

# COLLABORATION IN LAW PRACTICE: A SATISFYING AND PRODUCTIVE PROCESS FOR A DIVERSE PROFESSION

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To work effectively and to find satisfaction in the modern practice of law, lawyers need skills and perspectives that differ from those that are used by solo practitioners litigating on behalf of individual clients. Increasingly, more lawyers are working in large organizations and firms,<sup>1</sup> litigating in teams,<sup>2</sup> and planning together in meetings.<sup>3</sup> For the most part, however, law schools and post-law school training programs have failed to teach lawyers how to work with other lawyers and professionals for the client's good.<sup>4</sup> This article examines collaboration among lawyers

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I want to acknowledge several groups of colleagues who helped in the development and preparation of this article. Unfortunately, tenure requirements dictated that the paper be my own. A paper about collaboration written by one person seems a contradiction in terms. The joint work and learning I have enjoyed at CUNY Law School provided the impetus and insights for the article. I want to acknowledge all that I have learned about collaboration in my joint work with colleagues, staff, and students, past and present, at CUNY Law School. Because of the innumerable contributions from this richly diverse community, I will follow the CUNY tradition of not naming so as to not exclude. I also want to acknowledge the ideas and encouragement provided by the New York City Woman Clinical Law Professors Group and the Columbia Theory Workshop run by Steve Ellman, Beryl Blaustone, MaryLu Bilek, Carrie Menkel-Meadow, Alice Morey, and Holly Hartstone who were especially helpful in their comments and suggestions on later drafts. I thank the *Vermont Law Review* for their enthusiastic acceptance of the article and June Tierney for her careful and thoughtful editing. Finally, the transformation of the article from a reporting of experiences to one which incorporates many different disciplines could not have been accomplished without the research and input of Laurie Beck, a CUNY Law School graduate.

1. See *infra* notes 13-16 and accompanying text.

2. See Mary Twitchell, *The Ethical Dilemmas of Lawyers on Teams*, 72 MINN. L. REV. 697 (1988).

3. *Id.*

4. Since its inception, CUNY Law School at Queens College has included collaborative skills as an important aspect of lawyering. A recent report of the American Bar Association identifies collaboration skills as essential for new lawyers. See Report to the Task Force on Law Schools and the Profession: Narrowing the Gap, *Legal Education and Professional Development—An Educational Continuum*, 1992 A.B.A. SEC. LEGAL EDUC. & ADMISSIONS BAR 201. Several clinical programs have assigned students to work in teams to teach these skills and perspectives to the students. Throughout this article, I relate stories of CUNY law students' collaborations and the lessons I have learned from helping them learn from the experience of working together. See also Michael Meltsner & Philip G. Schrag, *Report From a CLEPR Colony*, 76 COLUM. L. REV. 581 (1976).