

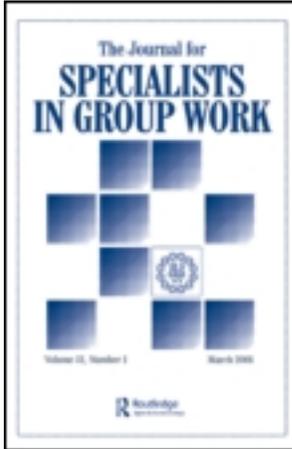
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### Personality, Leadership Style, and Theoretical Orientation as Predictors of Group Co-Leadership Satisfaction

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# Personality, Leadership Style, and Theoretical Orientation as Predictors of Group Co-Leadership Satisfaction

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*The purpose of this study was to predict group co-leader satisfaction using personality, leadership style, and perceived compatibility of theoretical orientation. Fifty-four co-leader pairs (n = 108 group leaders) completed the NEO-Five Factor Inventory, Leadership Characteristics Inventory, Co-Therapy Relationship Questionnaire, and Co-Therapist Inventory. Co-leaders' perceptions of theoretical compatibility, and differences in co-leader confrontational style, best predicted co-leader relationship satisfaction. In addition, co-leaders who selected their own co-therapist and those in experienced pairs were significantly more satisfied. Implications and recommendations for future research and for selection of co-leadership pairs and supervision of co-led groups are discussed.*

**Keywords:** *co-leadership; compatibility; leadership behavior; personality; satisfaction*

The co-therapy relationship demonstrates in vivo the therapists' ability to relate to each other . . . . And since this powerful tool can lead astray as well as help, it requires that both therapists conscientiously dedicate themselves to its care and development. (Stein, 1998, p. 44)

Anecdotally, clinical practice supports the use of co-therapy as an aid to group psychotherapy (Luke & Hackney, 2007). Benefits include better management of the group's many (and sometimes conflicting)

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needs, strong affect, complicated dynamics, and concurrent events (Bernard & Drob, 1985; Concannon, 1995); pooling of resources and abilities of both therapists (Bernard & Drob, 1985; Roller & Nelson, 1991); broadening of the range of transference reactions and simulation of a family unit (Concannon, 1995); increased validity and intensity of therapist interpretations (Dubner, 1998); the potential to break a therapeutic impasse (Roller & Nelson, 1991); the balance of challenge and support (Roller & Nelson, 1991); utility in training novice therapists (Rosenbaum, 1983); continuity of care (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995); and mutual support of co-leaders (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). In addition, co-leaders may enhance and balance group process and interaction, helping group members to benefit from multiple perspectives and experience support and empathy from one while being challenged by the other leader. This study will examine possible predictors of satisfaction in group co-leaders.

### **Personality as a Predictor of Co-Leader Satisfaction**

One of the examples cited most frequently on the merits of co-leading a group is the replication of the family in co-parenting roles. Roller and Nelson (1991) concluded that "most of the ideas we formulate regarding the relationship between co-therapists can readily be applied to the relationship between parents who desire to co-parent their children in an equal fashion" (p. 4). Wheelan (1997) likened co-therapy to parenting since co-therapists should have a united front; clarity of purpose; consistency in approach; and a shared plan of action. Furthermore, the most popular analogy of the co-therapist team is that of a married couple: "They not only are viewed as compatible partners but in some ways are perceived as belonging more to each other than to the group" (Concannon, 1995, p. 74).

Since the analogy of a married couple is often suggested (Brent & Marine, 1982; Whitaker & Garfield, 1997) as the replication of family co-parenting roles, personality factors found to predict marital satisfaction were investigated to assess whether they predict group co-leader relationship satisfaction. Based on a review of the marital literature, personality, intimacy, and communication (Plechaty et al., 1996) were identified as major factors in relationship satisfaction. Kelly and Conley (1987) and Karney and Bradbury (1997) reported that higher levels of neuroticism in partners has been shown to predict divorce while Karney and Bradbury also suggested that openness predicted marital satisfaction over time.

In addition, neuroticism, in particular, has been suggested as contributing to the quality of the co-leader relationship. Russell and Russell (1979) suggested that effective co-therapy involves "the kind

of ego strength, flexibility, reality sense and resolution of neuroticism” (p. 42). Thus far, however, research on personality variables as they relate to co-leader satisfaction has not been undertaken. Thus, one purpose of the current study is to broaden the understanding of how personality variables impact co-leader relationship satisfaction. The examination of co-leader relationship satisfaction is a precursor to studying the impact of co-leader behavior on group effectiveness. It is assumed that if co-leaders are satisfied with their relationship, they perceive that they work well together—a precursor to effectiveness.

Group theorists have suggested personality as a major influence on co-leadership satisfaction. Yalom and Leszcz (2005) hypothesized that the success or failure of a group depends largely on the co-therapy relationship, emphasizing complementary personalities: “select a co-therapist toward whom you feel close but who in personal characteristics is dissimilar to you; such complementarity enriches the experience of the group” (p. 439). Rosenbaum (1983) suggested that careful attention should be paid to the personality characteristics of therapists, particularly compatibility of temperament. Based on this previous work, personality characteristics are included as potential predictors in this study to better understand this idea of complementarity.

### **Theoretical Compatibility as a Predictor of Co-Leader Satisfaction**

Others have suggested compatibility is a strong predictor of co-leader relationship satisfaction. Bernard, Drob, and Lifshutz (1987) and Paulson, Burroughs, and Gelb (1976) suggested that compatibility of theoretical orientation was the key ingredient in co-leader satisfaction. Difference in style and skill was one of the main problems reported by the co-therapists of different theoretical orientations even though these co-therapists often had the same amount of experience (Paulson et al., 1976). However, in contrast, Piper, Doan, Edwards, and Jones (1979) found that co-leaders who consistently displayed dissimilar leadership styles had group members who achieved a significantly higher percentage of work and improvement.

Roller and Nelson (1991), in their qualitative study of co-leaders, noted an effective co-leader relationship was related to several characteristics: a complementary balance of therapist skills, compatibility of theoretical viewpoints and of therapists as people, equality of participation, compatibility of personalities, and similar levels of experience. They also noted the importance of co-leaders’ willingness to communicate openly with one another and discuss the co-therapy relationship. More recently, Okech and Kline (2005) examined qualitatively the development of co-leader relationships and their potential impact on

effectiveness. They concluded that “co-leaders believed that their effectiveness as co-leaders depended on the quality of their relationships . . . co-leaders freely share honest feedback and are emotionally open and available for each other” (p. 188). Most recently, Miles and Kivlighan (2008b) studied eight co-led intergroup dialogue teams and found that group co-leaders’ mental models of their groups became more similar over time, suggesting a shared cognitive model is arrived at by co-leaders after working together. In addition, similarity of group co-leaders’ mental models after specific sessions was related to higher levels of engagement in the following session; thus, suggesting similarity in co-leader views may impact group process in the short run. In a follow-up study, Miles and Kivlighan (2008a) examined group co-leader behavior and reported that as predicted, similarity in leadership style (personal and technical) resulted in enhanced group process.

While many predictors of co-leader satisfaction have been suggested, little quantitative research has been conducted to test these assumptions. Luke and Hackney (2007) noted that overall there were 225 published references to leader dyads, only 25 were research based (18 in peer-reviewed journals and 7 completed but unpublished dissertations). In addition, 5 of the 8 studies published since 2001 were qualitative in nature. Miles and Kivlighan (2008b) suggested that future studies extend the concept of mental models to include knowledge and attitudes about leadership. The exploration of co-leadership satisfaction is important to the field of group therapy as it will aid in the selection of co-leaders and in the provision of a structure for those co-leaders who have been assigned to work together.

The theoretical literature consistently suggests that neuroticism, and compatibility of theoretical orientation and leadership style, may predict group co-leadership satisfaction but with minimal research support. Miles and Kivlighan (2008b) suggested that co-leaders are most effective when co-leaders share a similar way of thinking but differ in their leadership skills and styles. The current study examines how personality variables, leadership style, and compatibility of theoretical orientation impact co-leader relationship satisfaction, both in terms of average levels of characteristic or skill, and also differences between co-leaders. A strength of this study is that it examines co-leader satisfaction from the perspective of both leaders to “capture the mutual nature of the construct” (Kivlighan, 2007, p. 430).

The research questions are as follows:

- RQ<sub>1</sub>: Are there significant differences in co-leader relationship satisfaction based on co-leadership experience, gender, age of group members, or choice to work together?

RQ<sub>2</sub>: Do the variables of personality, leader style, and theoretical compatibility of group co-leaders significantly predict, and in what combination, co-leader relationship satisfaction?

The hypotheses are as follows:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Group leaders with similar personalities will report lower levels of co-leader relationship satisfaction.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Group co-leader pairs with higher mean levels of extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness and lower mean levels of neuroticism overall will report higher levels of co-leader relationship satisfaction.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Group co-leader pairs with higher mean levels of theoretical compatibility and leadership style will report greater relationship satisfaction.

## METHOD

### Participants and Procedures

Participants were recruited from several sources: a listserv for college and university counseling centers; the *American Group Psychotherapy Association's* Co-Therapy Special Interest Group; a community mental health agency; and graduate students co-leading interpersonal growth groups as part of a graduate level course at a large research university. The criteria for participation were current co-leadership of a weekly counseling, training, support, psychoeducational, or therapy group, and both co-leaders agreeing to participate in this study. This study was approved by the university institutional review board.

Participants on listservs received a listserv e-mail inviting them to participate; if interested, they e-mailed the first author for a study packet to complete. Group leaders at the community mental health agency or in the groups course were informed of the study by the first author and told to contact her if interested in participating. Initially, 110 co-leader pairs received the self-report packet of questionnaires, along with a letter of introduction, and a stamped, addressed envelope for the return of the measures. Co-leaders were asked to complete the questionnaire without help or consultation from his or her co-leader. In all, 54 co-leader pairs, or 108 individuals, completed the surveys for a return rate of 49%. An additional 32 individual surveys were returned, but could not be used because only one co-leader within the pair returned the survey.

The average age of the group leaders was 45.8 ( $SD = 12.65$ ), with a range of 23 to 84 years. In all, 46.3% of the co-leader teams were comprised of two female co-leaders; 42.6% a male/female dyad; and

11.1% two male co-leaders. A total of 89.8% of the 108 leaders were Caucasian, 2.8% Asian American, 1.9% Hispanic/Latino, .9% Native American, and 4.6% indicated Other. (It was not possible to determine from the data which co-leader pairs were mixed in race.)

Of the surveys returned, 61.1% of the teams were comprised of two experienced co-leaders, 29.6% had one experienced and one inexperienced co-leader, and 9.3% were comprised of two inexperienced co-leaders (by self-report of group experience). A total of 64.8% of the co-leader teams chose to work with one another while 35.2% were assigned to work with one another. Approximately 75.9% co-led adult groups, 13% adolescent groups, 3.7% children's groups, and 7.4% unknown. In all, 59.3% reported their groups to be mixed gender, 6.7% led female only groups, 5.6% male only groups, and 18.5% did not indicate the gender of group members.

In all, 72.2% labeled their groups as therapy groups; 13% as counseling groups; 11.1% psychoeducational groups; and 14.8% as support groups. (Co-leaders occasionally labeled their group with more than one descriptor. Thus, total percentage amounted to over 100%.) A total of 70.4% indicated that their groups were ongoing (more than 30 sessions); 5.6% indicated that their groups would meet for 21 to 30 sessions; 18.5% ( $n = 10$ ) reported that their groups would meet for 11 to 20 sessions; and 5.6% ( $n = 3$ ) indicated that their groups would meet for 10 or less sessions. According to Tuckman's (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) group development model, 5.6% indicated that their groups were forming, 7.4% storming, 13% norming, 50% performing, and 20.4% adjourning (3.7% did not indicate a stage).

## Measures

*NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI; Costa & McCrae, 1992).* The NEO-FFI assesses personality characteristics in a 60-item version of the 240-item NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI). The NEO-FFI contains five 12-item scales representing the five dimensions: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Items are scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* and include: "I keep my belongings neat and clean," "I believe we should look to our religious authorities for decisions on moral issues," and "Most people I know like me."

Internal consistency coefficients for the NEO-FFI were .86, .77, .73, .68, and .81 for Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness respectively (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Correlations between the NEO-PI and NEO-PI-R

ranged from .75 for Conscientiousness to .89 for Neuroticism (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The NEO–FFI possesses convergent and discriminant validity. On average, the shorter scales of the NEO–FFI account for 85% as much variance in the convergent criteria as do factor scores (Costa & McCrae, 1992). In the current study, a standardized score was obtained for each co-leader on the 5 subscales based on separate norms for men and women (Costa & McCrae, 1992). In this study, internal consistency coefficients for the NEO–FFI were .83, .74, .72, .67, and .80 for Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness respectively.

Because of the interdependence of co-leader data, data analysis must take this relationship into account (Kivlighan, 2007; Olsen & Kenny, 2006; West, Popp, & Kenny, 2008). Kivlighan suggested agreement between client and counselor perceptions of working alliance predict treatment outcome; the authors of this study assume also that agreement between co-leaders will result in relationship satisfaction. To estimate differences between co-leaders, the difference in standardized scores was calculated for each co-leader pair on each of the five personality dimensions (Newsom, 2002). It was also important to estimate an average level of personality characteristic as it is suggested that higher levels of some personality variables and lower levels of other personality variables affected relationship satisfaction in other areas. Thus, a co-leadership average score for each personality variable was obtained for each dyad by averaging their standardized scores on each of the five personality dimensions to represent their combined level of functioning on that variable (some literature suggests that a couple's higher level of functioning predicts satisfaction). Difference scores and average scores for the five personality variables were not used in the same analyses due to intercorrelations in the data.

*Co-Therapy Relationship Questionnaire (CTRQ; Bernard et al., 1987).* The CTRQ measures co-leaders' perception of their compatibility and productivity and contains 15 questions answered on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from *compatible* to *non-compatible* or *productive* to *non-productive*. High scores indicate high productivity or compatibility. The subscales include Compatibility of Behavior during Sessions (5 items); Theoretical Compatibility (4 items); and Personal Relationship (2 items). Examples of CTRQ items include: "Roles adopted during sessions," "Views of process," and "Relative amount of participation during sessions." A principal components factor analysis of the measure supported a three factor structure (Bernard et al., 1987). In the study, the Cronbach alpha for the entire scale was .94, and individual subscales: Compatibility of Behavior during

Sessions = .53, Theoretical Compatibility = .69, and Personal Relationship = .38. Due to these low alphas, only the subscale Theoretical Compatibility was used in this study. For analyses, each co-leader pairs' average scores on Theoretical Compatibility were used.

*Leadership Characteristics Inventory (LCI; Makuch, 1997).* The LCI measures leadership characteristics to assess the compatibility of style between co-leaders. This 56-item measure is rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Items include "I seldom encouraged members to discuss how the group is functioning," and "I was quite controlling of what went on during group meetings." The nine subscales of this measure include: Direction Focus, Content Focus, Expression Focus, Immediacy Preference, Structure Preference, Confrontation, Transparency, Verbal Activity, and Empathy. Higher scores indicate that more of that specific group leadership behavior is exhibited by a leader. Reliabilities of the scales were moderate from .41 to .83 (Makuch, 1997). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the overall scale (.83) and the individual subscales: Direction Focus = .10; Content Focus = .55; Expression Focus = .41; Immediacy Preference = .53; Structure Preference = .61; Confrontation = .62; Transparency = .56; Verbal Activity = .78; and Empathy = .77. Due to the low reliability of some subscales, only the subscales Structure Preference, Confrontation, Verbal Activity, and Empathy were used for the present study. Each subscale score was subtracted from the co-leader's score to obtain a co-leadership difference score.

*Co-Therapist Inventory (CI; Kamerschen, 1969).* The CI measures co-leader relationship satisfaction. It consists of 44 items scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. The higher the total score, the higher the satisfaction with the co-therapy relationship. The CI was developed by Kamerschen who modified van der Veen's Family Concept Q Sort (FCQ; van der Veen, Heuber, Jorgens, & Neja, 1964) assuming that the ideal co-therapy relationship would parallel the ideal marital relationship. Sample items include: "We do not understand each other," and "We get along very well."

After a 4-week interval, the test-retest reliability of one's family concept had a median correlation of .71 (Kamerschen, 1969). Kamerschen calculated Spearman Rank Correlations Coefficients and found that the CI and the Leary Interpersonal Checklist (Leary, 1956), positively and significantly related to individual,  $r = .42$ ,  $p < .01$ , and pair satisfaction,  $r = .46$ ,  $p < .05$ , with the co-therapy relationship. Penland (1976) also correlated CI scores with the

Co-Therapist Satisfaction Scale (a one item scale),  $r = -.438$ ,  $p < .01$ . In the current study, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for the CI as .94. For analyses, each co-leader pairs' average scores on the CI were used. In this study, the correlation between co-leader's CI scores for each pair was .82.

## RESULTS

### Preliminary Analyses

Bivariate correlations were calculated to assess multicollinearity among the study variables. Table 1 reports correlations for all variables and includes means and standard deviations for all variables. Most variables were not significantly correlated. The CI, the criterion variable, correlated positively and significantly with average scores for NEO Extraversion and Openness to Experience, and CTRQ Theoretical Compatibility; and differences scores for LCI Confrontation. ANOVAs and follow-up t-tests were used to test for significant differences between different groups. Exploratory stepwise multiple regression procedures were used due to the lack of previous findings in this area and the exploratory nature of this study. Several preliminary tests were calculated to assess for normality of data and to meet statistical assumptions for regression. Scatterplots of all independent variables with the dependent variable indicated that all had a linear relationship with the dependent variable. In addition, the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was calculated for all variables; all significance values were greater than .05 indicating normality of data. Next, correlations between all variables were examined. No variables were highly correlated ( $>.8$ ).

### Primary Analyses

*RQ<sub>1</sub>: Are there significant differences in co-leader relationship satisfaction based on co-leadership experience, gender, age of group members, or choice to work together?* A one-way ANOVA indicated significant differences in satisfaction based on the experience level of the co-leadership team. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's (1988) *d*. Average scores for experienced co-leader teams ( $n = 33$ ) ( $M = 191.12$ ;  $SD = 14.8$ ) were significantly more satisfied than inexperienced co-leader teams ( $n = 5$ ) ( $M = 174.7$ ;  $SD = 12.14$ );  $t(36) = 2.36$ ,  $p = .023$  (Effect size = 1.21); and experienced/inexperienced teams ( $n = 16$ ) ( $M = 175.31$ ;  $SD = 16.98$ ),  $t(47) = 3.34$ ,  $p = .002$  (Effect size = .99). Both effect sizes would be characterized as large (Cohen,

**Table 1** Intercorrelations Among All Variables for the Total Sample

Measure	CI	DN	DE	DO	DA	DC	AN	AE	AO	AA	AC	CT1	L1	L2	L3	L4	M	SD	
CI	1.0																	184.91	16.91
DN	.03	1.0																8.34	7.39
DE	.07	.14	1.0															10.09	6.89
DO	-.11	.17	.23	1.0														8.94	8.18
DA	-.22	.25	.20	.22	1.0													7.55	5.93
DC	.03	.03	-.02	-.06	-.13	1.0												11.33	8.26
AN	-.25	.29	.00	-.06	-.06	.09	1.0											45.04	7.01
AE	.36	.12	-.06	.18	-.03	.02	-.45	1.0										57.18	6.43
AO	.30	-.01	-.05	-.25	-.12	.21	-.23	.17	1.0									62.25	6.70
AA	.05	-.14	-.14	.10	.06	.11	-.48	.36	-.01	1.0								56.36	8.03
AC	.12	-.06	.03	.27	.02	-.17	-.37	.37	-.23	.33	1.0							51.27	8.04
CT1	.64	.09	.24	-.15	.01	.17	-.01	.20	.39	-.04	-.00	1.0						5.03	.59
L1	-.38	.04	.01	.22	.23	.12	.11	.06	.13	.27	.01	-.16	1.0					.60	.35
L2	-.25	.13	.01	.00	.19	-.09	.11	-.27	.01	.07	-.10	-.17	.18	1.0				.64	.58
L3	-.18	.17	.07	.30	-.07	.00	.06	.19	-.03	.04	.10	-.12	.39	.02	1.0			.35	.34
L4	-.01	.11	.04	.14	.14	.20	-.02	-.12	.02	.28	.03	.02	.15	.19	-.06	1.0		.56	.43

Significant at  $p < .05$ ;  $p < .01$ .

CI = Average Score for Co-Therapist Inventory; NEO-FFI = NEO-Five Factor Inventory; CTRQ = Co-Therapy Relationship Questionnaire; LCI = Leadership Characteristics Inventory; TSDQ = Therapist Self-Description Questionnaire; DN = Difference Score for Neuroticism (NEO); DE = Difference Score for Extraversion (NEO); DO = Difference Score for Openness to Experience (NEO); DA = Difference Score for Agreeableness (NEO); DC = Difference Score for Conscientiousness (NEO); AN = Average Score for Neuroticism (NEO); AE = Average Score for Extraversion (NEO); AO = Average Score for Openness to Experience (NEO); AA = Average Score for Agreeableness (NEO); AC = Average Score for Conscientiousness (NEO); CT1 = Average Theoretical Compatibility (CTRQ); L1 = Difference Score for Confrontation (LCI); L2 = Difference Score for Verbal Activity (LCI); L3 = Difference Score for Empathy (LCI); L4 = Difference Score for Structure Preference (LCI).

1988). No significant differences in satisfaction were noted between inexperienced co-leader teams and experienced/inexperienced teams,  $t(19) = -.074, p = .94$ . However, it is important to note that while differences were found, all three types of pairs were satisfied with their co-leader relationships. Scores ranged from 133.5 to 211. The range of possible scores was 44 to 220. Thus, all three co-leader types based on experience were relatively satisfied.

A second one-way ANOVA did not indicate significant differences in relationship satisfaction based on gender of co-leader pairs,  $F(2, 51) = 1.08, p = .347$ . Mixed gendered co-leader teams ( $n = 23$ ) ( $M = 188.76, SD = 15.83$ ) did not significantly differ from all female ( $n = 25$ ) ( $M = 181.64; SD = 18.40$ ) or all male teams ( $n = 6$ ) ( $M = 183.75; SD = 13.45$ ).

No significant differences in relationship satisfaction were found using an ANOVA based on the age of group members,  $F(2, 47) = .240, p = .79$ . Co-leaders of adult groups ( $n = 41$ ) ( $M = 185.28; SD = 18.21$ ) did not significantly differ in satisfaction from co-leaders of adolescent groups ( $n = 7$ ) ( $M = 182.14; SD = 11.75$ ), or co-leaders of children's groups ( $n = 2$ ) ( $M = 191.50; SD = 9.19$ ).

A fourth one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in relationship satisfaction based on whether the co-leadership team was assigned to work together or chose to work together. The main effect for treatment condition was significant, indicating support for the hypothesis,  $F(1, 52) = 12.18, p = .001$ . Co-leaders who chose to work together ( $n = 35$ ) ( $M = 190.29; SD = 14.49$ ) were significantly more satisfied than those who were assigned to work together ( $n = 19$ ) ( $M = 175.00; SD = 16.90$ ), effect size = .97. It is important to note that those who did not choose to work together were still satisfied, but not as satisfied as those who chose to work together (the range is 44 to 220 with a mean for this study reported at 184.9).

*H<sub>1</sub>: Group leaders with similar personalities will report lower levels of co-leader relationship satisfaction.* Contrary to the prediction, Pearson  $r$  correlations indicated no significant relationships between average CI scores and difference scores on Neuroticism,  $r = .028, p = .843$ ; Agreeableness,  $r = -.218, p = .117$ ; Openness to Experience,  $r = -.106, p = .452$ ; Extraversion,  $r = .070, p = .616$ ; or Conscientiousness subscales of the NEO,  $r = .031, p = .823$

An exploratory stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed to assess how well differences in personality of co-leader pairs predict average co-leader relationship satisfaction. No difference scores on all 5 subscales of the NEO, individually and in combination, significantly predicted average relationship satisfaction. The total percentage of variance for the CI accounted for by the difference scores on

Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness of the NEO was only 7.5% (see Table 2).

*H<sub>2</sub>: Group co-leaders with higher levels of extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness and lower levels of neuroticism overall will report higher levels of co-leader relationship satisfaction.* As predicted, Pearson *r* correlations indicated significant positive relationships between average CI scores and average Openness to Experience,  $r = .302$ ,  $p = .028$ ; and average Extraversion,  $r = .359$ ,  $p = .008$ . Contrary to the predictions, Pearson *r* correlations indicated no significant relationships between average CI scores and average Agreeableness,  $r = .051$ ,  $p = .718$ ; average Neuroticism,  $r = -.248$ ,  $p = .074$ ; and Conscientiousness on the NEO,  $r = .121$ ,  $p = .389$ .

A second exploratory stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed to assess how well average co-leader personality variables predict average relationship satisfaction. No combination of co-leadership average levels of personality, individually or in combination, significantly predicted average CI scores using average personality scores on the subscales of the NEO. The total percentage of variance of the CI accounted for by average scores on Neuroticism, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness of the NEO together was only 20.5% (see Table 3).

*H<sub>3</sub>: The more similar group co-leader pairs are in theoretical compatibility and leadership style, the greater their relationship satisfaction is.* As predicted, significant positive relationships were found between average CI scores and average scores for Theoretical Compatibility,  $r = .641$ ,  $p < .001$ . In addition, a significant negative relationship was found between difference scores for co-leaders on the Confrontation subscale of the LCI and average CI scores,  $r = -.376$ ,  $p = .005$ . That is, the greater the differences in confrontation as a leadership style, the less co-therapy relationship satisfaction.

**Table 2** Multiple Regression of Co-Leader Difference Scores on NEO-FFI Subscales Predicting Relationship Satisfaction Using Average Co-Therapist Inventory Scores ( $N = 53$ )

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
Neuroticism	.201	.338	.087
Extraversion	.321	.363	.129
Openness to Experience	-.203	.308	-.097
Agreeableness	-.702	.432	-.244
Conscientiousness	-.014	.293	-.007

Note.  $R^2 = .075$  for the entire equation.

**Table 3 Multiple Regression of Co-Leader Average Scores on NEO-FFI Subscales Predicting Relationship Satisfaction Using average Co-Therapy Inventory Scores ( $N = 53$ )**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
Neuroticism	-.204	.408	-.084
Extraversion	.774	.411	.292
Openness to Experience	.638	.372	.250
Agreeableness	-.244	.325	-.115
Conscientiousness	.165	.333	.078

Note.  $R^2 = .205$  for the entire equation.

**Table 4 Multiple Regression of Co-Leader Difference Scores on the Leadership Characteristics Inventory and Co-Therapy Relationship Questionnaire Subscales Predicting Relationship Satisfaction Using Average Co-Therapy Inventory Scores ( $N = 54$ )**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
Co-Therapy Relationship Questionnaire			
Theoretical Compatibility	16.639	3.016	.0579
Leadership Characteristics Inventory			
Confrontation	-12.390	3.020	.0410
Verbal Activity	-3.172	3.081	-.1100
Empathy	-0.063	5.583	.0010
Structure Preference	1.683	4.123	.0430

Note.  $R^2 = .284$  for the entire equation.

Significant at  $*p < .05$ .

An exploratory stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess how well differences in leadership style (Structure Preference, Confrontation, Verbal Activity, and Empathy) and Theoretical Compatibility predict relationship satisfaction. Results suggested that differences in Confrontation subscale on the LCI and average Theoretical Compatibility were the only significant predictors of average CI scores accounting for 52.91% of the variance for the CI (see Table 4). Average Theoretical Compatibility accounted for 41.2% of the variance of CI, with differences in Confrontation scores accounting for an additional 10.2% of the variance.

## DISCUSSION

The current study is an attempt to better understand the constructs that contribute to a satisfactory co-leader relationship. The findings

have implications for co-leaders of psychoeducational, counseling, and therapy groups and those who supervising and/or match co-leaders. Clinical practice supports the use of a co-leadership model for groups anecdotally and through its popularity as a training modality (Rosenbaum, 1983).

Differences in co-leader relationship satisfaction based on group and leader characteristics were examined. ANOVAS and follow-up *t*-tests indicated that while all pairs surveyed were satisfied with their co-leader relationship, teams of two experienced group leaders were significantly more satisfied than teams of two inexperienced or one experienced- one inexperienced leader. In addition, leaders who chose to work together were significantly more satisfied with the co-leader relationship. Rosenbaum (1983) suggested that "equal clinical experience is helpful for a co-therapist team. This precludes the possibility of 'one-upsmanship'" (p. 161). Perhaps there is less competition among co-leaders who perceive themselves as skilled and also similarly competent. This sample was also heavily weighted towards experienced pairs (61%) and those who choose to work together (64%) so this may have skewed the findings. Interestingly, Murphy, Leszcz, Collings, and Salvendy (1996) reported that trainees who were not satisfied with supervision also reported not being satisfied with their co-leader relationship. Perhaps the need for supervision and/or the concern about being evaluated impacts satisfaction of inexperienced co-leaders uniquely when paired with experienced co-leaders.

Somewhat surprisingly, gender composition of the co-leader pairs did not impact co-leader satisfaction. Silberstein (1981) similarly reported no differences in satisfaction as a result of the gender of the co-leader pair. The age of group members also did not seem to impact co-leader satisfaction in contrast to Silberstein's findings.

Very surprising was the lack of support for the hypothesis that similarity in co-leader personalities (as measured by the NEO) would result in lower co-leader relationship satisfaction. Yalom (1995) suggested that "complimentarity enriches the experience of the group" (p. 417). However, in this study, similarity, or dissimilarity of personality, did not seem to impact co-leader satisfaction.

In addition, no support was found for the hypothesis that higher levels of extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness and lower levels of neuroticism overall (as suggestive of more adaptive behavior) would correlate with higher levels of co-leader relationship satisfaction. The analogy of a married couple as similar to the co-leader relationship has often been discussed in the literature (Concannon, 1995; Roller & Nelson, 1991; Rutan & Stone, 1993). However, the variables most predictive in the marital literature, neuroticism and openness, were not strongly related to co-leader satisfaction for co-leader

pairs. Perhaps co-leadership is not as much like marriage as often suggested. Co-leaders work together and need to respect each other and agree on theoretical approaches in very focused areas as opposed to married couples who spend much more time together and must agree on major issues and ways of coping. Maybe other variables, such as the ability to deal with confrontation and differences, may mediate personality similarity or differences.

It is particularly curious that lower levels of co-leader neuroticism did not predict group co-leadership satisfaction. Also interesting was the lack of correlation between openness and co-leader relationship satisfaction. However, openness as a personality characteristic as measured in the NEO-FFI focuses on openness to experience which may be different from open and honest behaviors. Open and honest behaviors may imply more of a willingness to share and disclose and thus, impact working style and relationship. Openness and honesty may be more correlated with one of the significant predictors, confrontational style, which would again imply openness and honesty and directness. Thus, while co-leadership may have some similarities to the marital relationship, it appears that some of the analogies may be overreaching at times.

The current finding may indicate that relationship satisfaction between co-leaders is a complex phenomena that is not simply predicted by the personalities of the co-leaders. A co-leader relationship, like a chemical compound, has unique properties of its own above and beyond the qualities of the elements (personality characteristics) that combine to form the compound (the relationship).

Some support was found for the hypothesis that the more group co-leaders are theoretically compatible, and leadership style, greater relationship satisfaction will be reported. Some support was found for this hypothesis. Average scores for Theoretical Compatibility were positively and difference scores for Confrontation were negatively correlated with and significantly predicted co-leader relationship satisfaction. Roller and Nelson (1991), in their qualitative study, also reported that rated compatibility of therapists' theoretical viewpoint was essential to co-leader satisfaction.

Davis and Lohr (1971) theorized that "having therapists with common backgrounds and with similar therapeutic techniques enhances the free exchange of ideas and increases mutual respect" (p. 156). Recently, Kivlighan (2008) suggested a similarity in view but diversity in skills and styles as being the best composition of co-leadership. Perhaps the shared team cognition described by Miles and Kivlighan (2008b) results in theoretical compatibility found in this study to be related to co-leader satisfaction.

Differences in confrontational style also were negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. This finding is congruent with Bernard

et al.'s (1987) study which suggested that co-therapists who were similar with respect to self-disclosure and directiveness were more likely to feel compatible. Negotiation is one of the seven variables within the Dugo and Beck (1997) co-leadership model. Negotiation is a dyadic relationship issue that emerges in co-leading since co-therapy requires a partnership contract and commitment to regularly examine the relationship and quality of collaboration.

Wheelan (1997) stated that co-therapy teams should not expect their group members to address conflict in the group if the co-therapists do not address their own conflict. Considering parallel process dynamics, it makes sense that differences in confrontation leadership style will play out within the co-leader relationship, as well. Thus, two people involved in a relationship who possess differing styles of confrontation may find themselves feeling less satisfied if they are unable to work through their differences. "Often the resistances of patients entering group therapy are mirrored in the resistances of co-therapists to confronting their own problems in interaction" (Rosenbaum, 1983, p. 160). Indeed, differences in confrontation may affect both the group and the manner in which the co-leaders manage their own relationship outside of group.

### **Implications of this Study**

Experienced co-leader teams were significantly more satisfied than inexperienced or inexperienced-experienced teams, though all reported a relatively high level of satisfaction. Similar to the findings of several other studies (e.g., Friedman, 1973; Kamerschen, 1969), there were significant differences in co-leaders' average relationship satisfaction based on whether or not the co-leadership team chose to work together. Perhaps co-leaders who choose a co-leader anticipate their partnership will be compatible, which then results in increased relationship satisfaction or perhaps that choice to work together is based on previous positive interactions. Whenever possible, it makes sense to allow group leaders to choose their own co-leaders as opposed to being assigned by a supervisor (or out of convenience). When interpreting these results, it also is important to note that it is unknown how long each co-leadership team had been working together. Possibly length of relationship impacted satisfaction since co-leadership teams who developed a good working relationship may then choose to continue to work together.

Within the current study, perceived compatibility of behavior in sessions and differences in confrontation style together best predicted co-leader relationship satisfaction. It makes sense that co-leaders who are able to discuss their perception of the change process, client issues, group dynamics; and possibly most importantly how and when confrontation will occur; will lead groups together in a compatible

fashion. Co-leaders need to understand one another's style of confrontation prior to co-leading. If co-leaders do have different confrontation styles, anticipating that the relationship may require more work and perhaps less relationship satisfaction in the short term, may be useful. Differences in confrontation leadership style have the potential to further encourage group members to split the leaders perpetuating a good leader/bad leader dynamic. For example, if one co-leader consistently confronts members, thus taking on the role of aggressor and the other co-leader consistently takes on the role of nurturer, then role rigidity results, which is counter-therapeutic to members who are working to understand their complex multi-faceted selves.

Processing stylistic differences after group sessions builds collegial ties and strengthens the co-therapy relationship and is a necessary part of co-leadership (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). Dublin (1995) recommended frequent pre and post group co-therapy discussions to address relationship issues, defining roles, and mechanisms for handling conflict. ASGW Best Practice Guidelines (2008) suggest co-leaders meet regularly to discuss "progress on group and member goals, leader behaviors and techniques, group dynamics and interventions; and developing understanding and acceptance of meaning" (p. 114). Fall and Wejnert (2005) emphasized Dugo and Beck's (1997) model of co-leadership with its main premise being that co-leader relationship must develop and progress in order to foster the same behaviors and dynamics in their group.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations in this study. There were many independent variables, and only one dependent variable. It also is important to note that the dependent variable, co-leader relationship satisfaction, does not imply co-leadership effectiveness. Co-leader satisfaction is perhaps correlated with leader effectiveness and group outcome. Future research needs to examine the correlation between co-leader characteristics and style, satisfaction, and effectiveness.

Another limitation is that most co-leaders who participated in this study were experienced co-leaders practicing for many years who chose to lead together. Thus, the data may be skewed towards those who have established a good working relationship as opposed to those who chose not to continue to work together or not to participate in this study. Thus, the full range of developmental issues and their impact on relationship satisfaction may not have been taken into account. It was also not possible to examine the impact of type of group (and the resulting group and relational dynamics) on co-leader satisfaction due to some leaders indicating leading more than one type of group.

The surveys used in this study were self-report which could have also decreased the validity of the findings. Furthermore, the variance in several of the independent variables was restricted, especially for the personality variables, which may have impacted the explanation of the variance in relationship satisfaction. The range of co-leader satisfaction was relatively small and skewed towards the satisfied to very satisfied range. In addition, the scores for the personality variables were also restricted and quite high except for neuroticism (as neuroticism is a negative trait, lower scores are preferable especially in a non-clinical sample). Also, the racial/ethnic representation of this sample was limited as it was primarily Caucasian. Perhaps the results of this study would have been significantly different with appropriate cultural representation. Some of the initial variables studied had low reliability which led to not using them as predictors in this study, perhaps leaving out key predictors.

## CONCLUSIONS

Future research needs to assess the relationship between co-leader relationship satisfaction and group member outcome. It is important to note that appropriate scales to measure some of these constructs need to be developed. Also, given the importance of a satisfied co-leader relationship, including parallel processes that occur between leaders and members, satisfaction with the co-leader relationship may very well be a necessary factor for positive group member outcome. However, co-leader relationship satisfaction may be necessary, but not sufficient to produce effective groups. Further empirical evidence, for example, is needed to determine whether highly satisfied co-leaders work more effectively than moderately satisfied co-leaders.

A model of how successful co-leaders work through their relational impasses would be a valuable contribution to the practice of co-therapy. Perhaps a “Best Practices” for managing the co-leader relationship could emerge from these data. Given the results of this study, best practices for training programs, agencies, and the private sector, would suggest that therapists be able to choose their co-leaders and address issues of compatibility, confrontation, and relationship.

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