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Personality and Community Prevention Teams: Dimensions of Team Leader and Member Personality Predicting Team Functioning

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Abstract

The predictors and correlates of positive functioning among community prevention teams have been examined in a number of research studies; however, the role of personality has been neglected. In this study, we examined whether team member and leader personality dimensions assessed at the time of team formation predicted local prevention team functioning 2.5 – 3.5 years later. Participants were 159 prevention team members in 14 communities participating in the PROSPER study of prevention program dissemination. Three aspects of personality, aggregated at the team level, were examined as predictors: *Openness to Experience*, *Conscientiousness*, and *Agreeableness*. A series of multivariate regression analyses were performed that accounted for the interdependency of five categories of team functioning. Results showed that average team member *Openness* was negatively, and *Conscientiousness* was positively linked to team functioning. The findings have implications for decisions about the level and nature of technical assistance support provided to community prevention teams.

The diverse community-based organizational forms known as coalitions, partnerships, teams, and collaboratives have become a primary vehicle through which public health programs are organized and delivered at the community level. U.S. government agencies have made a strong investment in community-based coalition approaches through programs such as Safe Schools/Healthy Children (targeting reductions in violence), Communities That Care (adolescent substance use, delinquency, and other problems), and Drug Free Communities (substance use prevention and treatment). Community coalition mechanisms have addressed AIDS, cancer, cardio-vascular disease, physical fitness, literacy, and a number of other areas of health and social problems.

Although coalitions have the potential to enhance coordination among community agencies and actors (Weiss, Anderson, & Lasker, 2002), coalition approaches may suffer from a number of particular problems such as competition among members, insufficient member commitment, and difficulties agreeing on a common vision (e.g., Weiss et al., 2002). These problems may help explain the fact that few evaluations have demonstrated a significant public health impact as a result of coalition-based programs (COMMIT, 1995; Hallfors, Hyunsan, Livert, & Kadushin, 2002; Roussos & Fawcett, 2000; Saxe et al., 1997). In addition, many coalition approaches have eschewed the use of evidence-based programs; the few coalition approaches that have demonstrated public health impact have more often been

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those employing evidence-based programs (Spoth et al., In Press; Feinberg, Greenberg, Osgood, & Sartorius, 2007).

In order to help enhance the effectiveness of community coalition-based public health efforts, both evidence-based and community-oriented researchers have examined a number of factors influencing coalition processes and outcomes. Evidence suggests that successful coalitions tend to have competent leaders, articulated self-governance procedures, and high levels of social cohesion and task focus (Butterfoss, Goodman, & Wandersman, 1996; Feinberg, Greenberg, & Osgood, 2004; Florin, Mitchell, & Stevenson, 1993; Wandersman et al., 1996). A history of positive collaboration in the community, an open and democratic community culture, and adequate training and technical assistance have also been linked to coalition success (Feinberg et al., 2002; Greenberg et al., In Press).

One area that has been less well researched is the influence of the characteristics of individual coalition members and leaders on coalition effectiveness. This is a logical area of study because the development and sustainability of coalitions depends on interactions among a number of diverse individuals. The quality of interactions among members is particularly important given that coalitions typically operate in a fairly unstructured context, without the proscribed role structure, hierarchy, and institutional accountability mechanisms found in other community organizations such as schools (e.g., superintendent, principal, teachers, counselors) or agencies (managers, supervisors, staff).

Personality and Team Functioning

Social psychological and organizational factors researchers have devoted substantial attention to the role of individual and organizational influences on work group dynamics and performance, utilizing a number of various conceptual frameworks (e.g., Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). We focus here on the framework of personality traits, which refers to durable patterns of behavior and preferences expressed by individuals across situations. After decades of debate since the beginnings of modern psychological science a century ago, the voluminous study of personality has come to a fair degree of consensus, albeit with some ongoing debate, on a five-factor model of personality traits (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1988; Barrick & Mount, 1991). Within the so-called Big Five model, each of the five factors represents a superordinate construct incorporating many sub-dimensions and facets. These five factors are: Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Extraversion.

Many studies and several meta-analyses of the relation of these five factors to individuals' work performance have produced varying results, although a consensus has emerged here as well (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991; Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001). *Conscientiousness*, reflecting reliability and dependability, has been consistently linked positively to work performance. Findings for *Agreeableness*, which represents cooperation and sympathy, and *Openness to Experiences*, reflecting intelligence and curiosity, are inconsistent. *Agreeableness* has sometimes been linked to positive functioning in certain contexts (e.g., Van Vianen & De Dreu, 2001), such as situations involving a high degree of social interaction and persuasion. However, meta-analyses suggested weak or no links (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick et al., 2001; Tett et al., 1991) for Agreeableness. Although the meta-analyses also found no overall influence of *Openness*, the authors note that some studies have found a negative association between *Openness* and team performance.

A complementary perspective is offered by considering the possible influence of personality on the two major functional domains in work-related teams, the social role and task role (Bales, 1950; Stewart, Fulmer, & Barrick, 2005). Individuals engaging in the social role

maintain social cohesion by supporting, encouraging, and linking other team members to produce team solidarity. Individuals engaging in the task role contribute to work goals by contributing information, carrying out goal-related tasks, and maintaining accountability. Positive functioning in both typically is necessary for successful team performance. All team members engage in both roles; individuals, however, differ in the attention they give and contribution they make to these domains. Also, it appears that personality traits influence individual engagement in each domain (Stewart et al., 2005). In this study, two associations were particularly strong: Individuals high on *Agreeableness* tend to promote social cohesion whereas those high on *Conscientiousness* tend to engage in goal-oriented work tasks. Other associations are smaller, but one is of interest in this context: Individuals with high levels of *Openness to Experience* tend to be low on engagement in the social role, as well as possibly on the task role. Although individuals with high levels of *Openness* may demonstrate unconventional thinking and independence of judgment that may aid a team, such individuals also may show difficulty in subordinating individual creativity in the context of a collaborative work process.

There are several gaps in the literature on personality and teams. First, we note that a majority of prior research focused on the link between individual personality traits and individual performance in a team context (for exceptions, see Barrick, Stewart, Neubert, & Mount, 1998; Neuman, Wagner, & Christiansen, 1999; van Vianen & De Dreu, 2001). Less is known about the link between the overall level of personality traits on a team and group-level functioning. For example, an individual with higher level of *Conscientiousness* may display better task performance but it may not guarantee that the team will also function well. Studies that have examined team level functioning have found that higher levels of collective *Conscientiousness* and *Agreeableness* are related to higher team performance (Barrick et al., 1998; Neuman et al., 1999). Findings are inconsistent with *Openness to Experience*; the linkage between *Openness* and team performance was negative for student teams, but positive or non-significant for non-student teams (Neuman et al., 1999; van Vianen & De Dreu, 2001). Thus, to further the understanding of the relation between personality and team functioning in a real-world context, we focus on collective team functioning rather than individual performance.

Further, the role of team leader's personality traits may not have the same implication for team functioning as team members' personality traits. Little is known about different roles of team leaders' versus team members' personality traits. However, research indicates that the style and competence of team leadership is an important determinant of team functioning and performance (Kumpfer, Turner, Hopkins, & Librett, 1993). Thus, the influence of leader personality traits on team functioning is an important area for inquiry.

Finally, diversity (i.e., variability) of individual attributes within a team may have important implications for team functioning (Day & Bedeian, 1995; van Vianen & De Dreu, 2001). It is possible that two teams with similar overall levels of a trait, for example *Agreeableness*, will have very different distributions. For example, one team may have some individuals very high and some individuals very low on *Agreeableness*, whereas another team may have individuals who have more similar levels of *Agreeableness*. It may be that individuals who share similar ways of functioning are able to coordinate with each other effectively. On the other hand, it may be that individual styles of functioning serve to complement each other. Day and Bedeian found positive association between diversity in *Agreeableness* and performance. However, Van Vianen and De Dreu did not find any significant associations between team performance and diversity in *Conscientiousness*, *Agreeableness* and *Openness to Experience*.

PROSPER and Domains of Team Functioning

We extend the research on personality and work teams by examining the relation of personality to the functioning of prevention-oriented community teams in the PROSPER dissemination trial (Spoth, Greenberg, Bierman, & Redmond, 2004). PROSPER is an innovative model for the dissemination of evidence-based school and family prevention programs addressing youth substance use. Organizationally, the PROSPER model is comprised of three tiers: local prevention teams, university prevention scientists, and Prevention Coordinators, who serve as liaisons between the teams and scientists by providing technical assistance, guidance, and consultation to the teams and feedback to the scientists. The local prevention teams are catalyzed and led by university Cooperative Extension Service (CES) educators, who are charged with bringing scientific advances to local communities in a wide array of areas (e.g. agriculture, positive youth development, nutrition, and community development). The local teams are comprised of representatives from the school system, key substance use and mental health agencies, parents and youth, and other local leaders.

In the first five years of the project, the teams are charged with selecting, implementing, and obtaining sustainable funding for one evidence-based family-focused and one school-based intervention. Interventions are selected from short menus of similar family-focused interventions appropriate for 6th graders and their families, and of classroom programs appropriate for 7th graders. Initial findings have demonstrated positive effects of PROSPER in randomly-assigned intervention communities compared to controls on child-reported proximal family relations (e.g. parental management of child behavior, parent-child affective quality and substance use; see Redmond et al., 2006; Spoth et al., In Press).

We briefly note here that although there are no precise and widely accepted definitions, we view “teams” as a set of individuals joined in pursuit of a goal. “Coalitions” tends to refer in the literature to a joining together of representatives of individual organizations. There is overlap between teams and coalitions, so defined: some coalitions are managed through organizational representatives who together form a team. But not all coalitions include a team, and more obviously, not all teams represent a coalition. Because the PROSPER “teams” include representatives from several organizations, as well as individuals such as parents and youth representing a stakeholder class, we view these groups as both teams and coalitions.

Based on our own and others conceptualization and measurement of the functioning of teams and coalitions, we have utilized a limited number of constructs as representing key indices of team functioning in prior work. For example, within-team factors of participation, leadership, task-focus, cohesion, and identity have been related to indicators of early team success (Florin, Mitchell, Stevenson, & Klein, 2000; Gottlieb, Brink, & Gingiss, 1993; Kegler, Steckler, McLeroy, & Malek, 1998; Greenberg et al., 2006). Teams that lack effective leadership, are characterized by conflict, low motivation, ineffective decision-making or show poor implementation (Emshoff et al., 2003). Based on these and other studies, we focus on five team-level constructs as indicators of effective functioning: leadership, work focus, team culture of cohesion, team goals and governance, and internal team tension/conflict. These indicators of effective team functioning are linked to teams’ ability to plan for sustainability and actual success in achieving sustainability through fundraising (Feinberg, In press). Thus, understanding the factors that influence these indicators of team functioning can help guide efforts to create and support effective and sustainable teams and coalitions.

Conceptually, the personality traits of team members and leaders may be seen as influencing these factors in direct ways. For example, higher levels of *Agreeableness* may lead members

to interact more easily and provide more support for each other, thus enhancing team cohesion and reducing team tension. Similarly, higher levels of *Conscientiousness* among both members and leaders may enhance team's work focus and goal-setting.

The Current Study

Here we examine whether the personality traits of team members and team leaders influence key aspects of mature team functioning. We utilize data on personality traits collected at the beginning of the project (or, for team members and leaders who join later, collected at time of enrollment). Our central question is whether aggregate team member personality and team leader personality traits predicted the functioning of the teams when the teams had reached a state of maturity, 2.5 to 3.5 years after team formation.

The temporal gap between the collection of personality data for most participants (see Method section) at the time of team formation and team functioning 2.5 to 3.5 years later deserves comment. We view the first one to two years of a community coalition's development as a formation phase in which member and leader personality factors, as well as organizational, historical, and other factors, influence initial self-organization processes. After some degree of fluctuation, stable patterns of team functioning tend to emerge. Thus, our inquiry investigates the degree to which personality traits influence these more mature patterns of team functioning. We also note that although personality traits do change over the life course, the pace of change is such that only minimal changes would be expected over a two to three year period. However, the addition of new team members introduces new influences on team functioning; hence we include the personality traits of new team members, and in some cases team leaders, in our measurement strategy.

Based on prior research, we expected differential results among the team member and leader personality traits and team functioning. First, we expected that higher levels of *Conscientiousness* would be linked to higher levels of teams' work focus and goals/governance. Second, we expected that *Agreeableness* would be related to high levels of social cohesion and low levels of tension. Third, we expected that *Openness to Experience* would be related to lower levels of work focus and social cohesion, and higher levels of tension.

Method

Procedures

Detailed information about community recruitment is provided elsewhere (see Greenberg et al., In Press). Briefly, 28 communities (14 in Iowa and 14 in Pennsylvania) were selected that met four eligibility criteria: (a) a community school district enrollment of 1,300 – 5,200 students, (b) 15% or more of the school district families eligible for free or reduced cost school lunches, (c) less than 50% of the community population employed by or attending a college or university, and (d) no current involvement in any other university-affiliated prevention research projects with youth. After the 28 communities were selected, communities were blocked by size and geographic location and then randomized into partnership intervention and control conditions. Communities in the sample tended to be small towns in rural areas, with an average of 7% of the families living below the poverty threshold, a median household income of \$37,070, and 29% of the students in the district receiving free or reduced-cost school lunches.

The participating universities' Institutional Review Boards authorized the study before participant recruitment began. Selected members of each team were invited to participate in key informant interviews at the time of team formation. We selected members for interviews who represented key organizations and community sectors for the project (i.e., the middle

school; drug, alcohol, and mental health agencies; parents of middle-school youth). Informed consent was obtained from each participant engaged in the computer-assisted interviews conducted by trained interviewers. Participants received an honorarium of \$20 when they completed the interview. We continued to interview the same respondents at least annually thereafter, and added new respondents when key organizational slots on the team were filled, or when team members left the team and were replaced. Data utilized in the current study consisted of three of the 5 waves of data collected to date. Wave 1 occurred within two months of team formation (Spring 2002). Waves 2 and 3 were collected at 6 and 18 months but are not a focus of the current report. Wave 4 was collected 30 months after Wave 1 and Wave 5 was collected a year later (42 months after Wave 1). By Wave 5 all teams had extensive experience and had implemented both a family-based evening intervention program (for Grade 6 families) and a school-based program (for Grade 7 students) with two separate cohorts of students.

Participants

Because partnership teams were not organized in the control communities, this study focuses on the team members and leaders in the 14 intervention communities. A total of 162 individuals participated in this component of the study in the 14 intervention communities. Three people were excluded due to changes in their member/director status over time, yielding a sample size of 159 for analyses. The number of participants per a community ranged from 7 to 16 ($M = 11.36$, $SD = 2.56$). Thirty eight people participated in wave 1 but not in waves 4 and 5. Because the unit of analysis is community, not individuals, all participants were included even if they did not participate in one of waves (personality data was collected on new participants at the time of enrollment in the study). Of the 159 participants, 117 participated at wave 1; 42 individuals joined a team after wave 1 and participated at either or both of wave 4 and 5. Participation rates were over 90% across communities and across the three waves among those contacted. Team members include local Cooperative Extension and school representatives, local substance abuse and mental health agency representatives, other community organization representatives, and parents (youth members were not interviewed). Team leaders were from local schools and Cooperative Extension systems.

At the beginning of the study, participants were an average of 42.5 years of age ($SD = 8.25$) with some graduate education ($M = 7.06$ and $SD = 1.25$, where 6 = college graduate, 7 = some graduate education and 8 = graduate degree). All participants were White, reflecting the racial composition of the rural communities in Iowa and Pennsylvania that were involved in the study.

Measures

Personality—At wave 1, three of the Big Five personality dimensions measured by the NEO Five-Factor Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992) were assessed. A five-point response scale was utilized for all items, ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree. *Agreeableness* (individual's flexibility and cooperation with others) and *Conscientiousness* (individual's carefulness and thoroughness) were each assessed with 12 items (e.g., "I try to be courteous to everyone I meet" and "I'm pretty good about pacing myself so as to get things done on time" for Agreeableness and Conscientiousness, respectively). Alphas were .86 and .79, respectively. *Openness to Experience* (degree of open-mindedness) was assessed by 11 items (e.g., "I am intrigued by the patterns I find in art and nature"). (One item from the scale was accidentally excluded due to a clerical error.) The alpha was .75. Personality scores were corrected for gender based on Costa & McCrae's guidelines (Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., 1991).

We did not collect data on neuroticism or extraversion, although we expect the former would have been linked to team functioning. The participants in this study were members of community prevention teams, and in that capacity had contact with our liaison agents (the Prevention Coordinators) as well as with the investigators on occasion. We decided that collecting data on neuroticism may have been perceived as too personal in this context. In addition, to reduce response burden, we also did not collect data on extraversion.

Team Functioning—At waves 4 and 5, five scales were used to assess prevention team functioning. *Team Focus on Work* was rated using 5 items on a true/false response scale adapted from Moos & Insel (1974) (e.g., “there’s a lot of time wasted because of inefficiencies”). Alphas at the community level were .86 and .78 for waves 4 and 5, respectively. *Team Culture* and *Team Leadership* were both assessed using 8 items on a 4-point response scale adapted from Kegler et al. (1988) (e.g., “There is a sense of unity and cohesion in this team” for team culture ; and “The team leadership gives praise and recognition at meetings” for team leadership). Alphas ranged from .90 to .97 for team culture and team leadership across waves. *Team Tension* was assessed by one item, “Some teams have to deal with conflict and tension caused by differences of opinions, personality clashes, hidden agendas and power struggles. How much tension have you noticed in your team?” The item had a 4-point response scale. Finally, *Team Goals* was measured using 2 items (“The PROSPER team has agreed on how it will govern itself and make decisions” and “The PROSER team has developed clear goals and objectives”) that were developed by the PROSPER team; the first item was rated on a 4-point response scale and the second item was rated on a yes/no response scale. The correlations between two items were .53 for wave 4 and .83 for wave 5. For each of the team functioning scales, we utilized a mean of wave 4 and wave 5 scores in order to reduce error from random year-to-year fluctuation. This method was justified by the high correlations across years: The correlations between the wave 4 and wave 5 team functioning scales were .62, .78, .58, .62 and .68 for Team Focus on Work, Team Culture, Team Leadership, Team Goals and Team Tension, respectively.

Analytic Plan

We conducted all analyses at the community level, i.e., a team level average personality score was created representing data of all reporters within the same community for each variable. For team functioning variables, we constructed the mean scores based on both team member and team leader reports. For personality measures, we utilized three variables; a mean of team members (excluding the team leader), the team leader score, and variability (standard deviation) among all team respondents (i.e., members and the leader). For the team leader personality score, if there was more than one leader in a community (N=1), or if a team leader had been changed from wave 1 to wave 4 (N=2), the mean score of the leaders’ personality scores were utilized. We conducted analyses for level of personality traits (members and leader) and variability in personality traits separately.

For level of personality, separate regression analyses were conducted using each of the three personality dimensions as a predictor. In each model, we included mean team members’ personality and team leaders’ personality as predictors. Due to substantial correlations among the team functioning variables, we used multivariate regression analyses instead of treating the five team-functioning variables independently. Therefore, we report univariate results only if the multivariate model result statistics were significant. Due to small sample size (N = 14), we utilized an alpha level of $p < .10$ (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003; Feinberg et al., In press).

To examine variability in personality characteristics, we used canonical correlation to take into account the fact that personality trait had 3 subscales (i.e., Openness,

Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness) and team functioning had 5 factors. The canonical correlation procedure created a single measure of association between the set of 3 predictors and the set of 5 outcomes.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

The correlations among Team Focus on Work, Team Culture, Team Leadership, and Team Goals ranged from 0.47 to 0.94 (see Table 1). The correlations between these variables and Team Tension ranged from -0.30 to -0.50 .

The Link between Personality and Team Functioning

A series of multivariate regression analyses were conducted to examine the link between personality and team functioning. For *Openness*, the multivariate test was nearly significant at $p < .05$ (Wilks' Lambda = 0.127, $F = 2.52$, $p < .06$). Univariate tests revealed that team leaders' *Openness* was negatively related to Team Focus on Work, Team Culture, Team Leadership, and Team Goals, and positively to Team Tension ($t = -3.29$, $p < .01$; $t = -2.76$, $p < .05$; $t = -2.52$, $p < .05$; $t = -2.39$, $p < .05$; and $t = 2.43$, $p < .05$, respectively). Team members' *Openness* was also negatively linked to Team Focus on Work and positively linked to Team Tension ($t = -1.84$, $p < .10$; and $t = 3.43$, $p < .01$, respectively). About 54%, 41%, 37%, 34% and 59% of variance in Team Focus on Work, Team Culture, Team Leadership and Team Goals were explained by *Openness*, respectively.

For *Conscientiousness*, the multivariate test was also significant (Wilks' Lambda = 0.122, $F = 2.62$, $p < .05$). Team members' *Conscientiousness* was significantly and positively related to Team Focus on Work ($t = 2.47$, $p < .05$). Team leaders' *Conscientiousness* was not related to any measures of team functioning. About 48% of the variance in Team Focus on Work was explained by *Conscientiousness*. Finally, for *Agreeableness*, the multivariate test was not significant (Wilks' Lambda = 0.329, $F = 1.04$, $p > .10$).

To examine the link between personality variability on the team and team functioning, we used canonical correlation. The multivariate test was not significant (Wilks' Lambda = 0.507, $F = .99$, $p > .10$). The tests of canonical dimensions were not significant for all three dimensions ($F = .99$, $F = .64$ and $F = .82$ for dimensions 1, 2 and 3, respectively).

Discussion

We investigated the associations between the personality dimensions of community prevention team members and leaders and subsequent team functioning. We focused on how three personality dimensions of both team members and team leaders-- *Agreeableness*, *Conscientiousness* and *Openness to Experience*—predicted five aspects of team functioning: Team Focus on Work, Team Culture, Team Leadership, Team Tension and Team Goals. . Participating community prevention teams were from small towns in rural areas in Pennsylvania and Iowa. Team leaders were from local schools and Cooperative Extension systems who were interested in preventing youth substance use. The team members included parents, youth and local professionals from education and social services. Using a multivariate regression approach, our analyses accounted for the interconnectedness of the five aspects of team functioning. The results highlighted the importance of two personality dimensions for community coalitions. Both leaders' and members' *Openness to Experience* had negative relations with team functioning. *Openness to Experience* was especially salient in predicting low scores on team focus on work and high scores on team tension. Together, team leaders' and team members' *Openness to Experience* explained about half of the variability in team focus on work and in team tension. This finding is consistent with prior

research (Stewart et al., 2005), although some researchers have found other results (e.g., Neuman et al., 1999).

Research and theory suggests that higher levels of *Openness to Experience* could lead team members toward diverse directions to fulfill individual curiosity and imagination, leading to difficulties in a collective focus on work (Stewart et al., 2005). In addition, if individuals become invested in their own chosen direction of activity, team tension would increase as team members struggle to define a unified team process. Moreover, individuals with high *Openness to Experience* appear to be more independent and less engaged in promoting social cohesion, thus diminishing the team's resources for managing conflict.

Interestingly, leaders' *Openness to Experience* was related to all five dimensions of team functioning, i.e., team focus on work, team tension, team culture, team leadership and team goals whereas members' *Openness to Experience* was related to only team focus on work and team tension. This finding implies that the leaders' level of *Openness to Experience* is an important determinant of multiple aspects of team functioning. Leaders who are high on this dimension may be concerned with their own pursuits and explorations and less able to provide support, foster unity, and maintain a goal-oriented structure for the entire team.

In contrast, we found that team members' *Conscientiousness* had positive implications for team functioning. This finding is consistent with the bulk of prior research. For example, a meta-analysis concluded that *Conscientiousness* is a consistent predictor of performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991). For this dimension, it was team members', not team leaders' *Conscientiousness* that was a significant longitudinal predictor of team functioning. High levels of dependability and reliability of just one or two leaders may not be enough to have positive implications for team functioning; rather, the overall level of dependability and effortful engagement among team members is salient.

This finding, like all the findings here, may in part be context specific. In some coalition models, team or coalition members serve as a decision-making board, with staff assigned to carry out the tasks decided upon. In PROSPER, both Cooperative Extension educators and the school-based co-leaders are able to devote only a limited amount of their work time at work to the PROSPER team activities. Thus, PROSPER teams' success is dependent on member engagement in key tasks, such as participant recruitment, fundraising, publicity. In other models where team members are less engaged in the team's actual work, it may be that team member conscientiousness is a less important determinant of team functioning.

Our null results for *Agreeableness* did not conform with some previous research indicating that *Agreeableness* is related to promotion of social cohesion and linked to team performance and viability (Barrick et al., 1998; Stewart et al., 2005). There are several possible reasons for this lack of consistency with prior research. First, it is important to recognize that much of the prior research had assessed individual performance, not group performance. In addition, research on *Agreeableness* has not previously addressed teams representing coalitions. Secondly, the results of prior research are mixed; for example, some prior research has not found *Agreeableness* to be strongly linked to task performance (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Finally, it is possible that even if a group is characterized on the whole by agreeableness, only one or two disagreeable people in the group could disrupt team functioning. In the literature on family relationships, for example, negativity is a highly reciprocal behavior in sibling, parent-child, and interparental relationships (e.g. Reiss, Neiderhiser, Hetherington, & Plomin, 2000). It may be that the tendency for negativity to be reciprocated, despite individuals' otherwise agreeable or positive personality traits, is a mechanism that requires further attention in our understanding of team functioning.

The results did not support the notion that diversity in personality traits is linked in either a positive or negative manner to team functioning. Given the limited sample size in this study at the team level, we encourage future research on this issue with a greater number of units.

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

The reader should be cognizant of certain limitations that could bear on the internal and external validity of the study findings. First, the number of teams examined was only 14 and consequently we interpreted findings that were significant at a liberal alpha of .10 (although several findings were significant at the conventional alpha of .05). Second, as noted above, these results are likely not generalizable to all types of collaborative workgroups. We believe these results are most applicable to community-based coalitions, partnerships, and teams focusing on public health intervention. Moreover, the communities involved were mostly White, rural and semi-rural, and located in two states. Further research with varied samples would provide an important replication.

Despite the limited sample size, the results generally are consistent with prior research. Moreover, the longitudinal nature of the study indicates that personality has a substantial influence on the functioning of coalitions during a somewhat mature phase, about 2 to 4 years after team formation. Where results were significant—namely, for team leader and member openness to experience and team member conscientiousness—personality accounted for a third to half of the variance in team level functioning. Given the link between coalition functioning and sustainability Feinberg, In press, these results suggest that personality traits likely have an influence that extends to the successful maintenance of the coalition's work beyond initial seed funding.

Supporting the functioning of community coalitions requires a balance between the needs and styles of individuals and the goals and processes of the entire group. These results suggest that technical assistance providers should begin to incorporate awareness of member and leader personality into their work. For example, providers may encourage decision-makers to take personality factors into account in hiring coalition leaders and recruiting members to coalitions. In coalitions that are not functioning well, technical assistance providers might assess the level of conscientiousness and independent creativity of coalition members and leaders. Coalitions with lower levels of conscientiousness or higher levels of individual independence may benefit from including other members with the beneficial traits. Moreover, technical assistance providers should offer greater support to teams that are challenged by less than optimal personality traits of team members and leaders. In addition, compensatory strategies such as accountability structures or enhancement of social cohesion through group-building or visioning activities may be in order.

It is likely that competent and successful technical assistance providers are naturally attuned to the influence of personality factors on coalition functioning and success. Explicit awareness and consideration of these issues, in combination with a focus on overall coalition goals and processes, may foster greater coalition effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

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Biographies

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Mark Greenberg, PhD., is director of the Prevention Research Center at Pennsylvania State University. He has been involved in the development and evaluation of numerous prevention programs, and is a member of the NIDA Council.

Table 1Means and Standard Deviations (*SDs*) for Personality and Team Functioning (*n* = 14)

	Mean	SD
Personality: Level*		
Team Leader Agreeableness	4.43	0.76
Team Leader Conscientiousness	3.57	1.09
Team Leader Openness	3.43	1.22
Team Member Mean Agreeableness	3.84	0.55
Team Member Mean Conscientiousness	3.88	0.36
Team Member Mean Openness	3.61	0.47
Personality: Team Variability (standard deviation)		
Agreeableness	1.06	0.31
Conscientiousness	0.87	0.20
Openness	1.07	0.19
Team Functioning		
Team Work	0.93	0.09
Team Culture	3.52	0.27
Team Leader	3.68	0.18
Team Goal	3.50	0.27
Team Tension	1.85	0.43

* Personality level for team members represents the team-level mean. Thus the standard deviation represents variability in team mean scores around the grand mean.

Table 2

Correlation coefficients among indices of team functioning (N = 14)

	Team Focus on Work	Team Culture	Team Leadership	Team Goals
Team Culture	.71 **	-		
Team Leadership	.69 **	.93 **	-	
Team Goals	.46 *	.82 **	.72 **	-
Team Tension	-.49 *	-.42	-.49 *	-.28

**
 $p < .01$;

*
 $p < .10$