (Handy et al., 2000; Southby et al., 2019) and parental involvement (collaboration with parents) in school can be seen in different ways, such as involvement in class assistance, homework support, or a stimulating role in education (Epstein, 2001).

Finally, the three other scales of Bronstein's IIC were not examined in this survey. Further quantitative research is needed to examine the other concepts of collaboration with volunteers, parents, and other professionals. Young people should also be involved as participants to examine the interaction processes with youth social workers, as youth are an important collaboration partner for professionals as well.

Conclusion

This study identified differences between youth social work professionals (working in youth care, education, and youth work) in the extent to which they experience interdependence and reflection on the collaboration process with different partners (volunteers, parents, and professionals from other disciplines). Identifying these strong and weak collaborative partnerships may help professionals, their organizations, and local governments to better organize collaboration with volunteers, parents, and professionals in order to improve support of young people. Particularly in the youth care and education sectors, more attention should be paid to collaboration between professionals and volunteers, as collaborative relationships are not always present. Given the importance of collaboration to the wellbeing of youth and the differences found between youth social work professionals, more research is urgently needed to better understand these differences and how collaboration between specific partners can be improved.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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