Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision

Volume 18 | Number 1 Article 9

2024

A Qualitative Investigation of Clinical Mental Health Counselors' Group Practicum Training Experiences

Brittany L. Pollard-Kosidowski
Indiana University of Pennsylvania, bpollard@iup.edu

Monica E. Kaule
Indiana University of Pennsylvania, npzy@iup.edu

Heather Uphold
Indiana University of Pennsylvania, kjnh@iup.edu

Chad Losinger
losinger62@gmail.com

Adam F. Stephens
SUNY New Paltz, stephena@newpaltz.edu

A Qualitative Investigation of Clinical Mental Health Counselors' Group Practicum Training Experiences

Abstract

The authors of this study used inductive content analysis to qualitatively explore the group practicum training experiences of clinical mental health counselors who graduated from one CACREP-accredited program. Fifteen participants shared about their firsthand experiences in a required group practicum course and described the ways in which the experience impacted their competence and self-efficacy as counseling professionals and group workers. Five resulting themes highlight the significance and value of practical training experiences dedicated solely to group facilitation. Implications for counselor educators and program accreditors are provided, along with recommendations for future research.

Keywords

group counseling, counselor education, practicum, experiential learning, Bloom's Taxonomy

Author's Notes

This study was funded fully by the Association for Specialists in Group Work's Research Committee. We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

JOURNAL OF COUNSELOR PREPARATION AND SUPERVISION
The official journal of the North Atlantic Region Association for Counselor Education and Supervision

A Qualitative Investigation of Clinical Mental Health Counselors' Group Practicum Training Experiences

Received: 10/01/22
Revised: 09/04/23
Accepted: 12/21/23
*manuscript accepted by previous editor

Brittany L. Pollard-Kosidowski, Monica E. Kaule, Heather Uphold, Chad Losinger, Adam F. Stephens

Abstract

The authors of this study used inductive content analysis to qualitatively explore the group practicum training experiences of clinical mental health counselors who graduated from one CACREP-accredited program. Fifteen participants shared about their firsthand experiences in a required group practicum course and described the ways in which the experience impacted their competence and self-efficacy as counseling professionals and group workers. Five resulting themes highlight the significance and value of practical training experiences dedicated solely to group facilitation. Implications for counselor educators and program accreditors are provided, along with recommendations for future research.

Keywords: group counseling, counselor education, practicum, experiential learning, Bloom's Taxonomy

As part of an ever-evolving social landscape presently characterized by political strife, intercultural violence, and an ongoing worldwide health crisis, today's clinical mental health counselors are tasked with serving clients more efficiently and cost-effectively than ever before (Currie et al., 2020; Novotney, 2019). Many practitioners have made significant shifts in recent years toward increasing their provision of group work services that foster spaces in which they can work with multiple individuals simultaneously and that allow members to develop and maintain consistent, stable connections with other human beings. Counselor educators currently preparing counselors-in-training (CIT) for the complex and dynamic realities associated with being a mental health practitioner in today's world are, as a result, increasingly responsible for arming students with the clinical skillset necessary to effectively facilitate therapeutic groups. Despite many calls over the years for increased exploration of pedagogical practices associated with group work training (Buser, 2008; Luke & Goodrich, 2017); however, relevant current literature remains surprisingly sparse (Vannatta & Steen, 2019). As such, the present study utilized a qualitative content analysis methodology to explore the training experiences of 15 clinical mental health counseling (CMHC) graduates who completed a required group counseling practicum course as part of their clinical training experience.

Ample research to-date has established group work as an effective clinical modality used widely across therapeutic settings and in the efficacious treatment of diverse populations (Bemak & Chung, 2015; Cusack et al., 2019; Gladding, 2019; Goicoechea et al., 2014; Kottler & Englar-Carlson, 2020; MacKinnon et al., 2016; Malekzadeh et al., 2018; Pender & Prichard, 2009). Researchers who examined the efficacy of individual therapy versus

Brittany L. Pollard-Kosidowski, Department of Counseling, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; **Monica E. Kaule**, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; **Heather Uphold**, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; **Chad Losinger**, Program/Dept/College Name, University Affiliation; **Adam F. Stephens**, SUNY New Paltz. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Brittany L. Pollard-Kosidowski, Department of Counseling, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, (email: bpollard@iup.edu).

group therapy found comparable treatment outcomes (Naumann, 2012; Paranjape et al., 2012; Rosselló et al., 2012), with several studies suggesting that although group work often actually holds a slight advantage over individual treatment in terms of outcome measures, therapeutic approaches combining the two may result in optimal clinical success (Dickhaut & Arntz, 2014; Echeburua et al., 2014; Paranjape et al., 2012). Due to its increasing popularity in therapeutic spheres and scholarship demonstrating its cost-effectiveness, time-efficiency, and therapeutic efficacy (Gladding, 2019), practitioners, researchers, and professional organizations have, over time, come to regard group work as a standalone, evidence-based clinical specialization (American Psychological Association (APA), 2022; Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW), 2014).

Despite its establishment as a highly effective clinical modality, however, it is not uncommon for counselors to report feeling ill-equipped in facilitating therapeutic groups. Midgett et al. (2016) noted the importance of self-efficacy among group counselors, reiterating the lack of contemporary research into this phenomenon. Shay (2017) described group worker challenges such as feeling pressured to track multiple group dynamics in real-time, not always knowing how to respond to group members, and figuring out how to determine the best course of therapeutic action in early group experiences. Pollard-Kosidowki et al.'s (2020) participants decried the lack of experiential group work practice offered by their shared training program, reporting that although they understood the fundamental concepts associated with group work, they lacked self-efficacy in applying those skills within therapeutic settings. Notably, participants in all three studies reported increased confidence after engaging in experiential training activities specific to group work; this research demonstrates a need for further pedagogical research related to group work and dedicated training methods that support the development of both confidence and competence among beginning counselors (Midgett et al., 2016; Pollard-Kosidowski et al., 2021; Shay, 2017).

Having established the historical and current contextual value of group counseling, Gladding (2019) suggested it is equally important to consider what the future of group work may entail, noting in particular its potential for cost-effective and time-efficient utilization. Although difficult to predict, researchers have suggested that future possibilities may include an expansion of available group services in clinical settings (Gladding, 2019; Corey, 2017), the further empowerment of group members to actively engage in social justice advocacy initiatives (Gladding, 2019; Singh et al., 2012; Singh & Salazar, 2010), and the modification of group-based treatment approaches to include both short-term and high-tech formats that better fit the evolving demands of managed care and the landscape of mental healthcare (APA, 2022; Utoyo et al., 2013; Van Lieshout, 2017). Research has made clear that both group work scholarship and practice are likely to continue expanding over the next several decades, particularly with the increasing needs of clinical populations and the support of dedicated professional organizations, counselor educators, and credentialed group work practitioners. This recognition further supports the notion that targeted, hands-on group work training is imperative for counseling students.

The Council for Accreditation and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), recognized as the primary accreditor of counseling programs within the United States, identifies group work as one of the eight core content areas in which CIT must be prepared (CACREP, 2015, 2023). Although group facilitation is a core therapeutic skill expected of practicing counselors, however, accreditation standards and counselor educators working within their guidelines have historically focused their attention more so on helping CIT to develop a working knowledge of group work constructs and theories rather than the applied skillset and self-efficacy necessary for effective group facilitation (Pollard-Kosidowski et al., 2021; Midgett et al., 2016). Although this study was conducted prior to the recent release of the 2024 CACREP standards, the language surrounding group work requirements remains largely unchanged from that of the 2016 standards. Both sets of standards require CIT to

develop competence in group theory, dynamics, leadership qualities, and ethical practice, as well as to engage for a minimum of 10 hours in a small group membership experience (CACREP, 2015, 2023). The requirement for active group facilitation experience is decidedly less clear, with both sets of standards noting only the need for CIT to facilitate or co-facilitate a group at some point during *either* practicum or internship (CACREP, 2015, 2023). As a result, counselor education programs failing to provide CIT with adequate group facilitation opportunities can leave students well short of the minimum level of competence expected by the completion of their CACREP-accredited training experience (Conyne et al., 1993; Gary & Grady, 2015) and ill-equipped to facilitate real-world therapeutic groups. At the time of this study, only four of the 360 CACREP-accredited CMHC programs in the United States explicitly required a practical or clinical course dedicated solely to group work facilitation, data gleaned by the authors' thorough review of curriculum requirements published on the websites of CACREP-accredited programs. Instead, the overwhelming majority of counselor training programs weave CACREP's (2015, 2023) minimal applied group work requirement into practicum and internship courses that also highlight other modalities such as individual, couples, and family work. This approach detracts from students' ability to practice targeted skills at length, giving them limited exposure to each modality, rather than intensive, hands-on experience with the core domains (i.e., individual and group work) that characterize contemporary counseling practice.

Despite lacking consistency across programs, the need for dedicated group work training is well-supported by current, relevant literature. Group counseling skills differ fundamentally from those required to work effectively with individuals, as group facilitators must be aware of the additional dynamics involved in managing interpersonal conflicts, fostering cohesion among group members, and successfully navigating the stage progression common to most groups (Holstun et al., 2019; Singh et al., 2012; Walsh et al., 2017). As such, active facilitation practice within the training experience is critical to the holistic professional development of CIT. While requisite small group membership experiences are beneficial to CIT in developing their knowledge and understanding of group work, scholars have suggested that facilitation experience is equally important in fostering the development of skill application, self-efficacy, and higher order critical thinking (Pollard-Kosidowski et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2014; Midgett et al., 2016). As a well-established and critical component of contemporary counseling practice, the training of CIT on group work facilitation skills must be viewed as an essential part of today's curricular landscape, with current CACREP (2015, 2023) training standards and traditional counselor education practices often falling short (Walsh et al., 2017).

Purpose of Study

Current curricular structures within counselor education provide ample opportunities for the experiential training of CIT in the eight core areas outlined by CACREP (2015, 2023). Practicum and internship courses, in particular, provide a rich context for supporting the applied clinical growth of trainees in working with both individual clients and therapeutic groups. The targeted development of group facilitation skills among CIT is possible through the intentional integration of experiential components dedicated solely to group work practice. The constraints of accreditation-driven curriculum, however, often relegate group work training to constituting only a small segment of the applied clinical experiences to which practicum and internship courses are dedicated. Instead, supervisory attention is primarily given to the development and refinement of individual counseling skills, with students often striving only to meet the minimum group work requirement set forth by CACREP (2015, 2023). As described above, counselors-in-training would greatly benefit from increased opportunities to develop their group facilitation skills, a need that could be filled by dedicating practicum and internship experiences specifically to this area of clinical practice. As such,

the present study investigated the group work training experiences of 15 counselors who graduated from one CACREP-accredited, master's-level CMHC program that required a dedicated semester-long group practicum course experience. The research question guiding this study was: *How does a dedicated group practicum experience required during master's-level counselor training impact the self-efficacy and competence levels of practicing counselors facilitating clinical groups?* For the purposes of this study, self-efficacy was operationally defined as one's belief that they can successfully engage with and/or complete a task, while competence referred to the self-reported knowledge, understanding, and capability of participants. The nature of the group practicum course is detailed further in the Participants section below.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical lens used to analyze data collected for this study is Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (BT; Bloom,1956), which originally consisted of six distinct levels of cognitive development: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. After the initial level of "knowledge", subsequent levels are presented under the umbrella of "skills and abilities," with the understanding that knowledge serves as a necessary precursor for applying the skillset that naturally follows. BT integrates various teaching modalities into a coherent and progressive whole (Wallace, 2019) and was developed as a means for standardizing various aspects of education, such as learning objectives, curriculum, and evaluative measures used to assess student progress and cognitive development (Ugur et al., 2015). In 2016, Spence presented an updated version of BT, with six classifications of revised taxonomy objectives that paralleled the original model and made each objective actionable for learners. Updated objectives include: (1) remember, (2) understand, (3) apply, (4) analyze, (5) evaluate, and (6) create (Spence, 2019) and allow educators to develop integrated, sequential, and discipline-specific targets that address different learning styles.

BT is widely used within counselor education (Kolb & Kolb, 2018; Nelson et al., 2020; Dollarhide, 2013) as a starting point for assessing the knowledge and skillset of CIT (Nelson et al., 2020), as well as a tool for measuring progress in terms of cognitive complexity (Granello, 2010) and practical application (Nelson et al., 2020). Counselor educators often structure curricular experiences to foster appropriate therapeutic decision-making skills and clinical approaches among CIT, recognizing that these counseling behaviors represent the external manifestation of the underlying values guiding their work. Behaviors associated with effective counseling practice include empowerment, advocacy, and collaboration (Dollarhide, 2013) with a special emphasis placed on the integration of Bloom's affective and cognitive domains (Bloom et al., 1956; Nelson et al., 2020). Within practicum and internship settings, CIT are afforded the opportunity to observe and reflect upon their personal and professional values in action; processes which support their development of higher order thinking skills, emerging capability to apply clinical knowledge, and evolving sense of self-efficacy as budding practitioners. The sequential nature of the BT model allows counselor trainees to crystallize their knowledge by engaging in the active application of skills, a process mirrored in other domains of counselor training as well. For example, in the most recent version of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC; Ratts et al., 2016), the fourth aspirational competency of *action* was added to round out the initial process of examining one's own attitudes and beliefs, building relevant knowledge, and developing therapeutic skills for use in facilitating multiculturally-affirming, socially just counseling processes for clients. Given the integral nature of both individual and group work to counseling, and the necessity of both competence and capability in conducting ethical therapeutic work, it is critical that CIT are enabled to actively practice facilitating both modalities in a dedicated and equitable fashion.

Method

Research Design

This qualitative study investigated the perceptions and experiences of 15 counseling professionals who were required to participate in a group practicum course experience within their shared counseling program. The inductive content analysis methodology used allowed the research team to examine themes that emerged organically and explicitly from collected interview data (Creswell, 2017; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The five co-investigators independently reviewed each transcript, following a uniform process that entailed memoing, coding, and thematizing the data, as well as reporting their interpretations as accurately as possible (Creswell, 2017; Shin, 2019). This method of sequentially making sense of the data at increasingly deeper levels paralleled the BT model (Bloom et al., 1956) used to analyze study findings.

Participants

Participants in the present study consisted of 15 counseling professionals who had graduated from one CACREP-accredited CMHC program within the five years prior to being interviewed and who were required to complete a semester-long clinical practicum experience focused solely on group work facilitation during their training. Inclusion criteria necessitated that participants be employed in a professional counseling role at the time of being interviewed and affirmatively report at least one post-graduate experience with facilitating or co-facilitating a psychoeducational, counseling, psychotherapy, or mixed type group in a clinical setting.

Each of the 15 participants was invited at the beginning of their interview session to choose a first-name pseudonym in an effort to protect their confidentiality. Participant ages ranged between 25 to 49 years old; 14 of the participants identified as Caucasian and one identified as Black/African American. Twelve (80%) participants identified as female and three (20%) identified as male. All participants held master's degrees in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, with two indicating they were currently pursuing doctoral degrees in Counselor Education and Supervision. In keeping with inclusion criteria, all participants reported being presently employed as counseling professionals.

Although all participants completed the same counselor training program within the same university setting, they did so across the span of five years and several cohorts. All participants were required to complete a one-semester group practicum experience as part of their training, with a minimum of 10 hours of direct group facilitation required and 15 hours of indirect service (i.e., maintaining documentation, preparing for group sessions, engaging in supervision at their site or with their faculty instructor) for a total of 25 clock hours. In addition to meeting the group practicum requirement, all participants completed a 75-hour (30 direct; 45 indirect) individual counseling practicum, as well as a 600-hour (240 direct; 360 indirect) internship experience. The course structure of the group practicum course mirrored the structure of its counterpart individual practicum course, in that participants engaged in weekly group and individual/triadic supervision with their faculty supervisor, in addition to engaging in weekly supervision with their site supervisor if working off-campus. Supervisory sessions focused on each student's application of group facilitation skills using tape review and provided support for navigating group member/client issues as they arose. The structure of the group practicum course aligned with all CACREP (2015) requirements for practicum supervision.

All participants reported that their practicum experiences occurred about halfway through their training. Nine participants indicated that their group practicum course came after they had completed individual practicum, while two reported that their group practicum experience took place before individual. Three participants reported that they took the individual practicum and group practicum courses simultaneously, while one participant took group practicum both alongside and after their

individual practicum experience, due to a necessary course repeat.

All participants reported that they were given the option to complete their group practicum on-campus by facilitating or co-facilitating small personal growth groups required of early-program Group Theory students or small personal growth groups comprised of undergraduate student volunteers. They were also given the option to find a community site (i.e., counseling agency, private practice, etc.) willing to supervise their work and facilitate a variety of group types (i.e., counseling, psychotherapeutic, psychoeducational, etc.). Four participants indicated that they completed their group practicum experiences at off-campus sites, whereas 11 participants reported having completed their group practicum experiences on campus. With regard to their current work, five participants indicated that they were not presently providing group counseling services in their clinical roles, while 10 indicated that they were presently required to facilitate some form of group work. All 15 participants reported at least one post-graduate experience with facilitating clinical groups, as indicated in the study's inclusion criteria.

Procedures

The study began with obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board at the lead investigator's university. The lead investigator reviewed a list of all program graduates from within the five-year span prior to the study being conducted, identifying eligible candidates based on their completion of the group practicum experience at the target university. Using an alumni email list, potential participants were emailed invitations to participate in the study and provided with informed consent, which was also reviewed at the beginning of each audio-recorded interview session. Interested parties contacted the lead investigator and, upon confirming that they met all inclusion criteria, were contacted to schedule an interview with one of the five co-investigators. Eighteen individuals were deemed eligible to participate.

Participants were each given a $15 Amazon gift card for their participation in one 30- to 60-minute interview and were made aware that they could withdraw their participation in the study, without penalty, at any point prior to data analysis. Data saturation was reached at 15 participants and the remaining three were dismissed from the study. A semi-structured interview protocol was utilized for each interview and allowed for the use of both pre-determined and spontaneous interview questions for data collection. Sample questions included:

1) *Please describe any experiences in your group practicum that impacted your understanding of group facilitation.*
2) *Please describe current self-efficacy and competence levels related to group work in your current counseling role.*

Each interview was audio-recorded for accuracy and later transcribed. All interviews were conducted either in-person or through the Zoom online meeting platform, depending on each participant's geographical location and personal preference.

At the beginning of each interview, all participants were asked to select first-name pseudonyms designed to help protect their confidentiality. As part of the informed consent process, all participants agreed to be contacted post-interview if clarification of their experiences was needed during data analysis. Once all interviews were completed, audio recordings were sent to an external transcription company and each interview was transcribed. The research team utilized content analysis procedures to analyze each transcript by engaging in an independent process of memoing, coding, and thematizing the data (Creswell, 2017). Memoing involved the co-investigators making margin notes to begin identifying collected data that related directly and explicitly to the research question. Coding consisted of each investigator separating data clusters (i.e., words, phrases) into distinct data categories that were to be further analyzed for identifiable themes. Thematizing entailed the co-investigators meeting to discuss and analyze identified codes and collapsing coded data clusters into emergent themes (Bensing et al., 2010; Creswell, 2017; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Shin, 2019). This process followed an inductive content analysis procedure that allowed the researchers to identify

and report the commonalities explicitly described by the 15 participants in this study. By independently analyzing the content of each individual interview and subsequently analyzing the themes inherent in the content that participants collectively shared, the authors were able to paint an explicit and detailed picture of the ways in which group practicum enhanced participants' self-efficacy and competence in facilitating group work. This type of content analysis is appropriate for qualitative inquiries designed to assess the data explicitly reported by participants and often serves as the foundation for deeper qualitative investigations into the meaning making participants do as it pertains to their lived experiences.

Ethical Considerations

One of the primary ethical concerns addressed consistently throughout the study was researcher bias. Once the recruiting period closed, the research team met to discuss any dual relationships present with participants to avoid the influence of bias and/or skewing the data collection process. Because four of the five co-investigators were, at the time, intimately involved with the department from which each participant had graduated, it was critical to ensure that the impact of existing dual relationships was minimized. This was done by assigning each investigator only to interview participants with whom they had no existing relationship.

Additionally, before engaging in data collection, the research team met to discuss each investigator's potential bias regarding the focus of the study and bracketed thoughts, feelings, opinions, and preconceived notions that emerged from the conversation (Creswell, 2017; Maxwell, 2013). Bracketing conversations were facilitated among all five co-investigators throughout each stage of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. One example of a bias that arose from these discussions and was repeatedly attended to throughout the research process was the lead investigator's belief that group practicum experiences may enhance students' cognitive complexity around group facilitation, given her experience as a group practicum instructor.

In an effort to ensure the accuracy of collected data, member checking (Carlson, 2010; Creswell, 2017) was used to provide each participant with the opportunity to clarify, add to, or eliminate any disclosures post-interview. All 15 participants were emailed their interview transcripts and given two weeks to respond with any edits. None of the participants indicated the need for any revisions of their transcript.

Finally, in accordance with ethical practices common to qualitative research, the second author took responsibility for maintaining an audit trail throughout the research process to ensure transparency in all study procedures and the maintenance of careful, detailed records of the research team's activities (Creswell, 2017). Audit trail notes were kept in a journal and have been maintained alongside interview transcripts and other study materials. They will be kept for a minimum of three years in accordance with federal standards for research.

Results

Upon analyzing collected data, the researchers identified five emergent themes across participants' group practicum training experiences: 1) Uniqueness and Value of Experience, 2) Increased Preparation and Professional Growth, 3) Significance of Supervision, 4) Increased Affinity for and Pursuit of Group Work Opportunities, and 5) Enhanced Professional Identity. Each of these themes as voiced by participants is detailed in the following subsections. Additionally, the researchers identified several outlier themes that are detailed in a later section dedicated to suggestions for future research. What follows are the firsthand experiences described by: Barb, Becky, Carter, Destiny, Elizabeth, Jeffrey, Liz, Lori, Lucy, Maddie, Nicolette, Olivia, Rose, Sarah, and Shawn.

Theme One: Uniqueness and Value of Experience

In Uniqueness and Value of Experience, participants shared that the group practicum course comprised a unique and significant training component in their educational experience that set them apart from their counseling colleagues. For example, Olivia shared her perspective on the group practicum course being required, noting, "I absolutely loved that that's a requirement. I was the only counselor at my last job that had any group… experience. I had skills that they didn't and that they had to work harder to develop. So to me, I think it was… essential." Lucy seconded this notion, recalling, "I can remember right after I graduated, you know, going on interviews. That was actually something that I talked up was how much I liked groups and how much… you know, how comfortable I felt running groups." In conjunction with Lucy and Olivia, Shawn emphasized how his experience level as a new graduate surpassed that of his peers in surprising and uncommon ways. He noted, "I realized that was not normal and I had more [group] experience over my peers."

Other participants highlighted the unique ways in which the group practicum experience supplemented the more traditional textbook learning provided in a pre-requisite Group Theories course. Barb emphasized the importance of incorporating content knowledge with practical application, reporting "I had textbook knowledge in a lot of… things that I wouldn't have practiced. I think it would've been the same if I didn't have group practicum." Lucy shared a similar view of the value of facilitation practice: "I got to actually see and participate in the process instead of just learning about it. It was helpful to actually be immersed in it."

Becky, Rose, Elizabeth, and Shawn also commented on the necessity of group practice as a training component, describing the opportunity as essential to their present career as professional counselors. Becky stated "I think everyone should at least… get practice and a sense of like familiarity of what group's about" while Rose shared "I think it was definitely one of the most important… parts of my counseling training, like I remember being in that class a lot when I think back on my master's program. And I think a lot of what I learned in that class, I definitely, like I still reflect on it." Elizabeth agreed, noting her surprise that the group practicum required only 10 hours of direct service, while the individual practicum course required a minimum of 30 hours. She said "I think it should definitely be a requirement… it needs to be there. Because any job you go to, there's gonna be some type of group." Shawn re-iterated "Very few programs that I [have] found has student [group] practicums. So the idea that it was almost extra practice helped you not only practice those skills but see different[ly] how those skills are used." All 15 participants noted at least once in their interviews the recognition of how uncommon, unique, and/or valuable their group practicum experiences were.

Theme Two: Increased Preparation and Professional Growth

Within the theme of Increased Preparation and Professional Growth, participants expressed specifically the significance of the group practicum experience in terms of improving both their competence and self-efficacy around group facilitation. Barb highlighted how her group practicum experience enabled her to advocate for herself in getting her career started post-graduation, recalling "I remember going out to my first job interview and telling them that I felt competent in groups and telling them that I had the skills and training in group." Lori and Lucy also remarked on feelings of competence that their experiences provided for them, a sense that has persisted into their current work experiences. Lori shared, "I think that it made me feel much more prepared and much more capable… I think it prepared me very well. I don't think that I'd feel as competent running the groups that I'm running [now] if I… didn't have that experience." Lucy reported "I run a lot of groups where I'm at right now and I think that my practicum experience really prepared me." Jeffrey noted the ways in which he recognizes a different level of group competence within himself than he sees in current counseling peers, sharing "Sometimes I would go into [their] groups and it would be just… it was a disaster."

Becky, Nicolette, and Shawn described the experience as being integral to their process of finding confidence in their clinical skillset. Becky noted, “It was extremely worthwhile to me and I grew in confidence because you’re not just in front of one person, you’re counseling a group.” Nicolette summarized, “That whole part of group prac[ticum] was just, I mean, essential to me; when content matches curriculum and you can then really make it purposeful in your learning.” Shawn noted, “Having group prac[ticum], I think, really strengthened that I knew what I was doing and helped me feel comfortable. Definitely much more confident.”

In addition to increased confidence, Elizabeth described other personal benefits of the group practicum experience, recalling “It prepared me phenomenally. I have more awareness; I definitely learned to be more assertive.” Lucy seconded this notion, remarking “Like, it wasn’t just about my skills as a group counselor. It was also about professionalism and, you know, speaking up and being assertive, and things like that.”

Theme Three: Significance of Supervision

In addition to the tangible benefits of group facilitation practice, the participants collectively noted the Significance of Supervision as another theme of their group practicum experiences. Several spoke at length about the value of the varying forms of supervision they received as part of their training, with supervisory modalities ranging from live supervision or “bug in the ear” methods to audio- and video-taped reviews. Participants described experiences in group supervision with their practicum classmates, as well as individual and triadic experiences sometimes shared with their co-facilitators. Several participants spoke about the invaluable nature of being able to watch or listen to themselves and receive feedback from both their instructors and their group practicum peers. Maddie explained the importance of receiving direct feedback from supervising faculty, stating “Having that feedback is really important. I think that made a difference, of, you know, knowing what I’m doing correctly, or different questions I could have asked, or totally letting things fly by that I didn’t even pick up on.”

Liz and Lucy both remarked about the value of utilizing recorded sessions within the supervision process, with Liz sharing, “I got to gain a lot of practice and I really appreciated them being recorded, and then being able to watch them back in supervision.” Lucy added, “I don’t think I could have gotten the facilitator skills without people listening to my recordings and giving me feedback. Just that feedback was so valuable. Even now, I kind of wish somebody would listen to me on my sessions because I just feel like it’s so beneficial.”

In addition to recognizing the value of the feedback provided during supervision, several participants recalled appreciating the supportive and encouraging nature of their faculty supervisors and noted specific supervisory features that aided most significantly in their development as group facilitators. Lori described the impact that group practicum supervision had on her overall development as a counselor: “The professor that I had was very, very supportive, very helpful, definitely took the time out to kind of help find the areas that it was the most challenging and kind of come alongside… me and my co-facilitator. We got a lot of personal attention from our professor, kind of you know giving us resources, guiding us through things.” Liz and Olivia explained the value of realizing that it was permissible to make mistakes and that supervision was a time to address those mistakes with their supervisors. Liz shared, “Hav[ing] the [supervision] area where we could make mistakes and then just go back to group and, kind of, uncover them again and redo all of those things, I think it was helpful to practice with the supervisor.” Olivia recalled of her supervisor, “She was really good at like challenging us. But also like telling us what our strengths are and… really getting us to think critically as a group counselor, like trying to find my theoretical orientation in group.” All participants shared thoughts about the importance and value of receiving quality supervision throughout the group practicum experience, with some offering suggestions for how

faculty supervisors might improve upon existing practices (these are shared in a later section).

Theme Four: Increased Affinity for and Pursuit of Group Work

This theme represented the participants' collectively-identified desire to engage in more group work following their group practicum experiences, as well as their appreciation for the group modality. Several participants expressed a belief that all CIT should be required to complete a group practicum experience. For example, Becky stated "I think every counselor-in-training should have to do a group practicum class," while Barb added, "I don't think I would've been an effective or maybe even like an ethical group counselor" without the group practicum experience. Sarah shared "It seems like a basic thing [counselors] should all know, even if you don't plan on doing group work, you might get it dropped in your lap anyway," while Rose commented, "It's a really important aspect that shouldn't be overlooked," and Maddie described the experience as "a good starting point" for running groups.

Participants reported experiencing a sense of increased affinity for engaging in group facilitation following their practicum experiences. Nicolette reported, "I volunteer to do groups now" in describing her current work. Olivia shared many thoughts on this topic, stating "I honestly would probably rather do group than individual… I think that having that extra experience strengthened that for me." She described herself as "confident in group" and noted, "I wish I could be doing groups right now." Sarah, Barb, Rose, Carter, and Lori also shared similar desires to engage in more group work. Rose offered, "I would like to do another group; I've been thinking about starting one up at my private practice," while Carter shared, "I hope I get the opportunity to supervise group practicum myself someday." As a current doctoral student in Counselor Education and Supervision, Lucy shared the joy she gets from supervising her own master's-level trainees as they navigate the practicum experience. She reported, however, "The master's students I have been supervising through their practicum experiences don't have a group practicum and I was like shocked. I didn't realize that wasn't, like, a thing!"

Another commonality that stood out among participant responses in this domain revolved around the ways in which engaging in group practicum related to their current professional roles. Destiny explained, "The job I work at now, I have brought it to their attention that I believe they need some group work. They told me they don't have a person to do group work and I said, 'Well, you're looking at her.'" Destiny's work experiences were echoed by Rose and Barb. Rose shared of her current role, "Maybe if I hadn't done group practicum. I wouldn't have taken this job" and noted that "As soon as [groups] came up at work, I was like 'May I?'" Barb stated, "My first job was heavily dependent on groups" and expressed her gratitude at having been adequately prepared for the work.

Participants also lamented the lack of continued group training within the counseling profession. After recounting their group practicum experiences, Lucy, Nicolette, Jeffrey, Carter, Lori, and Becky all shared similar perspectives regarding the need for postgraduate supervision and continued education around group work in the counseling profession. Nicolette commented, "I would say there is continued room for growth," while Lucy explained "I think once you graduate, because you don't have that feedback all the time, some things kind of hit a rut." Carter echoed Lucy's thoughts, stating "I think I've hit a kind of a, what's the word I'm looking for… just a wall" while Lori admitted, "I've gotten rusty" in terms of her group work skills. Becky shared, "I lost a little bit of some of that knowledge and skills when running a therapy group" and described a desire to regain both competence and confidence in group facilitation.

Theme Five: Enhanced Professional Identity

The final theme described by participants encapsulated commonalities in how the group practicum experience contributed to their overall sense of professional identity as counselors.

Descriptors used to characterize this part of their training included "pivotal" (Maddie), "invaluable" (Sarah), "worthwhile" (Becky), and "most important" (Rose), with several participants noting that group practicum not only gave shape to the early stages of their professional identity development, but also defined or influenced to some extent their current counseling work. As detailed in theme four, several participants indicated both a desire to expand their current group work practice and a proclivity for seeking out group work opportunities within their respective clinical settings.

Shawn and Destiny both spoke at length about the ways in which their group practicum experiences contributed to their view of themselves as counseling professionals. Shawn noted that having to complete two different practicum experiences allowed him to experience a fuller range of what it means to be a counselor, as well as to determine "how [he] wanted to portray himself" as a clinician. He recalled in particular a time when he applied for a counseling position that would require him to facilitate multiple groups throughout the week, explaining that because he had completed the group practicum course during training, he was able to more confidently describe himself as having experience directly related to the roles and responsibilities of the job – a quality that, as he surmised, ultimately helped him to secure the position.

Destiny shared a similar sentiment, describing the group practicum experience as one that "changed [her] perspective" on the counseling profession as a whole. She emphasized the value of being able to put into practice what she had learned in other group-focused courses and the ways in which doing so helped her to cement a beginning sense of professional identity, noting that group practicum was where she first felt like her identity "really bloomed." Liz seconded this notion, speaking about feeling confident in her ability to "jump right into" facilitating groups post-graduation as a result of the dedicated group practicum experience.

Another common theme for participants related to professional identity was a developing recognition throughout group practicum that they indeed possessed the skills necessary to tackle what many CIT and beginning professionals view as a daunting task – facilitating group work. Barb recalled feeling initially like she "really would[n't] be capable of running or managing a group", while Maddie expressed thinking as she began the facilitation experience "I feel like I'm doing what I'm supposed to, but I'm not sure if it's enough." Both recounted the significant progress they made throughout the experience, with Barb noting that she felt confident in accepting a post-graduation job that necessitated spending most of her time facilitating group work. She suggested that without the group practicum experience, she "would have had no idea" how to utilize the skills traditionally required of group counselors (e.g., linking, cutting off, etc.), nor would she have been "competent enough to engage in effective or ethical group facilitation." Barb also described group practicum as being especially helpful in terms of clarifying her role and function as a counselor in general, a concept that Lori seconded in her recounting of a difficult group practicum experience that resulted in her learning how to handle conflict and navigate what she referred to as "tough situations… where you can't just throw in the towel… [or] walk away." Participants collectively recalled learning firsthand within the group practicum experience the totality of what being a counselor entails, including the highs and lows inherent in clinical work, as well as the nuanced and multiple functions of counselors who engage in different therapeutic roles.

Discussion

This study explored the self-reported self-efficacy and competence levels of clinical mental health counselors who completed a semester-long group work practicum during their master's training. Five themes were collectively reported by the 15 participants and detailed in the preceding section. These themes included 1) Uniqueness and Value of Experience, 2) Increased Preparation and Professional Growth, 3) Significance of

Supervision, 4) Increased Affinity for and Pursuit of Group Work Opportunities, and 5) Enhanced Professional Identity.

Taken collectively, these five themes support prior research demonstrating that the active utilization of group work skills during counselor training promotes increases in both professional confidence and clinical capability (Macgowan & Vakharia, 2012; Pollard-Kosidowski et al., 2021). These 15 participants unanimously described multiple benefits associated not only with having the opportunity to put learned group skills into practice, but also in collaborating with a supervisor to review and refine their facilitation work. Their enhanced senses of competence, confidence, and professional identity were reflected in their postgraduate attempts to compete for employment, as well as in their ability to successfully enter professional practice.

Several participants noted their increased recognition of and appreciation for the value of group work as a clinical modality following the completion of the group practicum experience. Prior researchers have emphasized the importance of self-efficacy among group workers who face myriad challenges in their roles (Macgowan & Wong, 2017; Midgett et al., 2016; Shay, 2017), a prospect that daunts many counseling students and new professionals. The experiences shared by these participants re-iterate the value of developing confidence through practice and the power inherent in being afforded the opportunity to learn the art of group work practice experientially (Anderson et al., 2014; Nelson, 2020; Pollard-Kosidowski et al., 2021). Some described a parallel between their experiences of practice as individual counselors and group workers during training, expressing an appreciation for the ways in which their learning experiences modeled the importance of both modalities.

While it is reasonable to expect that the above-described results could be achieved in some measure during a traditional blended practicum or internship course, it is worth noting the significant likelihood of further improving one's skills in an experience dedicated to one targeted modality. The participants observed that the requirement to complete a course dedicated solely to group work facilitation helped them not only to recognize its importance within the clinical landscape, but also to put their appreciation for group modalities on equal footing with that of individual approaches. The notion that "practice makes perfect" applies to these findings in the sense that increased exposure to opportunities for application undeniably contributes to furthering skill comprehension and development, as it did for these participants.

Within the context of Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956; Spence, 2019), these findings also provide evidence to support the notion that group work trainees benefit from instruction that is both developmental and applied in nature. In alignment with Spence's (2019) revised BT model that promotes sequential remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating throughout the learning process, all participants spoke to some degree about recognizing links between their early-training content course on group theories and dynamics, their group practicum experiences, and their current professional practice. Several noted the impact of seeing play out in the groups they facilitated the concepts about which they had learned as beginning students; they described the value of being able to recognize group constructs in action and employ their facilitation skills in response. This provided a vivid representation of the transition from remembering and understanding group work content to applying skills during session and, in supervision, analyzing their use of group technique and evaluating opportunities for adjustment (Bloom et al., 1956; Nelson, 2020; Spence, 2019). Those who described an increasing desire to identify or create opportunities for group counseling in their present work rounded out the final part of the revised BT model, which empowers learners to use their newfound knowledge and skills to create something entirely new (Dollarhide, 2013; Spence, 2019). The increasing cognitive complexity (Granello, 2010) experienced by these trainees as a result of the group practicum experience is evident in reviewing the experiences they voiced for this study, as well as in their progression through the six levels of learning depicted in the BT model. Again, although

these findings are not necessarily unique to the group practicum experience, they do provide further support for the assertion that targeted skill training such as that provided in a group practicum course offers multifold benefits. Because group work has been commonly recognized by practitioners, researchers, and educators as a distinct specialization within clinical practice, it is important that it is afforded the commensurate measure of emphasis during training.

Implications

The implications associated with the present study will likely be most useful for counselor educators, faculty supervisors, clinical coordinators, and program accreditors, as they represent a fresh opportunity for re-visiting standard counselor training practices. Using the experiential and developmental lenses commonly espoused by researchers in this field, it is clear that blended and applied learning structures offer the most productive opportunities for counselor trainees to reflect upon and refine their clinical skills, build self-efficacy around facilitating therapeutic encounters, and identify modalities of professional interest. As such, counselor educators engaged in group work instruction, faculty supervisors, and clinical coordinators responsible for designing students' practical experiences may consider opportunities for more equitably attending to student desires for both group and individual practice. Re-balancing, for instance, practicum and internship expectations related to the direct and indirect hours associated with facilitating group and individual services may provide one solution. Given the rise of group work needs in the field, balancing direct service hour requirements equally between individual and group work modalities in both practicum and internship could prove useful. Clinical instructors could also consider using their weekly group supervision time with students as a model for group work, attending to group dynamics and processes metacognitively and providing opportunities for students to facilitate group activities when appropriate.

Engaging in curriculum revisions that allow space for two practicum experiences within a standard counselor training program represents another possibility. In programs where only distinct subsets of students express a desire for advanced group work training, a supervised group practicum may constitute a worthwhile option for elective coursework. Curricular edits in this vein would not only better serve master's trainees seeking to develop personal competence and confidence around group facilitation but may also provide rich new opportunities for doctoral students seeking supervisory and/or instructional opportunities of their own. For programs ill-equipped to make major curricular revisions, a helpful first step may be to devise strategies for integrating applied group *facilitation* opportunities into existing courses that parallel experiential group *membership* requirements. For example, restructuring the small group experiences generally required in group theory content courses to include hands-on opportunities for group leadership could be a worthwhile start. Rather than sourcing group facilitation out to willing faculty or other external parties, instructors could instead consider supporting students in facilitating their own self-led groups.

With regard to accreditation standards (CACREP, 2015, 2023), the implications of this study suggest that accreditors may want to re-visit the lacking attention presently given to group counseling requirements. Providing explicit guidelines for group work practice that are on par with the expectations outlined for individual counseling practice would bolster the clinical value attached to the group modality. This is becoming increasingly important in response to client demands for access to more efficient, cost-effective therapeutic services (Currie et al., 2020; Novotney, 2019). Accreditors may also consider opportunities for re-balancing hour requirements between clinical tasks and direct service types, as well as restructuring the parameters associated with clinical training experiences altogether to represent current field trends and trainee needs more fully and accurately.

Limitations

As with any scholarly endeavor, this study is not without its limitations, which stemmed from the researchers themselves, as well as from the research process and participant sample. First, it is important to note that two members of the research team engaged in their own master's-level group practicum experiences and may have, as a result, held personal biases about their value. The researchers attempted to identify and minimize this and other potential biases through engaging in the collaborative bracketing process detailed earlier.

Additional limitations are apparent within the sample of 15 participants used for this study. Although participation was solicited from within a five-year window, all but one participant had completed their respective group practicum experiences within a two-year timeframe. Participants from different student cohorts, therefore, may have additional experiences for which this study is unable to account. Additionally, some participants indicated that they no longer actively provide group counseling services, which may have impacted their perspective on the training experience and subsequent interview responses.

The participant sample described here also consisted of a fairly homogenous group of individuals, lacking particularly in racial diversity. As such, collective findings represent a very small sample of today's professional counselors, limited further by the qualitative research design used to collect and analyze data. It is unclear how varying cultural identities may influence the experiences of counseling trainees, particularly with regard to the unique task of facilitating therapeutic groups comprised of diverse members. Future research that attends to the diverse, intersectional identities of group work trainees is warranted.

Recommendations for Future Research

In addition to the five themes detailed above, there were several other common experiences shared by multiple participants. Although mentions of these topics did not rise to the level of consistency required for inclusion as standalone themes, we do believe they may warrant further scholarly exploration. Among these "mini-themes" is the notion that the group practicum course constituted an emotional experience for several participants. Many recalled feeling anxiety, disappointment, pride, and relief as they recounted their facilitation experiences, a collective sense that aligns closely with prior descriptions of group work training as an emotional experience (Kurtyilmaz, 2015; Pollard-Kosidowski et al., 2021; Prikhidko et al., 2020). Future researchers may want to investigate this notion of the "emotional experience" as it pertains to students' preparation for and engagement in practical coursework in particular.

Another theme that emerged to some degree was the participants' shared desire to provide suggestions for improving future group practicum training experiences. Suggestions ranged from logistical considerations related to site placement, timing of the course, etc., to implications associated with requiring students to engage in dual roles during the training experience as both small group members and small group facilitators, to reflections on which types of faculty might be best-suited to supervise a group practicum course. We propose that a qualitative study focused on capturing and expanding upon these suggestions might prove useful for counselor educators seeking to refine or implement their own group practicum training requirements.

Finally, participants made relatively consistent mention of the ethics associated with the group practicum requirement, expressing observations related to dual relationships among students, challenges in securing community sites, working effectively with certain populations, and practicing within their scope of competence. These ethical considerations and their overlap with existing standards in the American Counseling Association's (2014) Code of Ethics may merit further attention as group work training literature continues to expand.

Conclusion

This study sought to examine the group practicum experiences master's-level counselors recalled from their academic training and the ways in which those

experiences promoted self-efficacy and competence in group work facilitation. All 15 participants provided firsthand feedback about their personal experiences and described group practicum as being beneficial to their overall professional development despite having different experiences. Collected data was inductively coded, thematized, and categorized into five respective themes: Uniqueness and Value of Experience, Increased Preparation and Professional Growth, Significance of Supervision, Increased Affinity for and Pursuit of Group Work, and Enhanced Professional Identity; indicating there could be many benefits to integrating group practicum experiences into traditional counselor training curriculum. Participants also provided valuable feedback on how their efficacy, effectiveness, confidence, familiarity, preparedness, and cognitive complexity increased with the opportunity to participate in a group-focused practical experience. Though the curriculum and supervisory structure of the group practicum experience were largely the same as those of any other applied course, its primary benefit was simply that it is focused solely on participants' targeted development of group work skills. One of the most significant implications resulting from this study is to promote additional research into the value of requiring master's-level counseling students to participate in active group facilitation training before transitioning into professional practice. If further research continues to support the notion that group practicum experiences enhance and enrich the preparedness of CIT to use multiple therapeutic modalities, our hope is that counselor educators and program accreditors will take note and adjust their standards accordingly.

References

American Counseling Association. (2014). *Code of ethics.* Author.

American Psychological Association. (2022). Society of Group Psychology and Group Psychotherapy: About us. https://www.apadivisions.org/division-49/about

Anderson, M. L., Sylvan, A. L., & Sheets, Jr., R. L. (2014). Experiential group training: An exploration of student perceptions. *VISTAS Online, 35.* https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/vistas/by-subject2/vistas-group-counseling/docs/default-source/vistas/article_35

Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW). (2014). Mission statement. http://www.asgw.org/index.htm

Bemak, F., & Chung, R. C. Y. (2015). Critical issues in international group counseling. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 40*(1), 6-21.https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2014.992507

Bensing, J., Deledda, G., Fletcher, I., Mazzi, M., Moretti, F., Van Vliet, L., & Zimmerman, C. (2010). A standardized approach to qualitative analysis of focus group discussion from different countries. *Patient Education and Counseling, 82*, 420-428. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2011.01.005

Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals.* Longmans, Green.

Bloom, B. S., Engelhart, M. D., Furst E. J., Hill, W. H., & Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: Handbook I: Cognitive domains.* David McKay.

Buser, T. J. (2008). Counselor training: Empirical findings and current approaches. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 48*, 86–100. https://doi.org/10.1002/ceas.2008.48.issue-2

Carlson, J. A. (2010). Avoiding traps in member checking. *The Qualitative Report, 15*(5), 1102-1113.

Conyne, R. K., Wilson, F. R., Kline, W. B., Morran, D. K., & Ward, D. E. (1993). Training group workers: Implications of the new ASGW training standards for training and practice. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 18*(1), 11-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933929308413730

Corey, G. (2017). *Theory & practice of group counseling* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2015). *2016 CACREP standards*. https://www.cacrep.org/news/2016-cacrep-standards/

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2023). *2024 CACREP standards*. https://www.cacrep.org/news/2024-cacrep-standards/

Creswell, J. W. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among the five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Currie, C. L., Larouche, M., Voss, M. L., Higa, E. K., Spiwak, R., Scott, D., & Tallow, T. (2020). The impact of eHealth group interventions on the mental, behavioral, and physical health of adults: A systematic review protocol. *Systematic Reviews, 9*, 217-222. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-020-01479-3

Cusack, S. E., Coleman, J. A., Rappaport, L. M., & Sheerin, C. (2019). Moderation of improvement in self-efficacy following group psychotherapy for PTSD. *Psychological Services, 16*(4), 657–663. https://doi.org/10.1037/ser0000260

Dickhaut, V., & Arntz, A. (2014). Combined group and individual schema therapy for borderline personality disorder: A pilot study. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry, 45*(2), 242-251. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbtep.2013.11.004

Dollarhide, C. T. (2013). Using a values-based taxonomy in counselor education. *Counseling & Values, 58*(2), 221–236. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-007X.2013.00035.x

Echeburua, E., Sarasua, B., & Zubizarreta, I. (2014). Individual versus individual and group therapy regarding a cognitive-behavioral treatment for battered women in a community setting.

Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 29(10), 1783-1801. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260513511703

Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing 62*(1), 107–115. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x

Gary, J. M., & Grady, J. P. (2015). Integrating television media into group counseling course Work. *Journal of Counselor Preparation & Supervision, 7*(2), 68–86. https://doi.org/10.7729/72.1079

Goicoechea, J., Wagner, K., Yahalom, J., & Medina, T. (2014). Group counseling for at-risk African American youth: A collaboration between therapists and artists. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 9*(1), 69-82. https://doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2013.864961

Gladding, S. T. (2019). *Groups: A counseling specialty* (8th ed.). Pearson Education, Inc.

Granello, D. H. (2010). Cognitive complexity among practicing counselors: How thinking changes with experience. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 88*(1), 92-100. https://doi.10.1002/j.1556-6678.2010.tb00155.x

Holstun, V. P., Wiggins, E. C., & Maldonado, J. M. (2019). Emerging leadership: Mental health counseling competencies for school counselor trainees. *Journal of School Counseling, 17*(25).

Kolb, A., & Kolb, D. (2018). Eight important things to know about the experiential learning cycle. *Australian Educational Leader*, *40*(3), 8–14.

Kottler, J. A., & Englar-Carlson, M. (2020). *Learning group leadership: An experiential approach* (4th ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

Kurtyilmaz, Y. (2015). Counselor trainees' views on their forthcoming experiences in practicum course. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, 61,* 155-180. https://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2015.61.9

Lee, D. L., Rosen, A. D., & McWhirter, J. J. (2014). Assessing changes in counselor trainees'multicultural competence related to service learning. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 42,* 31-41. https://doi.org/10.1002/jmcd.2014.42.issue-l

Luke, M., & Goodrich, K. M. (2017). Introduction to research in group work: A renewed focus on exemplary methods. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 42*(1), 1-2. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2016.1264524

Macgowan, M. J., & Vakharia, S. P. (2012). Teaching standards-based group work competencies to social work students: An empirical examination. *Research on Social Work Practice, 22*, 380–388. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731512442249

Macgowan, M. J., & Wong, S. E. (2017). Improving student confidence in using group work standards: A controlled replication. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *27*(4), 434–440. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731515587557

MacKinnon, C. J., Smith, N. G., Henry, M., Milman, E., Berish, M., Farrace, A., Körner, A., Chochinov, H. M., & Cohen, S. R. (2016). A pilot study of meaning-based group counseling for bereavement. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying, 72*(3), 210–233. https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222815575002

Malekzadeh, M., Haghighi, S., & Movahedzadeh, B. (2018). The effectiveness of group Dialectical Behavior Therapy method on major depression in individuals referred to residential and semi-residential addiction recovery centers. *Qom University of Medical Sciences Journal, 12*(3), 28–35.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Midgett, A., Hausheer, R., & Doumas, D. M. (2016). Training counseling students to develop group leadership self-efficacy and multicultural competence through service learning. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 41*(3), 262-282. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2016.1186765

Naumann, F., Munro, A., Martin, E., Magrani, P., Buchan, J., Smith, C., Piggott, B., & Philpott, M. (2012). An individual-based versus group-based exercise and counselling intervention for improving quality of life in breast cancer survivors: A feasibility and efficacy study. *Psycho-Oncology, 21*(10), 1136–1139. https://doi.org/10.1002/pon.2015

Nelson, J. S., Pender, D. A., Myers, C. E., & Sheperis, D. (2020). The effect of affect: Krathwohl and Bloom's affective domains underutilized in counselor education. *Journal of Counselor Preparation & Supervision, 13*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.7729/131.1279

Novotney, A. (2019). Keys to great group therapy. *Monitor on Psychology, 50*(4), 66. http://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/04/group-therapy

Paranjape, A., Gordon, K. L., & Caine-Bish, N. (2012). Effect of individual vs. group counseling format on measures of theory of planned behavior constructs for healthy nutrition behaviors. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, 44*(4), S54-S55. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2012.03.122

Pender, D. A., & Prichard, K. K. (2009). ASGW best practice guidelines as a research tool: A comprehensive examination of the critical incident stress debriefing. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 34*(2), 175-192. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933920902807147

Pollard-Kosidowski, B. L., Diambra, J. F., Bettge, J. R., & Burd, C. K. (2021). A qualitative exploration of using experiential groups to train future group counselors. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision, 14*(2), 59-88.

Prikhidko, A., Su, Y., Houseknecht, A., & Swank, J. M. (2020). Emotion regulation for counselors-in-training: A grounded theory. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 59*(2), 96-111. https://doi.org/10.1002/ceas.12169

Ratts, M. J., Singh, A. A., Nassar-McMillan, S., Butler, S. K., & McCullough, J. R. (2016). *Multicultural and social justice counseling competencies.* http://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/competencies/multicultural-and-social-justice-counseling-competencies.pdf?sfvrsn=20

Rosselló, J., Bernal, G., & Rivera-Medina, C. (2012). Individual and group CBT and IPT for Puerto Rican adolescents with depressive symptoms. *Journal of Latina/o Psychology, 1*(S), 36-51. https://doi.org/10.1037/2168-1678.1.S.36

Shay, J. J. (2017). Contemporary models of group therapy: Where are we today? *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, 67*(1), S7-S12. https://doi.org10.1080/00207284.2016.1238749

Shin, H. S. (2019). Reasoning processes in clinical reasoning: from the perspective of cognitive psychology. *Korean Journal of Medical Education, 31*(4), 299–308. https://doi.org/10.3946/kjme.2019.140

Singh, A. A., Merchant, N., Skudrzyk, B., & Ingene, D. (2012). Association for Specialists in Group Work: Multicultural and social justice competence principles for group workers. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 37*(4), 312-325. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2012.721482

Singh, A. A., & Salazar, C. F. (2010). The roots of social justice in group work. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 35*(1), 97-104. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933921003706048

Spence, B. (2019). Using Bloom's Taxonomy matrix to reach higher-level learning objectives. *Radiologic Technology*, *90*(6), 622–624.

Ugur, H., Constantinescu, P. M., & Stevens, M. J. (2015). Self-awareness and personal growth: Theory and application of Bloom's Taxonomy. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, 60*, 89-110. https://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2015.60.6

Utoyo, D. B., Jaya, E. S., Arjadi, R., Hanum, L., Astri, K., & Putri, M. D. D. (2013). Preliminary study on the effectiveness of short group cognitive behavioral therapy (GCBT) on Indonesian older adults. *PLoS One, 8*(2), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0057198

Van Lieshout, R., Yang, L., Haber, E., & Ferro, M. (2017). Evaluating the effectiveness of a brief group cognitive behavioural therapy intervention for perinatal depression. *Archives of Women's Mental Health, 20*(1), 225–228. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00737-016-0666-9

Vannatta, R., & Steen, S. (2019). Pedagogical practices in CACREP-accredited group counseling courses: A content analysis. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, *44*(2), 138-150. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2019.1599477

Wallace, D. (2019). Parts of the whole: Theories of pedagogy and Kolb's learning cycle. *Numeracy: Advancing Education in Quantitative Literacy*, *12*(1), 250–256. https://doi.org/10.5038/1936-4660.12.1.17

Walsh, R., Bambacus, E., & Gibson, D. (2017). An approach to supervision for doctoral and entry-level group counseling students. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, *42*(4), 338–363. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2017.1350231

How to Cite this Article:

Pollard-Kosidowski, B. L., Kaule, M. E., Uphold, H., Losinger, C., & Stephens, A. F. (2024). A qualitative investigation of clinical mental health counselors' group practicum training experiences. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, *18*(1), 1-17.