

From Narcissism to  
Collaboration: A Creative  
Exploration of Co-leadership in  
Groups

# Objectives

- To identify some of the dynamics of co-leadership in group and organizations.
- To discuss those dynamics with a special emphasis on the co-leaders
- To distinguish between complementarity/integration and schism/opposition in co-leadership
- To specify some cues for a successful co-leadership
- To highlight the role of creativity in facilitating the understanding of our dynamics on personal, interpersonal and professional levels

# The workshop 7 March 2020

1. Introduce ourselves 15'
2. The group regulations: Confidentiality, what we are going to do, after nearly half the time experiential work, then 10 minutes break, then the power point., the the last 5 minutes for the evaluation
3. Introduce yourself, in a circle with your body, showing the way you PERCEIVE yourself as a leader

## EXERCISE ONE

60'

1. Think of a situation where two people co-led, Pick a card, Work in pairs. 15'  
Describe the situation to your partner
  2. Work in four and choose ONE situation. The others will consult: what was the problem in that situation, what were the dynamics, which leaders' styles: How would this be without giving any kind of explanation? 20'
- IN PLENARY: what are the dynamics at stake when two people co-lead 25'

# After 10' break (the workshop 7 March 2020)

## EXERCISE TWO

20'

1. 'Walk around. Find a partner, each couple leads the group with dancing or singing or playing

IN PLENARY: Reflection on the dynamics, easy and not easy, styles

## THEORETICAL PART

10'

1. The three co-leadership styles, opportunities and risks

## EXERCISE THREE

20'

1. Pick a card with your ideal situation/ Or draw, paint, or write about the ideal situation in leadership

2. Discuss in Plenary/subgroups how that style meets the group task/need/phase

OR

1. In pairs discuss your style, then ask the group to be placed in a sculpture of your choice
2. In Plenary: reflect on the experience to lead, to co-lead, to be led

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

LEWIN, LIPPIT, WHITE (1943)

Styles of leadership

- AUTHORITARIAN
- DEMOCRATIC
- LAISSEZ-FAIRE

JOHN GOTTMAN (1997)

The art of parenting

- DISMISSING
- DISAPPROVING
- LAISSEZ-FAIRE
- EMOTIONAL COACH

# Styles of co-leadership: COMPETITIVE

- Sado-maso style

50 shades of grey

- President & First Lady

Trump and Melania

Elisabeth and Prince Phillippe

# Styles of co-leadership: MESSY-SLOPPY

- DO AS WE SAY,  
DON'T DO AS WE  
DO

- FORGET WE ARE  
LEADERS,  
WE ARE ONE OF  
YOU

- YOU ARE OUR  
BABIES,  
WE WOULD DO  
ANYTHING FOR  
YOU

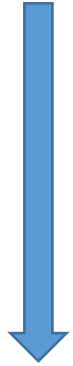
# Styles of co-leadership: COLLABORATIVE

- THELMA AND LOUISE

- THE TWO STORKS



COMPETITIVE



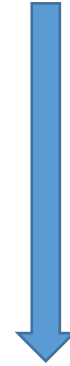
?

MESSY-SLOPPY



?

COLLABORATIVE



?

- LEADERS PERSONALITY AND STYLES
  - PHASES OF THE GROUP LIFE
  - ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE
    - PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

- Post-group discussion between co-leaders is more important than the pre-group one
- Prepare your work ahead
- Understanding distances and boundaries is of utmost importance for managing successful co-leadership style
- The more the leader is narcissistic, the more problematic the style of co-leadership
- Coleaders in a group have to practice, exercise, train together, co-leading may then become an “art” (Roller and Satir, 1991)
- But co-leading does not only applied in therapy.

# GOODNESS-OF-FIT

- LEADERS PERSONALITY AND STYLES
- PHASES OF THE GROUP LIFE
- ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE
- PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

# Back up material

- Questionnaire on social dominance to check if they adhere to a hierarchical idea of the co-leading relationship
- Questionnaire of Bill Roller: check it's items and reflect (for us)
- Postulate co-leadership styles adopting concepts from leadership styles adopting concepts from leadership or couple therapy
- Drawing a specific situation to show the roles that two leaders took (better if themselves)
- Drawing an aspirational situation where they are co-leading
- Experience co-leading in music and reflection
- Cards of pictures of group leaders

# Questions T / F

1. Experiential group psychotherapy allows a better exploration of the underlying dynamics of leadership(T)
2. Co-leading groups is better learned by experiential rather than didactic methods.(T)
3. Ambivalence is always healthy during co-leading (F)
4. Using arts in therapy facilitates leading groups(T)
5. The personality of the leader does not impact his style of co-leadership (F)
6. Complementary co-leaders are more successful than similar ones (T)
7. Understanding distances and boundaries is of utmost importance for managing successful co-leadership style (T)
8. Post-group discussion between co-leaders is more important than the pre-group one (F)
9. The more the leader is narcissistic, the more problematic the style of co-leadership (T)
10. Co-leadership research applies to a lot of group work, but not psychotherapy (F)

# 50 words abstract

- Co-leading can be exceptionally powerful source of productivity and creativity but may imply vulnerability. Co-leading dynamics swing between complementarity/integration and narcissism/schism. Ambivalence and confusion lie in middle. Cooperation for survival tends to drive the ongoing work forward. The workshop is experiential including didactic part and facilitated by creative arts.

Write a brief narrative describing how the content meets that criterion (how is it backed up by broader psychological practice, or established by research procedures or has been peer reviewed, published support or how it relates to statutory or regulatory policies). \*

- “Are two heads better than one” is a question that is often raised in any scientific discussion about Co-leadership. Kivingham and colleagues in 2011 tried to give an ultimate answer to that question, by underlying the correlation between the number of group leaders, the climate of the group, and the rate of success of group therapy. Co-leading has been a crucial theme within the clinical and scientific community for the past thirty years. In 1991 a very interesting book by Roller and Satir highlighted some of the shortcomings of leading with a colleague: in order to achieve its benefits and added value, the two (or three) leaders in a group had to practice, exercise, train together until co-therapy became an “art”. But co-leading is not only applied in therapy. Choice theory and evolutionary psychology have offered some interesting angles to working together as co-leaders in group work (f.i. Fall, 2016). The workshop will not apply findings of such existing research: moreover, it will collect and build a repository of reflections and narratives from group leaders and their training and experience.

# References

- 1. Fall, K.A. (2016). Using choice theory to conceptualize co-leader relationships in group work. *International Journal of Choice Theory & Reality Therapy*, 36 (1), 81-91.
- 2. Ohrt, J. H., Ener, E., Porter, J. and Young, T. L. (2014). Group leader reflections on their training and experience: Implications for group counselor educators and supervisors. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 39 (2): 95-124.
- 3. Pender, D. A., Anderton, C. (2016). Exploring the process: A narrative analysis of group facilitators' reports on critical incident stress debriefing. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 41 (1): 19-43.
- 4. Polk, M. (2015) Transdisciplinary co-production: Designing and testing a transdisciplinary research framework for societal problem solving, *Advances in transdisciplinarity 2004-2014, Futures*, 65:110-122
- 5. Sánchez-Bahillo, Á., Aragón-Alonso, A., Sánchez-Bahillo, M., Birtle, J. (2014) Therapist characteristics that predict the outcome of multipatient psychotherapy: Systematic review of empirical studies, *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 53(1).



## Past experiences of the TWO co-leaders relevant to topic area (most recent first)

- Leading the workshop “Co-leading groups: A seesaw between collaboration and narcissism” in the AGPA Connect 2019
- Organizing and co-leading “The Transcultural Community Camp: Groups, Leadership, and Social Transformation”, a three days workshop. Cairo, 2018-2020
- Co-authors of “Across the river of desire: the frailty of working with the Other”, paper presented at GASI conference, Berlin, 2017-
- Participating in "Leading our Transformation." A residential working conference in the Tavistock tradition, 5 – 9 December 2016, Johannesburg, SOUTH AFRICA-
- Participating in Praxis International Network Meeting, Paris, 2013-
- Participating in Femininity, Leadership, Authority, and Masculinity (FLAM) - Forum international de l'innovation sociale, a 5-day residential conference, Nice, France 2013
- Regular attendance at the Board meetings of IAGP, EAGT and the Psychiatry department at Cairo University, with active work on co-leadership dynamics and transformation