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The Use of Experiential Groups in the Training of Group Workers: Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation

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The Use of Experiential Groups in the Training of Group Workers: Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Bobby Joe, without whose unwavering support and understanding, I would never have reached this goal. Thank you for always being my rock.

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Abstract

Both the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) and the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) require counselor education programs to provide experiential training to group workers (CACREP, 2009; ASGW, 2000). However, no specific models are given to counselor educators to implement the experiential component. Only two research studies have examined the overall structure and type of instructor involvement commonly used in counselor training programs (Anderson & Price, 2001; Merta, Wolfgang, & McNeil, 1993). In addition, researchers have documented ethical concerns in the use of experiential training methods (Davenport, 2004; Furr & Barret, 2000; Riva & Korinek, 2004) including the role of dual relationships, confidentiality, and competency. Student experience of the experiential training is impacted by both the structure of the experiential group and the ethical pitfalls associated with each (Goodrich, 2008). Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine the current models of group work and how the structure of these models impacted student attitudes toward ethical concerns of dual relationships, confidentiality, and competency and overall student experience.

Members of the American Counseling Association (ACA) who had graduated with their master's degree in the past five years were asked to respond to the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups* online survey. The findings of this study suggested that the most common group work training model is to have a full-time faculty member both instruct the group work course and facilitate the experiential group. In addition, concern over ethical issues was found to be an important component in student's comfort level and belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group

counselor. These results do not support the findings of Anderson and Price (2001) which suggested a growing trend of group work instructors not being both the facilitator of the experiential group and the instructor of the course. However, the findings do support previous research which indicated that ethical concerns do negatively impact student involvement in the experiential group (Davenport, 2004; Hall, Hall, Harris, Hay, Biddulph, & Duffy, 1999).

KEYWORDS: experiential group, group work, counselor training, ethics

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

An essential element of counselor training programs is the training of group workers (Furr & Barret, 2000; Goodrich, 2008; Guth & McDonnell, 2004; Killacky & Hulse-Killacky, 2004). As a result of the implementation of training standards by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP, 2009) and the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW, 2000), most master's level counseling training programs require at least one course in group counseling. The training standards for both organizations call for an instructional and experiential component. The instructional component provides the academic foundation for group leadership and is taught using didactic teaching methods; whereas, the experiential component is designed to enhance the impact of the instructional component by introducing students to group theory, process, and dynamics through direct experience as a group member in a group activity (CACREP, 2009; Hensley, 2002).

A widely accepted way to meet the need for an experiential group component is some type of personal group experience (see Connolly, Carns, & Carns, 2005; Falco & Bauman, 2004; Fall & Levitov, 2002; Lennie, 2007; Osborn, Daninhirsch, & Page, 2003). Participating in an experiential component serves multiple purposes for students including gaining a greater understanding of the experiences of their future clients, increasing their self-awareness by allowing them to easily transfer skills learned in group work to the outside world (Yalom, 1995), and providing an opportunity to have an emotional and personal experience which allows them to "live" what they have learned in the didactic portion of the class (Anderson & Price, 2001).

The experiential component in group work has been defined in a variety of ways. It has been called a laboratory group (Davenport, 2004), personal development group (Lennie, 2007), and an experiential group (Furr & Barret, 2000). Regardless of the name of the experiential component, the goal of counselor educators is to increase the student's cognitive and affective understanding of the group participation experience (Conyne & Bemak, 2004).

Effort has been devoted to explaining how the experiential component differs from other training methods such as training groups and therapy groups. Merta, Wolfgang, and McNeil (1993) attempted to explain the difference between experiential groups and therapy groups by stating that in experiential group members self disclose and work on personal issues, like in therapy groups, but not at the expense of learning group process and skills. Further, Yalom described the difference between experiential and therapy groups by stating, "A training group, though it is not a therapy group, is therapeutic in that it offers the opportunity to do therapeutic work" (1995, p. 522). Furthermore, training group participants only play simulated situations, unlike experiential group participants who self disclose personal information. Students participating in training groups only "act" as participants by assuming a "safe/non-personal" role, whereas students in the experiential group are participants in the group. Only the experiential group offers first-hand understanding of the growth potential gained through participating in the group process (Berg, Landreth, & Fall, 1998). Together, these comparisons to other forms of group work help to define the experiential component in group work training.

Both CACREP and ASGW have described the minimum coursework and experiential requirements when teaching group work. In the standards established by CACREP (2009), a group work course must provide students understanding of the principles of group dynamics,

group leadership, theories of group counseling and group counseling methods, and direct experience as a group member for a minimum of 10 clock hours. Additionally, ASGW, in its *Professional Standards for the Training of Group Workers* (2000), requires group work courses to provide training in seven core areas along with knowledge and skill objectives for each. The core training standards include: knowledge and scope of practice, assessment of group members, planning and implementation of group interventions, leadership and co-leadership, evaluation, ethical practice, best practice, and diversity-competent practice. ASGW, like CACREP (2009), requires students to observe and/or participate as a group member and/or group leader for a minimum of 10 hours; however, neither association provides instruction on how to structure or implement these requirements.

In an effort to show best practices, counselor educators over the years have published their teaching models for group counseling instruction in various counseling journals. Some authors offer conceptual models of how they have structured their own group counseling course based on professional standards developed by ASGW. For example, Guth and McDonnell (2004) have published a developmental model for group counseling courses that meets specific ASGW core training competencies for group workers. The authors provided a conceptual framework to help guide other counselor educators and they proposed a process of evaluating the degree to which programs are meeting current training standards.

Some authors have offered concrete examples of how to structure and format a course in group work. Furr and Barret (2000) have suggested dividing a single group work course into two sections in order to limit the number of students participating in the experiential component. Both sections would meet together for 80 minutes to learn didactically on the theory of group

process. For the remainder of class, one section participates in group skills training while the second section participates in an experiential group. At midsemester, the two sections switch, thus allowing all students an opportunity to participate in the experiential group while maintaining proper group size. Osborn, Daninhirsch, and Page (2003) used a similar approach to Furr and Barret (2000) when structuring a humanistically-based experiential component. The authors suggested offering multiple sections of the group course in order to limit the number of students participating in the experiential component. Both of these formats are examples of how to structure a group work course and maintain proper group size.

Other researchers offer non-traditional ways to expand on the experiential group. Connolly, Carns, and Carns (2005) conducted a study comparing a traditional discussion-based experiential component to an activity-based experiential component. The activity-based experiential group involved traditional classroom experiential activities and completion of an outdoor challenge course. The challenge course consisted of a series of physical obstacles which required students to work as a group in order to finish. The researchers believed that an activity-based group is a viable resource for educating graduate students on the theory and practice of group work using experiential techniques. Adding an activity-based experiential component to a course in group work is not typical in counselor education programs; however, it may provide an optional opportunity for additional group leadership training.

Hatch and McCarthy (2003) examined the use of challenge courses in which students, as part of their group work course, completed a series of challenging activities in a wilderness setting that encouraged them to work as a team both physically and mentally. The authors suggested that if the challenge course participation is undertaken before the classroom

experiential activities, it may accelerate bonding among members and may serve as a valuable tool for setting the stage for individual and group growth. The challenge course participation can foster a non-threatening environment of teamwork and cooperation which can be drawn upon by group members in later parts of the classroom experiential activities. By adding an additional activity, such as the challenge course, educators may help to develop the bond of group members and help transition students from the didactic portion of the group work class into the experiential component. Together, these best practices of teaching the experiential component in group work add to the knowledge base of the counselor education framework.

Student Experiences

The purpose of the experiential component of group work training is to promote further understanding of the process of group work. According to the *ASGW Best Practice Guidelines* (1998), counselors should be competent in seven areas of group work: (1) nature and scope of practice, (2) assessment of group members and the ecological systems in which they function, (3) the planning of group interventions with sensitivity to environmental contexts and impacts of diversity, (4) the implementation of specific group interventions, (5) concepts and practices governing leadership and co-leadership, (6) evaluation, and (7) ethical practice, best practice, and diversity-competent practice.

Kottler (2004) has advocated that the only way to teach graduate students to be competent group leaders is to give them the opportunity to experience the group and practice leading the group under supervision. Participating in the group experience calls for graduate students to disclose personal information, be open to new experiences, and be willing to address personal issues. Considering the unique participation required of the experiential component in

group work training, graduate students may have a strong reaction to their experience; however, there is little research completed on the students' attitudes toward experiences of the experiential component of their group counseling course. Some of the research that has been completed suggests that not all students enjoy or benefit from the experiential component. Davenport (2004) conducted an informal survey of master's degree students to assess the impact of the experiential group. She found that many students had a negative experience due to concerns of confidentiality and dual relationships. Students reported feeling like they had learned little from the group because no one was willing to take risks and deal with heavy affective issues. One reason given for not taking risks was concern over sharing personal information which could make them appear "unhealthy" to the professor. Davenport also found that students had negative experiences due to concerns over the competency of the facilitator of the experiential component, especially when the facilitator was a graduate student. This research finding suggests that student experience may be impacted by the dual roles held by the facilitator of the experiential component.

Some research data suggest that the experience of participating in the experiential component of group training can be harmful. Irving and Williams (1995) believed that not all individuals benefit from the experiential component in group work and some may even be damaged by it. In order to gain a better understanding of specifically who would benefit or be damaged, the researchers studied the relationship between the learning styles of graduate students and their group experiences. The learning styles were identified as (1) Activists: those who engross themselves in the here-and now and believe in teamwork, (2) Reflectors: those who distance themselves and think before acting, (3) Theorists: those who learn best by believing

their activity is part of a bigger picture and has purpose, and (4) Pragmatists: those who like to see the practical uses of their learning experiences. The researchers reported that all learning styles expressed concern over safety and vulnerability; however, students identified as theorists and reflectors found the experiential component uncomfortable while those identified as activists felt the group was destructive. Overall, the researchers concluded that participant experiences in group work were perceived differently due to differences in learning styles.

Similarly, Hall, Hall, Harris, Hay, Biddulph, and Duffy (1999), conducted a study on the long-term outcomes of small-group work for counselor development. All 92 participants were graduates of either a Master's degree program or held a Diploma in human relations or counseling studies who graduated within 21 years of the study. All the survey respondents were involved in the direct application or training of counseling. In the survey, participants were asked to circle "feeling words" they attributed to their experience as a group member. The results indicated that 12.4% of the participants felt uncomfortable, hurt, challenged, and battered, while 2.2% of participants reported suffering from long-term psychological distress. Although the percentage of graduate students reporting being adversely affected was small, it is worrisome that the required participation in group work training harmed those being trained to help others (Hall, et al.).

Anderson and Price (2001) argued that while student well-being should be carefully monitored, the feelings of discomfort or fear associated with participation in an experiential group should not be construed negatively. Discomfort will only help students to become more aware of the emotions and feelings of future clients when entering therapy and their fears of disclosing personal information and taking risks with the counselor. In a study conducted by

Kline, Falbaum, Pope, Hargraves, and Hundley (1997), 23 master's degree students enrolled in a group work course were randomly assigned to three experiential groups each facilitated by a male doctoral student. They utilized two qualitative questionnaires in order to gain insight into student experience in the experiential group and understanding of the experiential groups' relevance in group work training. The researchers found that although participants reported the experiential group created feelings of anxiety and overall discomfort, they also described it as a positive experience that promoted personal awareness and growth. Similarly, in the study conducted by Hall et al. (1999), where 92 participants were surveyed to determine the long-term outcomes of small-group work, although participants reported both short-term and long-term psychological stress, they also acknowledged the experience of participating in small-group work as deeply meaningful and personally significant. It is unclear, however, as to whether or not these participants processed their feelings of psychological stress and meaningfulness immediately after the course or after a considerable amount of time had passed. The data collected by Hall et al. did not identify what group format was used in the participant's group work course; therefore the reader is not able to determine if the format of the group was related to the participant's level and duration of stress. It is surprising that, after determining that a small percentage of graduate students are "damaged" by their participation in the experiential component, more research on student attitudes and experiences has not been completed. As a result, continued research is needed on the immediate and long-term attitudes of graduate students in the experiential component of their group counseling course.

Ethical Considerations

In an effort to meet CACREP standards of teaching an experiential component in group work, counselor educators require students to participate in a personal group experience (CACREP, 2009). Despite the benefits of an experiential component to group skills training, ethical concerns related to dual relationships, confidentiality, and competency of the group facilitator are frequently encountered (Anderson & Price, 2001). Many counselor educators have written extensively on the need to minimize these ethical concerns, especially those related to dual relationships, in order to foster a comfortable environment for students (Goodrich, 2008).

Although these ethical concerns are inherent in teaching a small group experience (Fall & Levitov, 2002; Furr & Barret, 2000), their occurrence and frequency often depend on the structure of the course. One of the main variants in the structure of the experiential component is the role of the group facilitator. The group facilitator can be a faculty member, doctoral student, or adjunct professor who may or may not be the teacher of the didactic portion of the course. Often, a full-time faculty member leads the experiential component in group work (Davenport, 2004). An inherent ethical dilemma in this situation is the dual relationship between the professor and the student and concerns over the student's privacy. According to Anderson and Price (2001), students are in a vulnerable position because of the power differential between the student and the professor. The power differential is even greater when the professor serves as evaluator of the student's performance and facilitator of the group thus being knowledgeable about sensitive information disclosed by students. Students may feel unduly pressured to disclose information in an effort to "perform" and receive a good grade. The 2005 ACA *Code of Ethics* (F.7.b) mandates that professors make students aware of the ramifications of their self-

disclosure and that the evaluative components of the experiential training experience do not depend on the student's level of self-disclosure.

Also, the self-disclosure of the student can have ramifications for the instructor. CACREP (2009) requires that faculty review the progress of students each semester. The review of the student causes a conflict of interest for the instructor of the experiential group. If the instructor has pertinent information related to the student but is was obtained in the experiential group, faculty may be concerned about violating student confidentiality (Furr & Barrett, 2000).

Sometimes, an adjunct professor is hired by the program to teach either the didactic and experiential component of the group work course or just the experiential component. When the adjunct professor serves as both facilitator of the group and evaluator of student performance, the same ethical dilemmas exist, such as student privacy and power differential. However, when an adjunct professor teaches only the experiential component, there may be fewer ethical pitfalls. Students may feel more willing to disclose personal information knowing that the facilitator is not responsible for assigning grades in the course. In addition, students may feel more open to the group process because they do not have to be worried about being seen as unhealthy by full-time faculty.

Universities that have both master's degree and doctoral programs often have doctoral students conduct or co-lead the experiential component of the master's level group class in order to minimize the dual relationship between faculty and students. However, there are ethical dilemmas associated with this practice, including competency of the doctoral group leaders and dual relationships between doctoral students and master's students. The 2005 *ACA Code of Ethics* (C.2.a) states that counselors practice only within the boundaries of their competence. By

having a doctoral student facilitate these groups, master's degree students ponder whether the facilitator is capable of handling their personal information competently or confidentially (Davenport, 2004). In an informal study conducted by Davenport (2004), a student reported an incident which had occurred in a previous experiential group where the doctoral student facilitator had to report a case of child abuse based on information shared by a group member. It appeared to the student that the doctoral student facilitator was in a difficult situation with regards to being supportive to the group member and fulfilling his/her own ethical obligations to report the child abuse. The student felt the faculty was at fault for expecting the doctoral student to be competent to handle the situation. Are instructors expecting too much of doctoral students when assigning them to lead a group of advanced students? Kottler (2004) believed instructors may be delegating responsibility to doctoral students who do not have enough experience and expertise. Leading a group of psychologically sophisticated students through their resistances and fears of loss of privacy can be a daunting challenge (Davenport, 2004).

Merta, Wolfgang, and McNeil (1993) have contended that concern over ethical dilemmas contributed to a great deal of variety in determining how experiential groups are structured. Merta et al. surveyed 272 master's-level programs and found five general approaches to structuring experiential groups. These approaches included (a) the instructor as the group facilitator (39%); (b) the instructor was not involved in the experiential group and did not receive feedback about students' attendance and participation (8%); (c) the instructor was not involved in the experiential group but did receive feedback on attendance and participation (19%); (d) the experiential group was not led by the instructor but the instructor either observed or participated in the activity (22%); or (e) the instructor limited instruction to didactic methods only (12%).

Although the approach of having the instructor double as the group facilitator can lead to concern over dual relationships between the instructor and students, it was the most common structure of a group work course. In contrast to data collected by Merta et al., a study by Anderson and Price (2001) suggested that instructors are more vigilant about avoiding dual relationships. Only 3% of students indicated that their instructor led their experiential group compared to 39% surveyed by Merta et al. Goodrich (2008) noted that additional follow-up studies are needed to further the research completed by both Merta et al. and by Anderson and Price to determine the current trends in how courses in group counseling are structuring the experiential component. Are counselor educators continuing to minimize dual relationship concerns by not having full-time faculty members facilitate the experiential group as noted by Anderson and Price (2001)? In addition, it appears that more research is needed to explore how the type of facilitator and their level of involvement in the experiential group impact the experiences of group workers in training.

General Research Questions

The following research questions examined the current models of group work training, specifically the experiential component, and how the differences in these models impacted student experience regarding ethical concerns and comfort level.

1. What are the current models of group work training in use by U.S. counseling programs?
2. Do the data support the findings of Anderson and Price (2001) in which group work instructors were increasingly vigilant about avoiding dual relationships by not facilitating the experiential group activity?

3. What are the current attitudes of counselors toward the ethical concerns of dual relationships, confidentiality, and competency in the experiential component of a master's level group work course?
4. To what extent do counselors perceive that their learning of group process was impacted by concerns over these ethical issues?
5. Are there differences between experiential groups facilitated by full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and doctoral students, and to what extent do these differences impact student experience or student comfort level?

Assumptions of the Study

A basic assumption of this research was that the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups* that was created for this study by the researcher is valid and accurately measures masters' level counselors attitudes and experiences as they pertain to the experiential component in their first master's level group work course.

Also, the participants who completed the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups* were master's level counselors and members of the American Counseling Association (ACA) who represented a valid sampling of students who have had the experience of participating in an experiential group.

Additionally, it is assumed that the participants who completed the survey have completed a group work course in which they participated in an experiential component and that their retrospective recall of the experience was accurate.

Definition of Terms

ACA – American Counseling Association: A professional and educational organizational that is dedicated to the growth and advancement of the counseling profession by providing leadership training, publications, continuing education, and advocacy services to professional counselors (ACA, 2009).

AEE – Association for Experiential Education: A professional association dedicated to supporting the professional development, theoretical advancement, and the evaluation of experiential education in order to achieve a more just and compassionate world (AEE, 2010).

ASGW – Association for Specialists in Group Work: A division of the American Counseling Association (ACA) that supports counseling professionals who specialize in group work and seeks to extend counseling through the use of group process (ASGW, 2010).

CACREP – Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs: An accrediting body that is dedicated to promoting quality and excellence in counselor education through the development of preparation standards and the accreditation of professional preparation programs (CACREP, 2010).

Challenge course: An experiential, action-based activity which requires a group effort to physically overcome obstacles in an outdoor or wilderness setting in order to facilitate trust and solidarity between individuals (Connolly, Carns, & Carns, 2005).

Dual relationships: This occurs in group work when the leader of the group component holds multiple roles or responsibilities with the group members (Goodrich, 2008). It is common in the counseling literature for dual relationships to be referred to as multiple relationships.

Experiential education: The Association for Experiential Education (AEE) defines experiential education as a "philosophy and methodology in which educators purposely engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify issues" (Association for Experiential Education, 2009).

Experiential group component: A component of a course in group work implemented as a result of the requirements by both ASGW and CACREP which state that students must observe and/or participate as a group member and/or leader for a minimum of 10 hours.

Group workers: The Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) defines group workers as "mental health professionals who use a group modality as an intervention when working with diverse populations (ASGW, 2007, p.1).

Professional competence: It is defined in the *ACA Code of Ethics* (2005) (C.2.a.) as being "based on their (counselor) education, training, supervised experience, state and national professional credentials, and appropriate professional experience (p.9)."

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the research and literature related to the experiential component of group work training and how the ethical dilemmas associated with implementing the experiential component impact student experience. This chapter is organized into four sections that build a conceptual framework for examining the evolution of using experiential education in group work training. In the first section, the current methods used in group work training are examined. The second section provides an outline for the use of experiential education in counselor education. In the third section, the models of group work training and their ethical implications are examined. In the fourth section, the impact of group work training on student experience is analyzed.

Current Methods in Group Work Training

Training in group counseling typically includes four components: academic, observation, experiential, and supervision (Barlow, 2004; Dies, 1980; Riva & Korinek, 2004). In the academic component, learning fundamental counseling skills is imperative to student development (Barlow, 2004). One of the most common training methods for learning basic counselor communication skills is Allen Ivey's Microcounseling Model or MC Model (Hawley, 2006). In the MC Model, students are trained in 13 skill sets: (1) ethics and multicultural competence, (2) attending behaviors, (3) open and closed questions, (4) client observation, (5) encouraging, paraphrasing, and summarization (6) reflection of feeling, (7) clinical interview structure, (8) confrontation, (9) focusing, (10) reflection of meaning, (11) influencing skills, (12) skill integration, and (13) determining personal style (Ivey & Ivey, 2003). In this type of skill-

based training model, students receive written information about the skill, observe the skill, and then practice the skill (Ivey & Ivey 2003). The efficacy and application of the MC model has been researched in over 450 studies (Daniels & Ivey, 2007) and has proven to be effective in teaching basic counseling skills to students (Kuntze, van der Mole, & Born, 2009).

Although skill-based techniques were first applied to teaching individual counseling skills, several authors have discussed the application of Ivey's MC Model for the training of group counselors (Harvil, Masson & Jacobs, 1983; Pearson, 1985). Particularly, Toth and Stockton (1998) proposed a six stage skill based model for training group counselors. All six stages are conducted in one to two 2 ½ hour sessions for each counseling intervention. Stage 1 is an experiential component in which students are broken into small groups and given the opportunity to take turns leading a discussion group. This exercise is videotaped as a baseline to be used as an instructional tool in a later stage. Stage 2 is a didactic component in which information on the counseling skill, such as examples of the skill in action, are given to students in written form. In stage 3, students view videotaped vignettes of advanced graduate students using the specific interventions and written examples given in stage 2. In stage 4, students are asked to role-play the intervention they observed in the vignette using the exact wording found in their skill description. The goal of this stage is to give students the opportunity to deliver the intervention in a pre-scripted form. Stage 5 is an observational component in which students view the taped experiential component from stage 1 and provide feedback on when and how the intervention could have been used. In stage 6, students return to their small group and continue the discussion from stage 1. Students are instructed to use the intervention learned in previous stages during this group discussion. Toth and Stockton (1998) asserted that applying the MC

Model to the training of group workers using their 6 stage model raises the self-efficacy of students by encouraging students to practice skills while strengthening their positive self-perceptions.

The Skilled Group Counseling Training Model or SGCTM (Buser, 2008) is another model which applies Ivey's MC Model to teaching group workers basic counseling skills. When utilizing SGCTM, instructors train students in three stages: (1) exploring – the identification of problems; (2) understanding – the development of group goals; and (3) acting – the activities group members utilize to achieve those goals. The focus of SGCTM is to teach both low-level skills, such as being empathetic and responsive, and high-level skills including immediacy and appropriate self-disclosure (Smaby, Maddux, Torres-Rivera, & Zimmick, 1999). In a study conducted by Smaby, Maddux, Torres-Rivera, and Zimmick (1999), researchers compared gains in skill acquisition between students who received training in SGCTM as part of a group counseling class and those who participated in a conventional group counseling class. Participants included 78 master's degree students from two universities; 63 students were enrolled in the experimental group and randomly divided into 4 sections while 15 students were enrolled in the control group. A survey developed by the researchers based on the SGCTM was used to assess participants group counseling skills. The results of the survey indicated that students in the experimental group who received SGCTM training demonstrated greater improvement in both microcounseling and advanced skills compared to those students who did not receive SGCTM training. The researchers argued that these findings indicated that not only is the SGCTM a valid model to teach microcounseling skills, but also constitute evidence that

high level skills can be learned by master's degree students prior to the supervised internship experience.

Another important element of the academic component is building a foundation of group theory, particularly Yalom's (1970, 2005) theory of group work. Among Yalom's many contributions to the field of group work, perhaps the most salient is the description of the therapeutic factors and the focus on the here-and-now. Yalom (1970) described 11 curative factors, later renamed therapeutic factors, which are essential to therapeutic change: Instillation of hope, universality, imparting information, altruism, the corrective recapitulation of the primary family group, development of socializing techniques, imitative behavior, interpersonal learning, group cohesiveness, catharsis, and existential factors. Although the therapeutic factors describe how group members experience change in group therapy, they are also relevant to students' development as group work counselors. For example, Gillam (2004) suggested that students experience the therapeutic factor of universality as they realize they share the same initial apprehensions about their ability to be effective group leaders. In addition, students are able to directly experience the power of imitative behavior and interpersonal learning as a result of small group work. Counselor educators who structure and implement didactic and experiential experiences with focus on the therapeutic factors will have a positive impact on student growth and development (Gillam, 2004).

Yalom (2005) advocated for the use of the here-and-now focus in group therapy. He described the process of the here-and-now as two-fold: the group focuses on immediate events taking place and then examines the here-and-now behavior that occurred. It is imperative that

the processing of the here-and-now experience take place in order for group members to transfer their learning of the experience to situations outside of the group (Yalom, 2005).

The second component in training group workers is the observational learning process. A key component in this process is the use of modeling (Riva, 2004). Bandura theorized and empirically validated that people learn by watching others perform specific behaviors (Bandura & Walters, 1963). In the context of counselor education, students learn leadership skills by observing others leading a small group experience. Riva (2004) believed that the instructor in a group course models behaviors that students will have an "in the moment" opportunity to observe and learn. Killacky and Hulse-Killacky (2004) suggested that modeling effective group counseling skills in all components of group worker training will strengthen the learning process for students. Bandura (1982) also proposed that peer modeling is a powerful tool in increasing self-efficacy. As students watch peers engage in learning and conducting group counseling skills, they will feel motivated to practice and achieve this skill.

Another component in the observational learning process is the use of live or videotaped demonstrations by "master" therapists (Barlow, 2004). Barlow (2004) suggested that this practice makes it is easier for beginning students to privately assess their own strengths and weaknesses and to compare and contrast therapists skills and styles. In addition, Toth and Stockton (1998) believed that the use of live or videotaped vignettes is important because students are able to observe targeted behaviors in action and increase their self confidence in replicating those behaviors. Videotapes of student performance can also be used in the observational learning process. Toth and Stockton (1998) utilized an observational component when teaching a course in group work where videotapes completed by students were viewed by

the class and used to identify missed opportunities to utilize specific interventions. These student videotapes were shown in addition to videotapes of "master" therapists in order for students to see their growth as they learned additional skills.

Process observation is a common method of training group workers (Cox, Banez, Hawley, & Mostade, 2003, Orr & Hulse-Killacky, 2006). Process observation occurs when a student, acting as the process observer, watches the dynamics of a group occur and later articulates to the group what group dynamics and behaviors were observed. Cox et al. (2003) proffered that the benefits of process observation are twofold – the process observer becomes aware of group process and the group receives constructive feedback which improves their group's process. Orr and Hulse-Killacky (2006) expanded on the application of process observation by examining how it encourages the transfer of learning in group members. They have asserted that all group members can become process observers as they begin to see how things happen in the group while experiencing what is happening in the group. When these individual experiences are shared, the combined learning experience can be applied to learning experiences outside of the classroom.

The third component in training group workers is the experiential component. Typically, the experiential component is a conducted as a small-group experience often called a laboratory group or task group. The experiential component allows students to experience being a group member and/or leading a group. Yalom (2005) has stated that groups serve as a social microcosm, allowing group members to relate the work learned in the group setting to their lives beyond the group experience. It is essential for students to complete the experiential component to assist in their development towards being an effective group leader (Goodrich, 2008). A

review of the literature indicated that no new research has been conducted in the past nine years to show the most common practices for structuring or implementing the experiential component. In the most recent research study, Anderson and Price (2001) found that 97% of students indicated that their group work course instructor did not lead their experiential group. As a result, the researchers suggested the most common way to structure the experiential component is to have another qualified group leader, not the instructor of the group work course, facilitate the group apart from the academic component.

The use of process notes in the experiential component can be used to enhance the group process (Falco & Bauman, 2004). Falco and Bauman (2004) conducted a study using process notes as a group counseling technique in the experiential component of a master's level group work course. The process notes were comprised of narratives of each session which included unspoken observations and comments made by group members and comments regarding the group process. In this study, the process notes were taken by the facilitator or co-facilitator of the group and distributed to group members before the next group meeting in order to give continuity to the group and prompt reflection on the last session. The authors report that through responses to a questionnaire gathered after the final meeting, all 17 group members agreed on the usefulness of using process notes as a group counseling technique. Group members reported that the process notes assisted them in focusing in on salient issues and helping them to remember thoughts and feelings from the previous sessions. One limitation to the use of process notes as used by Falco and Buaman (2004) is that they were written by the facilitator of the group, not by group members. Group members did not have the opportunity to serve as the process observer. By allowing group members to rotate being the process observer, the use of process notes would

serve as part of the observation component to group worker training and continue the thread of transfer of learning to other experiences.

Haberstroh, Parr, Gee and Trepal (2006) expanded on the use of written process notes by Falco and Buauman (2004) through the use of interactive E-journaling. In the study, both group members and the group facilitator submitted an open-ended email describing their thoughts, emotions, and experiences from the previous group session to all group members and the instructor. Through the use of semi-structured interviews of group members, the authors found the use of E-journaling allowed group members to reflect upon and share thoughts that emerged between group sessions, voice unfinished business, and continue the group experience in their home environment. As noted by the authors, as students became more skilled at writing reflections as a group member, they became more knowledgeable about group work, specifically group stages and therapeutic factors.

Although the experiential component has typically been viewed as a separate component in the teaching of group work, it is possible to incorporate aspects of the experiential component into the academic component. Riva and Korinek (2004) believed that a group course " provides an avenue where instructors can demonstrate effective group leadership behavior through a conscious use of modeling techniques and class members can experience what it is like to be in a group and be a group member" (p. 56). The authors suggested using typical group interventions such as modeling, setting norms, and facilitating voice in the classroom setting in order to mimic the workings of a task group. Killacky and Hulse-Killacky (2004) went one step farther and suggested that generic group competency skills should be infused in coursework across the counseling curriculum. They suggested using the three-phase task group model of warm-up,

action, and closure in each class meeting or over the course of the semester. By expanding group competency skills into other courses besides group work, the authors believed students will become more effective group workers in a variety of settings with diverse populations.

The fourth component in training group workers is the role of supervision. Within the counseling profession, supervision is recognized as essential to group leader development (Granello & Underfer-Babalis, 2004). The Association for Specialists in Group Work recommends that during master's level practicum and internships, students spend one quarter of their direct-service hours in supervised leadership or co-leadership of group work (ASGW, 2000). Some of the most recent research conducted on supervision includes examination of supervision models to increase cognitive complexity (Granello & Underfer-Babalis, 2004) and multicultural competence (Lassiter, Napolitano, Culbreth, & Kok-Mun, 2008; Ober, Granello, & Henfield, 2009), the addition of computer-based supervision (Vaccaro & Lambie, 2007) and the experiences of group supervisors (Okech & Rubel, 2009) and group supervisees (Linton, 2003). In supervision, all three previous components of training (academic, experiential, and observation) come together as students recall their experience as a group member, contemplate their confidence as a group leader, and combine theory with interventions (Barlow, 2004).

In addition to the four components, the use of a conceptual framework when teaching group work is vital. Bemak and Conyne (2004) suggested using an ecological perspective in which a group is viewed as a living social system and the focus in on the characteristics of the group members. "The ecological perspective uses ecological concepts from biology as a metaphor with which to describe the reciprocity between persons and their environments...attention is on the goodness of fit between an individual or group and the places

in which they live out their lives" (Sands, 2000, p. 187). The Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) defines group work as "a broad professional practice involving the application of knowledge and skill in group facilitation to assist an *interdependent* collection of people to reach their *mutual* goals which may be intrapersonal, interpersonal, or work-related" (ASGW, 2000). Bemak and Conye (2004) argue that the concepts of interdependence and mutuality are salient to the ecological perspective and therefore provide a good fit for teaching ecologically-centered group work. They provide a model for teaching ecologically-centered group work which is organized into three steps. In step 1 (Planning ecologically-centered group work) students design group plans which take relevant contextual factors into account such as purpose, setting, methods, leader role, and evaluation. In step 2 (Performing ecologically-centered group work) students are provided the opportunity to become a group member and group leader or co-leader through an experiential group. The authors stressed that gaining knowledge about groups is not sufficient in itself; students must gain practical knowledge about groups by experiencing the dynamics of a group first-hand. In step 3 (Processing ecologically-centered group work) students create meaning from their experience and learn the importance of outcome evaluation or the degree to which group participation promoted a good fit between the group, its members, and the environment.

Orr and Hulse-Killacky (2006) built on the research of Conyne and Bemak (2004) by introducing the concepts of voice, meaning, mutual construction of knowledge, and transfer of learning. They asserted that these concepts establish cohesion and interconnectedness among group members, key concepts in applying the ecological perspective to group work training. Orr and Hulse-Killacky (2006) defined the concept of voice in a group as the "members' willingness,

permission, and ability to share their own unique perspectives on the world around them" (p. 190). Meaning occurs when members value this voice and begin to create their own meaning within the group. Members then move towards mutual construction of knowledge which is based on the combined experiences of group members. Last, transfer of knowledge occurs when members are able to apply knowledge learned from this experience to future similar experiences.

The Use of Experiential Methods in Counselor Education

The Association for Experiential Education (AEE) defines experiential education as a "philosophy and methodology in which educators purposely engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify issues (Association for Experiential Education, 2009). AEE outlines basic principles of experiential education including: (1) that learners are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, and physically; and (2) that the results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experience and learning. AEE also states that the term "educator" is meant to include therapist, facilitator, and counselor. Using this definition in relation to the field of counselor education, instructors can use experiential methods as a valid way to assist students in gaining direct experience of group work.

Starting in the 1960s, counseling programs began offering student training groups in which the activities were purely experiential, with little theory or model-driven applications (Ward, 2004). Ward (2004) further reported that this approach to teaching counselors in training was consistent with the prevailing principle of that time which argued that only insight-based experiences and understanding were valuable in training group experiences. It soon became evident that students needed cognitive understanding of the personal group experience to fully

understand group process. Starting in the 1970s, the practice of teaching group work had undergone a transformation where content of group theory and process was combined with experiential activities to achieve both cognitive and affective understanding in students (Conyne & Bemak, 2004). One of the major contributors in the transformation of teaching group work has been the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW). ASGW was founded in the early 1980's "to promote quality in group work training, practice, and research (ASGW, 2009).

In the *ASGW Best Practice Guidelines* (ASGW, 2007), the association describes seven areas that every counselor must know about group work: nature and scope of practice; assessment of group members and the ecological systems in which they function; the planning of group interventions with sensitivity to environmental contexts and impacts of diversity; the implementation of specific group interventions; concepts and practices governing leadership and co-leadership; evaluation; and ethical practice, best practice, and diversity-competent practice. In addition, it is required that students complete a minimum of 10 clock hours (20 clock hours are recommended) of experiential work where students are able to observe or directly experience group work as a member or a leader. The experiential group is a way for students to demonstrate competency in group work in both knowledge and skill areas (Wilson, Rapin, & Haley-Banez, 2004). Fall and Levitov (2002) agreed that competent group leadership training requires both the acquisition of knowledge and adequate opportunity to experience and apply knowledge in personal and practical ways. In other words, students must learn by doing.

Although the *ASGW Best Practice Guidelines* (ASGW, 2007) require either the observation *or* experience of group leadership, but not both, many researchers are adamant about the necessity for students to actively experience the role of group leader and not just observe it.

Fall and Levitov (2002) believe that something is lost in translation between watching someone else lead a group and personally engaging with members and feeling the power of the group. They compare participating in the experiential group to taking a driver's education course. Just as watching the instructor drive will not help the student to learn the necessary skills for driving, watching a group leader conduct a group will not help students learn the necessary skills for group leadership. Kottler (2004) agrees with Fall and Levitov (2002), stating that he does not know how to teach students to lead group without giving them the opportunity to experience group and practice leading groups.

In addition to learning effective group leadership skills, the experiential group provides an opportunity to have an emotional and personal experience as a group member. Students will be able to personally experience the theory and process of group work they previously only had the chance to learn about in the didactic portion of the class (Anderson & Price, 2001). They will personally understand the feelings associated with disclosing personal information and the power of the group to facilitate change. As a result, participating in the experiential group helps students to acquire a better understanding of the experiences their future clients will have as group members (Yalom, 1995). The experiential group can also give personal understanding to the growth potential gained through the group process (Berg, Landreth, & Fall, 1998). This is accomplished when students gain meaningful learning and develop a sense of self as a group member. This sense of one's self as a group member can lead to increased self-awareness of one's personal characteristics such as personal style, talking too much, and physical behavior (Pistole, Kinyon, & Keith, 2008). This knowledge can be transferred to student's life outside of group work, as the group serves as a microcosm of the larger society (Yalom, 1995).

Other disciplines such as nursing have utilized experiential group components in their training programs to achieve understanding of group concepts and self-awareness relevant to personal and professional growth (Pistole, Kinyon, & Keith, 2008). Pistole, Kinyon, and Keith (2008) examined how experiential groups facilitate undergraduate nursing students' learning group knowledge and skills. Twenty-two undergraduate nursing students who had enrolled in a psychiatric /mental health psychosocial course, volunteered to participate in the experiential group. The participants were randomly divided into three groups with each group facilitated by two doctoral level counseling students. Each group met for 90 minutes for six group sessions with the purpose of interacting and discussing group-initiated topics and group concepts. This study did not utilize a control group and all 3 experimental groups received the same treatment. Two questionnaires were used in the study: (1) a nursing questionnaire given pre-test and post-test based on nursing learned goals and (2) a counseling scale developed by the authors to examine learning in a course linked experiential group. Pistole et al. found that the experiential group promoted nursing learning goals of building rapport, providing effective patient care through practicing therapeutic communication, and knowledge of group dynamics and group process. In addition, as a result of participating in an experiential group, nursing students believed their self-awareness, interpersonal relating, and ability to give and receive feedback had increased. As a result, the researchers argued that the use of experiential groups is an option for teaching group concepts to nursing students. This study highlights the ability of the experiential group, even when conducted in another discipline, to provide a personal growth experience to students.

Some researchers have attempted to find alternatives to the traditional experiential group component which is typically conducted in an academic setting. Connolly, Carns, and Carns (2005) conducted a study which compared a traditional academic experiential component in a group counseling course to an activity-based laboratory group. All 20 participants were students enrolled in a group counseling course at Texas State University-San Marcos. Ten participants were randomly assigned to the traditional, discussion based experiential group which primarily focused on here-and-now experiences and group interaction based on the work of Yalom (2005). The remaining 10 participants were assigned to the activity-based group where experiential activities were completed along with a challenge course. The authors described the challenge course as an experiential, action-based model which required some physical activity and group effort to overcome obstacles in an outdoor or wilderness setting. The data from the study indicated that an activity-based group is a viable resource for educating graduate students on the theory and practice of group work using experiential techniques. The activity based-group can also be used in addition to instead of a replacement of the traditional discussion based experiential component. The challenge course can be facilitated before the experiential component in order to help students become more cohesive and therefore more open to disclosure and risk taking (Hatch & McCarthy, 2003).

The experiential component is an important teaching tool when training group workers. A survey conducted by Orlinsky, Botermans, and Ronnestad (2001) reported that counselors believe that experiential learning is one of the most salient factors in terms of their development. The ASGW concurs by requiring that a student enrolled in a counseling program receive 10 clock hours observing or experiencing being a group member or leader (ASGW, 2007). ASGW,

however, does not specify how students receive this experience. In order to develop a group course which requires an experiential component, professors have looked to the literature to find models which fit their counseling program's needs. Despite the need for continuing knowledge of the various models used in developing the experiential component, little research has been completed on which models most frequently are used by counseling programs.

Models of Group Work Training and Ethical Implications

There are several models or formats counselor education programs can utilize when facilitating the experiential group. In the first model, the course instructor both facilitates the group and grades the experience (Davenport, 2004). In the second model, the group course is divided into two sections: didactic and experiential group. The course instructor of the didactic section responsible for determining grades is not the facilitator of the experiential group (Furr & Barrett, 2000). In a third model, students participate in a therapy or personal growth group of their choice outside of the classroom with no connection to the counseling program (Hensley, 2002). All of the models have varying formats (Osborn, Daninhirsch, & Page, 2003; Hensley, 2000; Pistole et al., 2008) which have unique advantages and limitations.

When the course instructor both facilitates the group and grades the experience, a dual relationship may exist between the professor and the student. Students are in a vulnerable position because of the power differential between the student and the professor (Anderson & Price, 2001). The power differential is even greater when the professor serves as evaluator of the student's performance and facilitator of the group because the professor becomes knowledgeable of sensitive information disclosed by students. Students may feel unduly pressured to disclose information in an effort to "perform" and receive a good grade. In addition, confusion may

occur when the course instructor changes roles from teacher to facilitator. The American Counseling Association (ACA, 2005) *Code of Ethics* (F.10.d.) states that counselor educators should avoid relationships with students that "may compromise the training experience or grades assigned."

Within this format, there can be variability depending on whether a full-time faculty member or an adjunct faculty member is the course instructor who is both grading the experience and facilitating the experiential group. When the course instructor is a full-time faculty member, this person may have already formed a personal bond or relationship with students enrolled in the course. This may cause additional dual relationships in the group. The student may be viewed as receiving favoritism in the experiential group because of the prior relationship with the full-time faculty member. In addition, students may feel apprehensive about their self-disclosures being reported to other full-time faculty and being seen as "unhealthy" (Furr & Barrett, 2000; Pistole et al., 2008). Yalom (2005) agreed that when the group facilitator is operating in a dual role, the group members are more likely to be restricted and guarded. If the course instructor is an adjunct professor, students may be less concerned about their personal disclosures being reported to full-time faculty. Also, there is less of a chance that students will have already formed a personal relationship with an adjunct faculty member.

One advantage to the course instructor both facilitating the experiential group and grading the experience is that the course instructor is able to directly see the application of skills learned in the didactic portion of the course in the experiential component. If the course instructor notices students are struggling with a particular skill, he or she has the opportunity to

re-direct students in the didactic portion. Some instructors develop models in which they use a combination of facilitation and observation.

Hensley (2000) developed the 2-way fishbowl model which each student is given the opportunity to participate as a group member, group leader, and group observer. In the two-way fishbowl model, the instructor is primarily an observer of the experiential experience. Only in the first two sessions does the instructor facilitate the group. This is done in an effort to reduce student anxiety and to assist student learning of the co-facilitation process (Hensley, 2000).

The instructor forms the two-way fishbowl in week 1 by randomly assigning students into two groups of equal size. One group is selected to become the observation group while the other becomes the working group. For the first experiential group session, the working group forms a seated inner circle while the observation group forms a larger circle around them. The working group completes a 45-minute group while the observation group observes. After the group session has ended, the observation group discusses their observations of group process with the working group. Also, at this time, the working group processes their feelings with the observation team members. In week 2, the groups are reversed and this process continues until the end of the course. Starting in week 3 of the experiential group, two members of the observation group are chosen to co-facilitate the group for the working group members. In this model, each student is given the opportunity to participate as a group member, group leader, and group observer. One limitation to the two-way fishbowl model is that the instructor of the didactic portion of the course facilitates and observes the group sessions (Goodrich, 2008). As a result, students may still feel conflicted about disclosing personal information to a faculty member and appearing damaged.

In order to reduce dual relationships and concerns over confidentiality, the group course can be divided into two sections: didactic and experiential group. The course instructor of the didactic section responsible for determining grades is not the facilitator of the experiential group. Some authors have offered concrete examples of how to structure and format such models for a course in group work. In Furr and Barret's model (2000), both sections would meet together for 80 minutes to learn didactically the theory of group process. For the remainder of class, one section participates in group skills training while the second section participates in an experiential group. At mid-semester, the two sections switch, thus allowing all students an opportunity to participate in the experiential group. Osborn, Daninhirsch, and Page (2003) used a similar approach to that of Furr and Barret (2000) when structuring a humanistically-based experiential component. The authors suggested offering multiple sections of the group course in order to limit the number of students participating in the experiential component. Both of these formats give examples of how to structure a group work course and maintain proper group size.

Students enrolled in a course where the didactic and experiential components are separate may feel more comfortable due to the role clarity of the course instructor (Goodrich, 2009). The course instructor does not have change roles between teacher of the didactic portion who issues grades and facilitator of the experiential group. As a result, students may not feel the pressure to "perform" because they have greater understanding that their personal disclosures will not affect their grade in the course.

Universities which have both master's degree and doctoral programs often have doctoral students conduct or co-lead the experiential component of the master's level group class. One advantage to this model is that it minimizes the dual relationship between faculty and students;

however, dual relationships and power differentials still exist between the doctoral students and the master's degree students. Master's degree students may have already formed a personal relationship/friendship with the doctoral student which could be perceived as favoritism by other members of the group.

Finally, students may participate in a therapy or personal growth group of their choice outside of the classroom with no connection to the counseling program (Hensley, 2002). Students may feel more comfortable sharing personal information with individuals not affiliated with the counseling program; however, this model does not provide a way for the course instructor to link student classroom learning to the experiential group. In addition, instructors cannot evaluate student's group leadership skills or exercise any control over the group.

Overall, counselor educators must safeguard students from abuses of power by remaining clear about the purpose (Hensley, 2002) and structure (Fall & Levitov, 2002) of the experiential group. Additional ethical considerations for students enrolled in a group course as a student and as a group member are the right to privacy (ACA Code of Ethics, 2005, B.1.b.) and the right to confidentiality (ACA Code of Ethics, 2005, B.4.a.). Students should be made aware that while confidentiality between group members is expected, it cannot be assured. In addition, students need to be properly informed that their self- disclosures will not be used to evaluate their performance in the course as stated in the ACA (2005) *Code of Ethics* (F.7.b.). Furthermore, counselor educators must also be culturally sensitive when facilitating the experiential group, especially when asking students to self-disclose personal information. ASGW recommends in its *Principles for Diversity-Competent Group Workers* (1998) that group facilitators are mindful

that some of the characteristics of group work and theory may clash with the beliefs, values, and traditions of various cultures.

Incorporating an experiential component into a group work class can be problematic due to several ethical considerations (Connolly, Carns, & Carns, 2005; Davenport, 2004; Hensley, 2002). One fundamental issue is whether or not the requirement of mandating students to participate in an experiential group is ethical (Davenport, 2004). Welfel (1999) believed that forcing students to participate in a group experience undermines the effectiveness of the group process. On the other hand, Kottler (2004) argues that students should have to complete an experiential group and that it is hypocritical for counselors to ask future group members to participate in an experience that they themselves were unwilling to complete. One safeguard programs can utilize to protect students from this ethical dilemma is to inform students of the group experiential requirement prior to their enrollment in a counseling program (Hensley, 2002). This safeguard, however, may be difficult to place into action considering that many graduate students learn about the program of study only after being accepted into the program. Another possibility is to have the group experiential activity listed as a requirement in the information offered about the program of study via the counseling program's brochures or website. By doing this, the information is available to future students to view before applying to the counseling program. The ACA (2005) *Code of Ethics* (F.7.a.) states that counselor education programs must inform students of "training components that encourage self-growth or self-disclosure as part of the training process" in student orientation. By discussing the need for participation in the experiential group in the orientation process, professors will have the

opportunity to go over students' concerns regarding ethical dilemmas in advance and discuss possible solutions.

Both faculty-led and doctoral student-led experiential group leaders must continually work to minimize dual relationships in the experiential component. When a professor leads the experiential component problems can ensue because the professor must assume two roles: group leader and program administrator (Yalom, 2005). While some counselor educators believe that professionals other than the professor should lead the experiential group (Remley & Herlihy, 2000), others argue that dual relationships are not always harmful and can add richness to the group experience (Kottler, 2004). When students lead experiential groups, an additional ethical concern of competence exists. The 2005 ACA *Code of Ethics* (C.2.a) states that "counselors practice only within the boundaries of their competence." Master's level students have questioned whether or not doctoral student are capable of handling their personal information competently or confidentially (Davenport, 2004; Pistole et al., 2008). One way to ensure competence among doctoral students leading experiential groups is to choose advanced graduate students who are familiar with group process and by conducting in depth supervision by counseling faculty. In a study conducted by Pistole et al. (2008), two doctoral counseling students co-facilitated an experiential group comprised of 6-8 undergraduate nursing students for 6 sessions. The co-facilitators were chosen and screened by their faculty supervisor and all had completed two semesters of advanced counseling practicum and one course on group work. They were given extensive supervision by counseling faculty which included 90-minute, weekly group supervision sessions where videotapes were reviewed and member interaction, co-facilitator strengths and weaknesses, and confidentiality were discussed. The authors suggested

that supervision played an important part of the success of the doctoral students as effective group leaders. In addition, they believe that the group leaders were able to learn and display effective group leadership skills because they were not involved in multiple relationships with the group members inside their own discipline.

Innovative training models have been developed which seek to reduce the role of dual relationships in the experiential component by limiting the self-disclosure of students (Fall & Levitov, 2002; Romano, 1998). In *Simulated Group Counseling* (SGC), developed by Romano (1998), students concurrently enroll in SCG and a didactic course in group counseling and theory. The SGC groups have a maximum of 10 students and meet for 90 minutes weekly, one hour of SGC followed by 30 minutes to process the group. Students are instructed to chose group member character roles including a name different than their own. The instructor assists students in selecting presenting problems that are typical to counseling such as relationship loss or career indecision that students will have to role-play each week. The students take turns co-facilitating the group each week with an experienced doctoral student assigned as an observer. The observer facilitates the process session after the group is finished. The instructor may observe the SCG session and participate in the process sessions. Dual-relationship issues between students and the instructor are reduced because students are role-playing and not disclosing personal information. However, Romano (1998) pointed out that SGC does have limitations. One limitation to SGC is the disruption of the group's equilibrium by constantly shifting student roles between group member and group co-facilitator. The role shifts may be distracting to students and do not portray a realistic picture of group process. A second limitation is the expectation by the instructor that students will be able to keep the role-playing

consistent and not add in their personal experiences. It may be presumptuous to assume students will have the insight to realize that their personal life experiences are "leaking" into their assumed role. If either the instructor or the student becomes aware of the situation, the student may need supervision on how disclosures will affect him or her personally and as a group member.

Fall and Levitov (2002) sought to enhance the SGC model by developing a model using actors as group participants in the experiential group. The actors develop character roles and presenting problems which are played out every week in the experiential group. Students take turns co-facilitating the group while the remaining students observe the group session through a one-way glass. Unlike SGC developed by Romano (1998), which only limited the self-disclosure of students, the model used by Fall and Levitov (2002) eliminated self-disclosure by students. While using actors as group participants may limit ethical concerns of dual-relationships and confidentiality, a limitation of the model is the lack of personal experience students obtain as group members. Students are able to observe and discuss group behavior, but are not able to physically or emotionally experience it. In addition, the casting and training of actors as group members is very time consuming and may not be an option for smaller universities with no access to a drama program.

Merta, Wolfgang, and McNeil (1993) have contended that concern over ethical dilemmas has contributed to a great deal of variety in determining how experiential groups are structured. Merta et al. surveyed 272 master's-level programs and found five general approaches to structuring experiential groups. These approaches included (a) using the instructor as the group facilitator (39%); (b) the instructor was not involved in the experiential group and did not receive

feedback about students' attendance and participation (8%); (c) the instructor was not involved in the experiential group but did receive feedback on attendance and participation (19%); (d) the experiential group was not led by the instructor but the instructor either observed or participated in the activity (22%); or (e) the instructor limited instruction to didactic methods only (12%). Although the approach of having the instructor double as the group facilitator can lead to concern over dual relationships between the instructor and students, it was the most common structure of a group work course. In contrast to data collected by Merta et al., a study by Anderson and Price (2001) surveyed 99 graduate level students in 7 counseling programs and found four types of instructor involvement in the experiential component. The type of instructor involvement included (a) the instructor did not lead or observe the experiential group but did receive feedback about the group's development (41%); (b) the instructor did not lead but did observe the experiential group (33%); and (c) the instructor did not lead or observe the experiential group and did not receive any feedback concerning the group (22%); or (d) the instructor was both the leader of the experiential group and the instructor of the course (2%). The results of Anderson and Price's (2001) survey suggest that instructors are becoming more vigilant about avoiding dual relationships. Only 3% of students indicated that their instructor led their experiential group compared to 39% surveyed by Merta et al. (1993). However, the results also indicated that in an effort to respond to ethical concerns over dual relationships, a sizeable minority (22%) of instructors were not actively involved in the monitoring or leadership of the experiential group (Anderson & Price, 2001). Additional follow-up studies are needed to further the research completed by Merta et al. and Anderson and Price to determine the current trends in

how courses in group counseling are structuring the experiential component and to explore how these different structures impact the experiences of group workers in training.

The Impact of Group Work Training on Student Experience

The majority of research in the training of group workers has been on best practices (Steen, Bauman & Smith, 2008; Pistole, Kinyon, & Keith, 2008), group leadership skills (Rubel & Kline, 2008) and supervision (Granello & Underfer –Babalis, 2004; Okech & Rubel, 2009). A small percentage of the literature has examined student experience in a master's level group work course. A recurring theme in these articles is the discomfort felt by students as they completed the experiential component. Furr and Carroll (2003) pointed out that many students entering counselor education programs are surprised by the degree of personal exploration and disclosure involved. This lack of knowledge of how much must be personally invested in the experiential component may contribute to student discomfort. One student participant described going through an experiential experience as an "almost devastating-consuming kind of experience" (Auxier et al., 2003, p.32). As a result of such extreme responses by students, researchers have sought to examine the effects of the experiential group on student experience.

Davenport (2004) conducted a 10-year informal survey of doctoral students on their experience in their experiential component of their group work course in their master's program. She found that many students reported having negative experiences due to the existence of dual relationships. Some students feared being seen as "unhealthy" by professors while other students were concerned with the motives of the advanced students who led the groups. Similarly, Steen, Bauman, and Smith (2008) conducted a study on the group work training experiences of school counselors. They surveyed 802 members of the American School Counseling Association

(ASCA) to determine which components of training were experienced in the group work course and how well prepared professionals felt to deliver group counseling. Eighty-one percent of participants led or co-led a group as part of their training with group members being classmates in 39% of cases. Supervisors observed these groups 92% of the time. Respondents also had an opportunity to provide comments on their training experience at the end of the survey. Findings indicated that not only did a majority of respondents feel negative towards their group experience but that counselors with less than five years experience did not feel adequately prepared to lead small groups.

Irving and Williams (1995) believed that not all students who participate in a small group experience as part of their group work course like or benefit from it. By identifying student learning styles, the researchers hoped to determine which students would benefit and those who would be "at risk" from participating in group work training. The learning styles were identified as (1) Activists: those who engross themselves in the here-and now and believe in teamwork, (2) Reflectors: those who distance themselves and think before acting, (3) Theorists: those who learn best by believing their activity is part of a bigger picture and has purpose, and (4) Pragmatists: those who like to see the practical uses of their learning experiences. Overall, the results indicated that individuals from all learning styles except Pragmatists liked nothing about the group experience. Both Theorists and Reflectors found the group very difficult for themselves, while Activists suggested that this type of group experience might be destructive to students. Limitations of using this approach to teaching group work are the time involved in identifying learning styles in students and the complexity of formatting a group experience using their preferred learning styles.

The majority of research studies have been completed using participants who have already graduated from a graduate level counseling program. The data collected from these studies rely on participant memories of their experience in the group work course. Anderson and Price (2001) conducted a study in which they surveyed 99 master's level students who were currently enrolled in a group work course. Students completed the survey during the final two weeks of their course. The results of the survey showed that while 77% to 97% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the experiential component was useful or positive, 3% to 33% reported feeling some degree of discomfort during the course. These results echoed findings by Hall et al. (1999). Hall et al. (1999) conducted a survey of 92 counselors who had experienced either a Rogerian small group or a Tavistock Group Dynamics training in their master's program going back 21 years. The study examined student experience and long-term outcomes of small group training. More than 50% of the participants described the small group experience as "anxiety-provoking," "confrontational," "enlightening," and "growthful." Although a majority of the participants reported the experience as meaningful, 12% of participants reported experiencing short term distress while 2% reported feeling long-term distress. It is remarkable to note that participants who completed the small group training 20 years ago felt it was a memorable experience and could recall how it made them feel.

A very small percentage of the literature in the training of group workers has focused on student experience, but none specifically examined how the model of the experiential component, including the level of instructor involvement, affected student experience.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology that was used in the study. Organization of the chapter includes the following subsections: purpose of the study, research questions, participant selection criteria, instrumentation and instrument development, data collection plan, and methods of data analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the current best practices for how master's level counseling programs are structuring the experiential component of the group work course and to explore how these different structures impact student experience.

Research Questions

The following research questions examined the current models of group work training, specifically the experiential component, and how the differences in these models impacted student experience.

1. What are the current models of group work training in use by U.S. counseling programs?
2. Do the data support the findings of Anderson and Price (2001) in which group work instructors were increasingly vigilant about avoiding dual relationships by not facilitating the experiential group activity?
3. What are the current attitudes of counselors toward the ethical concerns of dual relationships, confidentiality, and competency in the experiential component of a master's level group work course?

4. To what extent do counselors perceive that their learning of group process was impacted by concerns over these ethical issues?
5. Are there differences between experiential groups facilitated by full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and doctoral students, and to what extent do these differences impact student experience or student comfort level?

Characteristics of the Sample

The sample for this study was drawn from members of the American Counseling Association (ACA) who had joined in the past five years. It was theorized that members of ACA who had joined in the past five years would also have graduated within the past five years from a master's degree counseling program. The term of five years was used in order to obtain current data on the structure of experiential groups and student experience and to identify changes to the experiential group and student experience since the study completed by Anderson and Price in 2001. ACA is a professional organization for professional counselors founded in 1952 with the goal of enhancing the counseling profession (ACA, 2009). The organization continues to influence the field of counseling by providing yearly conferences which allow for the collaborations and meeting of professional counselors and counseling students across the nation and by publishing *The ACA Code of Ethics (2005)*, a staple in counselor education training. The organization currently includes a membership of approximately 45,000 counseling professionals, including student members (ACA, 2009).

Criteria for participation in this study included membership in ACA, email address listed in the ACA's membership directory, a working email address, and graduation from a master's degree counseling program in the past five years. The email addresses were entered into a

generic electronic mailing list titled *The Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups*. Participants were contacted directly through email using a mass email message. After allowing for non-respondents and inaccurate email addresses, the approximate number of participants in the study was 330.

Of the 2101 email addresses received from ACA, 79 were returned as undeliverable. An additional 61 ACA members emailed the researcher stating they had graduated over 5 years ago and were not eligible for the study; yielding a sample of 1961 potential participants. Surveys were returned by 330 participants, representing a return rate of seventeen percent (17%). Descriptive information was gathered in order to identify characteristics of the sample and to aid future researchers conducting investigations related to this study. Participants were asked to identify their sex. The majority of participants were female (76.1%), compared to male (23.9%). The frequency of participants' sex appears in Table 2.

Table 1
Frequency Distribution of Participants by Sex

Gender	n	%
Female	251	76.1
Male	79	23.9
Total	330	100

Participants were asked to identify their race. Most of the participants identified themselves as White (80.9%). Blacks or African Americans made up the second largest race

category, representing almost 10% of the sample (9.7%). Of the remaining categories, 1.5% of the sample identified themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native, while Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Chinese, and Middle Eastern participants each represented less than 1% of the sample. Participants who selected the race category of "other" represented 5.2% of respondents and include the self-described nationalities of White/Mexican, Hispanic/White, Euroasian/Caucasian, Bi-racial, Latino/South American, Chinese/White, Multiracial, Native American/French/Spanish, Finnish, Latin American/White, Human, Various, White/Persian, Hispanic, White/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American. The frequency of their responses is listed in Table 3.

Table 2
Frequency Distribution of Participants by Race

Race	n	%
White	267	80.9
Black, African American, or Negro	32	9.7
American Indian or Alaska Native	5	1.5
Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano	3	.9
Puerto Rican	2	.6
Cuban	1	.3
Chinese	1	.3
Middle Eastern	2	.6
Other	17	5.2
Total	330	100

Instrument Development

Few studies have examined the attitudes of masters' degree students on the ethical implications of the use of an experiential group activity as a component of their training. Davenport (2004) looked at student experiences on the use of laboratory groups in counselor development; however, she conducted an informal study for which she did not report the methodology used. She used a convenience sample from doctoral students enrolled in the counseling program where she taught.

Other researchers have looked at other areas relating to the use of experiential groups; however, they did not specifically explore students' perceptions of ethical implications (e.g., Hall et al., 1999; Lennie, 2007). Lennie (2007) explored factors contributing to self-awareness in personal development groups. She developed a questionnaire which measured contributing factors to self-awareness and the students' perceptions of their own self-awareness. Hall et al. (1999) examined both the short and long-term outcomes of small group work in counselor development. Their questionnaire measured both the amount of loss of learning and application of skill over time. Participants were asked to rate the usefulness and memorability of the small group work on a 7-point Likert scale. In addition, participants were asked to circle both counseling skills and feelings they directly attributed to the small group experience.

Erwin (1999) went one step further and looked at how student experience can be impacted by the social climate of the group. He examined the different social climates (task-oriented, uninvolved, and socio-emotionally oriented) that developed within three groups experiencing the same program of experiential training in structured group counseling. Although their questionnaire did ask about individual and group reactions to the activities conducted in the

experiential group, ethical dilemmas were not addressed. Similarly, Hatch and McCarthy (2003) investigated the use of challenge course participation as a component of experiential groups for counselors in training. Their survey asked participants to rate their level of agreement with six statements concerning the level of cohesiveness between group members based on a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The survey also included three open-ended questions which sought to gather individual experiences from the participants. Only a study conducted by Anderson and Price (2001) examined the attitudes of master's degree students regarding the use of an experiential group activity as a component of their training. Their survey, which consisted of 23 questions, gathered information on four topics: (1) the quality of the learning experience, (2) the issues of dual relationships or privacy concerns, (3) the students' general comfort with the group, and (4) the students' choice to participate.

Although the survey created by Anderson and Price (2001) did examine student experience and instructor participation in the experiential group, it did not include common themes found in the literature regarding student experience in the experiential group. Specifically, their study did not address concerns over short-term and long-term stress (Hall et al., 1999). In addition, their survey did not examine how student experience differed when the facilitator was a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, or doctoral student involved in dual relationship roles (Davenport, 2004). In order to include current themes on student experience found in the literature to Anderson and Price's (2001) survey, I created the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups* (see Appendix A). It was created for this study with the purpose of (a) determining the current attitudes of counselors toward the ethical concerns of dual relationships, confidentiality, and competency in the

experiential component of a master's level group work course; (b) determining to what extent counselors perceived that their learning of group process was hindered by concerns over the aforementioned ethical issues; (c) determining the current models of group work training and examining how they reflect the work of Anderson and Price (2001); (d) examining if there are differences between experiential groups facilitated by full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and doctoral students; and (e) understanding how these differences impact student experience or student comfort level.

The survey consists of 38 items divided into five sections. In section I participants are asked to give demographic and background information including sex, race, age, year of master's degree graduation, and the frequency of delivering group counseling in the workplace. In section II participants are asked to describe the type of leadership and course structure of their first group counseling course in their master's degree program through the use of 9 multiple-choice questions. In section III participants are asked to respond to 12 opinion statements regarding ethical concerns they encountered in their first group counseling course in their master's degree program by using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). In section IV participants are asked to respond to 10 statements regarding their experiences and level of overall comfort in the experiential component of their first group counseling course in their master's degree program using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). In section V participants are asked to share their personal experience and recommendations regarding the experiential component through the use of two open-ended questions.

Dr. Rebecca Anderson gave her permission (see Appendix B) to incorporate items from her survey into the survey I developed entitled *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups*. The following questions on the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups* were taken from the survey completed by Anderson and Price: Section II – Items 6, 8, and 9; Section III – Item 18; and Section IV – Items 27, 29 and 32.

Table 3

Instrument Development - Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups

Item	Literature Reference
Instrument Development	
1-5	Anderson and Price (2001); Pistole, Kinyon, and Keith (2006)
6, 8, and 9	Anderson and Price (2001); Merta, Wolfgang, and McNeil (1993)
7, 10. 11, and 12	Davenport (2004)
13	Fall and Levitov (2002); Hatch and McCarthy (2003); Romano (1998); Steen, Bauman, and Smith (2008)
15, 16, 17	Riva and Korinek (2004); ASGW (1998)
18-20	Davenport (2004); Riva and Korinek (2004); Anderson and Price (2001)
21, 22, 24, 25, and 27-31	Anderson and Price (2001)
32-36	Hall, Hall, Harris, Hay, Biddulph, and Duffy (1999); Anderson and Price (2001)
37-38	Hatch and McCarthy (2003)

Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups Section I: Personal Information. The variables selected in the demographic information were chosen based upon research exploring master's degree students' attitudes towards the use of experiential

groups in the training of group workers (Anderson & Price, 2001; Pistole, Kinyon, & Keith, 2006).

Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups Section II: Type of leadership and course structure. Research completed by Hensley (2002), Anderson and Price (2001) and Merta, Wolfgang, and McNeil (1993) suggested that the type of experiential group leadership used in group counseling training is changing in order to be more vigilant in avoiding dual relationships. Items 6, 8, and 9 are based on literature regarding the course structure and instructor participation utilized in the experiential group, specifically the quantitative studies conducted by Merta et al. (1993) and Anderson and Price (2001). Merta et al. (1993) contended that concern over ethical dilemmas contributed to a great deal of variety in determining how experiential groups are structured. Merta et al. (1993) surveyed 272 master's-level programs and found five general approaches to structuring experiential groups. These approaches included (a) using the instructor as the group facilitator (39%); (b) the instructor was not involved in the experiential group and did not receive feedback about students' attendance and participation (8%); (c) the instructor was not involved in the experiential group but did receive feedback on attendance and participation (19%); (d) the experiential group was not led by the instructor but the instructor either observed or participated in the activity (22%); or (e) the instructor limited instruction to didactic methods only (12%). In an effort to expand on the work of Merta et al., Anderson and Price (2001) surveyed 99 graduate level students in 13 counseling programs and found four types of instructor involvement in the experiential component. The type of instructor involvement included (a) the instructor did not lead or observe the experiential group but did receive feedback about the group's development (41%); (b) the instructor did not lead but did

observe the experiential group (33%); and (c) the instructor did not lead or observe the experiential group and did not receive any feedback concerning the group (22%); or (d) the instructor was both the leader of the experiential group and the instructor of the course (2%).

Items 7, 10, 11, and 12 are based on research pertaining to ethical concerns of dual relationships between the group facilitator and the students in the experiential component of a group work course. Davenport (2004) argued that care should be taken by counseling programs when assigning a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, or doctoral student to facilitate the experiential component. Davenport (2004) stated that when faculty members facilitate the experiential group they take on a therapeutic role which can interfere with their dual role as professor. In addition, Davenport (2004) believed that doctoral students leading experiential groups may be practicing beyond their competency level to the detriment of the group members. Item 13 was derived from literature found across various components in the training of group workers. Items 13(a) and 13(b) are based on the quantitative study conducted by Steen, Bauman, and Smith (2008). Steen et al. (2008) conducted a survey of 802 members of the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) to determine the type and quantity of participant's group work training experiences. Item 13(c) is based on the work of Fall and Levitov (2002) in which actors were utilized as group members in the experiential group. Item 13(d) is based on *Simulated Group Counseling* (SGC) developed by Romano (1998). In SGC, group members are instructed to play a character role throughout the experiential group sessions in order to limit personal disclosures. 13(e) is based on the work of Hatch and McCarthy (2003) who argued for the inclusion of a challenge-course component in the experiential group. Hatch and McCarthy (2003) found that the incorporation of a challenge course prior to the actual

experiential group sessions may assist in developing cohesion between group members and aide in increasing student comfort level.

Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups Section III: Ethical concerns. In the training of group workers, there has been conflict concerning the most suitable way to fulfill professional standards while avoiding ethical dilemmas (Goodrich, 2008). The items in this section are based on a review of the literature regarding the ethical dilemmas inherent in teaching the experiential component in a group work course. Items 15 and 17 are specifically based on the ethical role of the facilitator of the experiential group. Riva and Korinek (2004) confirmed the need for competent facilitators by stating only the competent facilitator "will know how to take actions to de-escalate emotionally-charged situations or how to take actions to end an experiential activity before emotions become too intense" (p.61). Item 16 is based on the recommendations by ASGW in its *Principles for Diversity-Competent Group Workers* (1998) that all group workers should be culturally competent and knowledgeable of the values and beliefs of various cultures when facilitating groups. Items 18, 19, and 20 were based on research concerning dual relationships in the teaching of group work. Davenport (2004) conducted an informal survey of doctoral students concerning their past experiences in the experiential component of their master's degree course. Participants in the study reported concerns over the competency and effectiveness of the group facilitator. In addition, participants reported being influenced by the facilitator regarding the amount and depth of personal information disclosed in the experiential group. Riva and Korinek (2004) identified specific methods and techniques that were appropriate for use in the experiential component. They argued that because the experiential group has the ability to have either a positive or negative

emotional impact on students, norms must be established early in the course and reinforced often in order to keep students focused on the purpose and goals of experiential learning experience. Riva and Korinek (2004) suggested that one norm that is helpful to students is to discourage personal disclosures while discussing group dynamics. Items 21, 22, 24, 25 in Section III and Items 27-31 in Section IV were based on a quantitative study regarding student experience in the experiential component. Anderson and Price (2001) surveyed 99 students enrolled in a master's-level group work course throughout seven different counseling psychology graduate programs. The 23-item survey gathered information concerning student attitudes about participating in the experiential group and any dual relationship or privacy issues encountered while enrolled in the course. It was reported that nearly one third of the participants experienced general discomfort, concern over their privacy, and the presence of dual relationships. In addition, many other participants were concerned about being evaluated or criticized by other group members and/or the group facilitator. Items 23 and 26 were based on the research of Pistole, Kinyon, and Keith (2008). Pistole et al. (2008) conducted a study on the use of the experiential group in an undergraduate nursing course. In the study, 22 nursing students formed 3 separate groups each facilitated by two doctoral counseling students. Each group met every week in addition to the didactic portion of the nursing course. Two questionnaires were used in the study: a 12-item "nursing" questionnaire which focused on nursing learning goals and a 17-item "counseling" questionnaire which focused on student's learning of group process and theory. Pistole et al. (2008) found that the use of experiential groups in conjunction with a nursing course was successful in teaching nursing students group concepts and skills. However, the researchers also found that students limited sharing personal experiences in the experiential group due to ethical

concerns of confidentiality. Specifically, students had trepidation that confidential information disclosed in the experiential groups would be shared with faculty members or other students in the nursing program, therefore exposing personal issues or weaknesses.

Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups Section IV: Student experiences in the experiential group. Items 32-36 were based on research which evaluated the long-term outcomes of small group work. Hall et al. (1999) surveyed 92 participants who had graduated with a MEd human relations degree or an MA in counseling studies and had participated in a small group experience over the past 21 years. In the survey, the participants were given a list of 80 words and invited to circle as many words as needed to describe the feelings they experienced during the small group experience. Over three quarters of participants felt the experience was challenging while around ten percent of participants reported having short-term stress. Interestingly, almost half of the participants felt other members had suffered short term stress. In addition, two percent of participants reported suffering from long-term stress as a result of the small group experience.

Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups Section V: Personal experience. Items 37 and 38 were based on research pertaining to the use of challenge courses in the experiential component for counselors in training. Hatch and McCarthy (2003) found that the incorporation of a challenge course can affect the cohesion level of group members. In the survey, participants were asked to answer three open-ended questions which allowed them to share their experience as a group member in the experiential component. The authors noted that the inclusion of open-ended questions assisted them in assessing the utility of the challenge course experience. Specifically, in item 37, participants are asked to comment on

any experience during the course of the experiential component, including concerns over ethical dilemmas. In item 38 participants are asked to state their recommendations on how to best improve the experiential component.

A focus group, which included four experts in the field of group work, was conducted in order to increase the construct validity of the survey items on the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups*. The focus group included the following individuals: Dr. Richard Mathis, Ph.D., L.P.C., Department Head of Psychology and Counselor Education at Nicholls State University; Mr. Andrew Hebert, L.P.C., Clinical Director of Magnolia Family Services; Mrs. Nicole Methvin-Perrero, L.P.C., Clinical Manager of Magnolia Family Services; and Dr. Jessica Fournier, Ph.D., L.P.C., school counselor at Houma Jr. High School. All focus group members gave suggestions regarding how to re-order survey items to increase participant comprehension which were ultimately used in the final draft of the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups*.

Data Collection Plan

All procedures and protocols related to data collection were reviewed and approved by the University of New Orleans Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) (see appendix C). After receiving approval, data were collected from members in the American Counseling Association (ACA) membership directory. Data were collected anonymously via SurveyMonkey™ (http://www.surveymonkey.com), an on-line survey and data collection service. The *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups* was developed for use as an on-line survey through SurveyMonkey.com creation tools. A secure electronic link was created through which participants could access the survey. While

the total population of potential participants is identifiable via their electronic email address before data collection, the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups* does not contain questions that could reveal the identity of individual respondents. SurveyMonkey™ does not provide any mechanism for identifying participants.

Potential participants for the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups* were contacted by a generic mass electronic message requesting participation (see Appendix D). The electronic message included a brief description of the study, a statement regarding participant anonymity, and a consent form in order to participate in the study. Directions for accessing the survey via the secure electronic link generated by SurveyMonkey™ were provided as well. Thus, participation in the study was completely voluntary and anonymous.

Once the participants accessed the on-line version of the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups*, they were requested to complete a demographic information section and a 38-item *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups.* All participants were sent a second generic mass electronic message (see Appendix E) in week 2 of the study, thanking those who had already participated, and reminding those who had not. At the end of week 3, the end of the study was announced by a final generic mass message (see Appendix F) thanking all those who participated.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this proposed study included descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and MANOVA to identify student experience and types of instructor involvement in the experiential component of a master's level group work course.

Descriptive statistics, specifically frequency distributions, were used to answer research question 1 "What are the current models of group work training in use by U.S. counseling programs?" from items 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13.

Descriptive statistics, specifically frequency distributions, were used to answer research question 2 "Do the data support the findings of Anderson and Price (2001) in which group work instructors were increasingly vigilant about avoiding dual relationships by not facilitating the experiential group activity?" from items 6, 8, 9 and the data from the survey conducted by Anderson and Price (2001).

Hypothesis 1

There are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the strength of concern of master's level students over the dual roles held by the group facilitator.

A MANOVA was used to test this hypothesis. The independent variable was the type of experiential group facilitator from item 10. There were 3 levels of the independent variable: full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and doctoral student. The dependent variable was the master's level students' comfort level regarding the dual roles held by the experiential group facilitator from items 18, 20, and 29.

Hypothesis 2

There are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the strength of concern of master's level students over issues of confidentiality.

A MANOVA was used to test this hypothesis. The independent variable was the type of experiential group facilitator from item 10. There were 3 levels of the independent variable: full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and doctoral student. The dependent variable was the master's level students' comfort level regarding confidentiality in the experiential group from items 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28.

Hypothesis 3

Master's level students who believe that their facilitator was competent will report stronger feelings of comfort participating in the experiential group than master's degree students who believe that their facilitator was incompetent.

An ANOVA was used to test this hypothesis. The independent variable was the master's level students' opinion of the experiential group facilitator's competence from item 15. The dependent variable was the comfort level of master's level students from item 27.

Hypothesis 4

There are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the ethical concerns of master's level students.

A MANOVA was used to test this hypothesis. The independent variable was the type of experiential group facilitator from item 10. There were 3 levels of the independent variable: full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and doctoral student. The dependent variable was master's level students' concern over ethical issues in the experiential group from items 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26.

Hypothesis 5

Master's level students who were not concerned with ethical issues in the experiential group will report that the experiential group was more instrumental in their development as a group counselor than master's level students who were concerned with ethical issues in the experiential group.

A MANOVA was used to test this hypothesis. The dependent variables was master's level students' concern regarding ethical issues in the experiential group from items 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26. The independent variable was the master's level students' belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor from item 32.

Hypothesis 6

There are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the comfort level experienced by master's level students when participating in the experiential group.

ANOVA was used to test this hypothesis. The independent variable was the type of experiential group facilitator from item 10. There were 3 levels of the independent variable: full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and doctoral student. The dependent variable was the master's level students' comfort level from item 27.

Hypothesis 7

There are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on master's level students' experience of the experiential group.

A MANOVA was used to test this hypothesis. The independent variable was the type of experiential group facilitator from item 10. There were 3 levels of the independent variable: full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and doctoral student. The dependent variable was the master's level students' experience of the experiential group from items 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36.

Due to the use of multiple MANOVAs, a conservative alpha level of $p=<.01$ was used for all statistical tests.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the current best practices for how master's level counseling programs are structuring the experiential component of the group work course and to explore how these different structures impact student experience. Participants were asked to indicate how often they led counseling groups in their current job. Over one-fourth of the participants indicated they never led counseling groups (27.3%) or only led counseling groups once a month (22.4%), while approximately 16% of participants reported leading counseling groups 10 times or more a month. The remaining participants identified leading counseling groups as follows: twice a month (8.2%), three times a month (3.6%), 4 times a month (11.2%), five times a month (3.3%), six times a month (2.1%), seven times a month (2.1%) and 8 times a month (5.5%). The frequency of the participant response is listed in Table 4.

Table 4
Frequency Distribution for Number of Counseling Groups Led per Month

Number of Counseling Groups Led per Month	n	%
0	90	27.3
1	74	22.4
2	27	8.2
3	12	3.6
4	37	11.2
5	11	3.3
6	7	2.1
7	1	.3
8	18	5.5
10+	53	16.1
Total	330	100

The *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups* was utilized to assess master's degree students' ethical concerns while participating in the experiential group. Participants indicated their agreement to statements regarding ethical concerns in the experiential component using a Likert scale. In Section III, the Likert scale ranged from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. Nearly half of participants strongly agreed that their group facilitator was competent (45.4%) compared to 3.9% of participants who strongly disagreed that their group facilitator was competent. Only 34.6% of participants felt

their facilitator incorporated cultural sensitivity into the group, while 3.9% of participants strongly disagreed and 9.2% of participants disagreed that their facilitator was an effective group leader. Only 30.6% of participants strongly agreed that they were comfortable with the dual roles held by the experiential group facilitator. A majority of participants agreed (16.8% strongly agreed; 44.6% agreed) that the facilitator encouraged them to disclose personal information in the experiential group; however, 4.6% of participants strongly disagreed and 20.4% of participants disagreed that they felt comfortable disclosing personal information in front of the facilitator. A small percentage of participants disagreed or were unsure (strongly disagreed 2.4%; disagreed 4.2%; unsure 10.5%) that their personal disclosures in the experiential group did not affect their grade in the group work course. Approximately 25% of participants strongly agreed (4.2%), agreed (14.4%), or were unsure (4.9%) that they felt pressure from the facilitator to disclose personal information in the experiential group. The majority of participants strongly disagreed (53.2%) that they were concerned with the facilitator breaking confidentiality compared to 17.4% of participants who strongly disagreed that they were concerned with other group members breaking confidentiality outside of the experiential group. The majority of participants agreed that they were comfortable with the amount of personal information other group members disclosed (60.7%) while the majority disagreed (50.0%) that they felt pressure from other group members to disclose personal information. The frequency of participant response is presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Frequency Distribution for Section III – Ethical Concerns in the Experiential Group

Items	n	%
15. I felt the group facilitator was competent		
Strongly Disagree	11	3.9
Disagree	16	5.7
Unsure	20	7.1
Agree	107	37.9
Strongly Agree	128	45.4
16. I felt the group facilitator incorporated cultural sensitivity		
Strongly Disagree	6	2.1
Disagree	15	5.3
Unsure	45	15.9
Agree	119	42.0
Strongly Agree	98	34.6
17. The group facilitator was an effective group leader		
Strongly Disagree	11	3.9
Disagree	26	9.2
Unsure	24	8.5
Agree	112	39.4
Strongly Agree	111	39.1

Table 5 Continued

18. I was comfortable with the dual roles held by the facilitator		
Strongly Disagree	12	4.3
Disagree	26	9.4
Unsure	30	10.8
Agree	125	45.0
Strongly Agree	85	30.6
19. The facilitator encouraged students to disclose personal information		
Strongly Disagree	3	1.1
Disagree	67	23.5
Unsure	40	14.0
Agree	127	44.6
Strongly Agree	48	16.8
20. I felt comfortable disclosing information in front of the facilitator		
Strongly Disagree	13	4.6
Disagree	58	20.4
Unsure	25	8.8
Agree	150	52.8
Strongly Agree	38	13.4

Table 5 Continued

21. I understood that my level of personal disclosure did not affect my grade in the course		
Strongly Disagree	7	2.4
Disagree	12	4.2
Unsure	30	10.5
Agree	113	39.4
Strongly Agree	125	43.6
22. I felt pressure from the facilitator to disclose personal information about myself		
Strongly Disagree	92	32.4
Disagree	125	44.0
Unsure	14	4.9
Agree	41	14.4
Strongly Agree	12	4.2
23. I was concerned with the facilitator breaking confidentiality		
Strongly Disagree	150	53.2
Disagree	100	35.5
Unsure	15	5.3
Agree	13	4.6
Strongly Agree	4	1.4

Table 5 Continued

24. I was comfortable with the amount of personal information other group members disclosed		
Strongly Disagree	13	4.6
Disagree	25	8.8
Unsure	28	9.8
Agree	173	60.7
Strongly Agree	46	16.1
25. I felt pressure from other group members to disclose personal information about myself		
Strongly Disagree	75	26.2
Disagree	143	50.0
Unsure	18	6.3
Agree	40	14.0
Strongly Agree	10	3.5
26. I was concerned with other group members breaking confidentiality		
Strongly Disagree	50	17.4
Disagree	141	49.1
Unsure	39	13.6
Agree	44	15.3
Strongly Agree	13	4.5

The *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups* was also utilized to assess master's degree students' personal experiences while participating in the experiential group. Participants indicated their agreement with statements concerning their overall experience in the experiential component using a Likert scale. In Section IV, the Likert scale ranged from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. Over half of the participants (55.4%) agreed that they felt comfortable participating in the experiential group compared to 13.9% who did not feel comfortable participating in the experiential group. The majority of participants also (58.0%) agreed that they were open to disclosing personal information; however, 20% of participants were concerned about being evaluated or criticized by the facilitator while 30% of participants were concerned about being evaluated or criticized by other group members. Approximately 33% of participants (5% strongly disagreed; 14.3% disagreed; 13.6% unsure) disagreed or were unsure that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor. Nearly one-fourth of participants (24.2%) agreed that they suffered from short-term stress due to the experiential group compared to 3.2% of participants who agreed and 1.1% of participants who strongly agreed that they suffered long-term stress due to the experiential group. Although the majority (65.9%) of participants did not feel that the experiential group was psychologically damaging, approximately 10% of participants (6.1% unsure; 3.2% agreed; 0.7% strongly agreed) were unsure or agreed that participation in the experiential group was psychologically damaging. Over half of the participants (55.7%) agreed that the experiential group was challenging. The frequency of participant response is presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Frequency Distribution for Section IV – Student Experience in the Experiential Group

Items	n	%
27. I was comfortable participating in the group		
Strongly Disagree	12	4.3
Disagree	39	13.9
Unsure	17	6.1
Agree	155	55.4
Strongly Agree	57	20.4
28. I was open to disclosing personal information		
Strongly Disagree	9	3.2
Disagree	44	15.7
Unsure	27	9.6
Agree	163	58.0
Strongly Agree	38	13.5
29. I was concerned about being evaluated or criticized by the facilitator		
Strongly Disagree	60	21.4
Disagree	125	44.6
Unsure	33	11.8
Agree	56	20.0
Strongly Agree	6	2.1

Table 6 Continued

30. I was concerned about being evaluated or criticized by other group members		
Strongly Disagree	35	12.4
Disagree	124	44.0
Unsure	24	8.5
Agree	85	30.1
Strongly Agree	14	5.0
31. The group discussed issues that were relevant to my development as a group counselor		
Strongly Disagree	14	5.0
Disagree	40	14.3
Unsure	38	13.6
Agree	139	49.6
Strongly Agree	49	17.5
32. I felt the group was instrumental in my development as a group counselor		
Strongly Disagree	18	6.4
Disagree	31	11.1
Unsure	31	11.1
Agree	116	41.4
Strongly Agree	84	30.0

Table 6 Continued

33. I suffered short-term stress due to the group		
Strongly Disagree	93	33.1
Disagree	89	31.7
Unsure	15	5.3
Agree	68	24.2
Strongly Agree	16	5.7
34. I suffered long-term stress due to the group		
Strongly Disagree	161	57.5
Disagree	98	35.0
Unsure	9	3.2
Agree	9	3.2
Strongly Agree	3	1.1
35. I felt the group was damaging to my psychological health		
Strongly Disagree	184	65.9
Disagree	67	24.0
Unsure	17	6.1
Agree	9	3.2
Strongly Agree	2	0.7
36. I felt the group was challenging		

Table 6 Continued

Strongly Disagree	13	4.6
Disagree	37	13.2
Unsure	22	7.9
Agree	156	55.7
Strongly Agree	52	18.6

Research Questions

Research Question 1

In order to answer research question 1 "What are the current models of group work training in use by U.S. counseling programs," participants were asked to identify the type of leadership and course structure used in their first group work course in their master's degree program. Participants were asked to indicate if the instructor for their group work course also facilitated the experiential component. More than half of the participants indicated that the group work course instructor did facilitate the experiential component (57.9%). The percentage of participants whose instructor did not facilitate the experiential group was 34.2%. The percentage of participants who chose the category "I don't remember" was 7.9%. The frequency of the participant response is listed in Table 7.

Table 7
Frequency of Instructor facilitating Experiential Component

Did the instructor also facilitate the experiential component?	n	%
Yes	191	57.9
No	113	34.2
I do not remember	26	7.9
Total	330	100

The academic role of the instructor of their first group work course of their master's degree program was a characteristic about which participants were asked to respond. The most frequently chosen response by participants indicated that their instructor was a full-time faculty member (36.7%), while 20% of participants indicated that their instructor was an adjunct faculty member. Approximately 3% of participants could not recall the academic role of the instructor (2.7%). Participants who selected the academic role of the instructor as "other" represented 2.4% of the participants and identified the academic role of their group work course instructor as a field faculty advisor, department head, visiting faculty and teachers' assistant. Almost 40% of participants selected the "not applicable" option (38.2%), as instructed by the survey question if their group work course instructor did facilitate the experiential group. The frequency of their responses is listed in Table 8.

Table 8
Frequency Distribution of Academic Role of the Instructor of the Group Work Course

Academic Role of Instructor	n	%
Full-time faculty member	121	36.7
Adjunct faculty member	66	20.0
Other	8	2.4
I do not remember	9	2.7
Not Applicable	126	38.2
Total	330	100

Note. Responses to "other" included the academic role of field faculty advisor, department head, visiting faculty, and teachers' assistant.

How often the instructor of the course observed the experiential group was a characteristic for which participants were asked to respond. Nearly half of the participants indicated that the instructor observed the experiential group every group meeting (47.3%). The percentage of participants whose instructor frequently observed the experiential group was 13.3%, while the percentage of participants whose instructor seldom observed the experiential group was slightly lower with 5.8%. Almost 20% of participants indicated that their instructor never observed the experiential group (17.3%). The percentage of participants who selected "Not Applicable" category was 16.4%. The frequency of participant responses is listed in Table 9.

Table 9
Frequency Distribution of Instructor Observation of Experiential Group

Frequency of Observation by Instructor	n	%
Every group meeting	156	47.3
Frequently	44	13.3
Seldom	19	5.8
Never	57	17.3
Not Applicable	54	16.4
Total	330	100

Participants were asked to indicate if their course instructor was given feedback concerning the progress of the experiential group if they did not facilitate or observe the experiential group. The majority of the participants (60.9%) chose the category "Not Applicable" which corresponds to the percentage of participants who indicated their professors did observe or facilitate the experiential group. Approximately 67% of participants reported that the instructor of the group work course did observe the experiential group at varying frequencies throughout the course. The percentage of participants whose instructor was given feedback regarding the progress of the experiential group was 27.3% compared to 2.4% of participants whose instructor did not receive feedback. The remaining 10% of participants chose the "I don't know" category (9.4 %). The frequency of participant responses is listed in Table 10.

Table 10
Frequency Distribution of Feedback Given to Instructor Regarding Experiential Group

Was the instructor given feedback by the facilitator of the experiential group?	n	%
Yes	90	27.3
No	8	2.4
I don't know	31	9.4
Not Applicable	201	60.9
Total	330	100

The academic role of the facilitator of the experiential group was a characteristic for which participants were asked to respond. Almost one-third of participants indicated that the facilitator of the experiential group was a full-time faculty member (30.6%). The percentage of participants who chose the category "other" to describe the facilitator of the experiential group was 23.9% and offered the following responses: field faculty advisor, community-based practitioner, group members, master's student, therapist from the university counseling center, independent contractor, post-master's degree student, master's student and doctoral student, and counselor from the student affairs office. A large number of participant responses indicated that the group members themselves rotated being the facilitator of the group. The percentage of participants who indicated that an adjunct faculty member facilitated the experiential group was slightly lower (20.9%). Fewer than 10% of participants indicated that a doctoral student facilitated the experiential group (7.3%). The remaining 17.3% of participants chose the "I do not remember" category. The frequency of participant responses is listed in Table 11.

Table 11
Frequency Distribution of Academic Role of the Facilitator of the Experiential Group

Academic Role of Facilitator	n	%
Full-time faculty member	101	30.6
Adjunct faculty member	69	20.9
Doctoral Student	24	7.3
Other	79	23.9
Not Applicable	57	17.3
Total	330	100

Note. Responses to "other" included the academic role of field faculty advisor, community-based practitioner, group members, master's student, therapist from the university counseling center, independent contractor, post-master's degree student, master's student and doctoral student, and counselor from the student affairs office.

Participants were asked to indicate if they knew the facilitator of the experiential group in another role before he/she facilitated the group. Approximately 50% of participants did not know the experiential group facilitator in another role prior to the experiential group (49.1%) compared to 40.3% of participants who did know the experiential group facilitator prior to the experiential group. The remaining 10.6% of participants chose the "Not Applicable" category. The frequency of participant response is listed in Table 12.

Table 12
Knowledge of Experiential Group Facilitator Prior to Membership in Experiential Group

Did you know the facilitator prior to the group?	n	%
Yes	133	40.3
No	162	49.1
Not Applicable	35	10.6
Total	330	100

In what role master's degree students knew the experiential group facilitator prior to the experiential group was a characteristic for which participants were asked to respond. Approximately 30% of participants knew the facilitator as a professor prior to the experiential group (29.4%), while 10% of participants knew the facilitator as a fellow graduate student. Less than 1% of participants knew the facilitator as a therapist outside of the university setting. The percentage of participants who chose the category "other" to describe their knowledge of the facilitator prior to the experiential group was 59.1%. Their responses included an advisor, former colleague, and from university sponsored activities. The remaining participants (0.9%) chose the category "Not Applicable." The frequency of participant response is listed in Table 13.

Table 13
Participants Knowledge of Role of Facilitator of Experiential Group Prior to the Experiential Group

Role of Facilitator	n	%
Professor	97	29.4
Therapist	2	0.6
Graduate Student	33	10.0
Other	195	59.1
Not Applicable	3	0.9
Total	330	100

Participants were asked to identify what types of activities they participated in while in the experiential group. The majority of participants did experience being a group member (85.2%) while in the experiential group compared to only 53.3% who experienced being a group leader. Almost 15% of participants were instructed to develop a character role different from themselves while acting as a group member (14.8%). Only 3% of participants were part of an experiential group in which the group members were actors or others outside the counseling program portraying character roles. The percentage of participants who participated in an outdoor challenge course was 3.9% and who took the group work class as an online course was 2.1%. Approximately 10% of participants reported engaging in none of the previous mentioned activities while enrolled in a masters' level group work course (10.9%). The frequency of participant response is listed in Table 14.

Table 14
Experience While Participating in the Experiential Group

Experience	n	%
I experienced being a group member	281	85.2
I experienced being a group leader	176	53.3
The group members were actors	10	3.0
I was instructed to develop a character role	49	14.8
I participated in an outdoor challenge course	13	3.9
I took the group work course as an online class	7	2.1
None of the above	36	10.9
Total	330	100

Research Question 2

A frequency distribution of participant responses asking if the instructor of the group work course facilitated the experiential component, if the instructor observed the experiential group, and if the instructor was given feedback concerning the progress of the experiential group were used to answer research question 2 "Do the data support the findings of Anderson and Price (2001) in which group work instructors were increasingly vigilant about avoiding dual relationships by not facilitating the experiential group activity?" The frequencies of participant responses have been previously noted in Tables 5, 7, and 8. The results of the frequency distributions indicate that the data do not support the findings of Anderson and Price (2001). In order to determine these percentages, the category "Not Applicable" was deleted from survey

item 9. The frequency distribution of participant responses compared to participant response from the work of Anderson and Price (2001) is listed in Table 15.

Table 15
St.Pierre Data Compared to Data from the Survey Conducted by Anderson and Price (2001)

Item	*St.Pierre* %	*Anderson and Price (2001)* %
The group work instructor facilitated the experiential group	57.9	2.0
The group work instructor did not facilitate the experiential group but did observe it	66.4	33.0
The group work instructor did not facilitate the experiential group but *did* receive feedback from the experiential group facilitator	70.0	41.0
The group work instructor did not facilitate the experiential group but *did not* receive feedback from the experiential group facilitator	6.0	22.0

In direct contrast to Anderson and Price's (2001) findings, the data show that an substantial majority of group work course instructors (57.9%) were both the leader of the experiential group and the instructor of the course. In addition, it was found that the percentage of instructors who did not lead the experiential group but did observe the experiential group is twice the percentage (66.4%) found by Anderson and Price (33%). The current data show that more instructors are receiving feedback from the facilitator of the experiential group (70%) and fewer instructors are not receiving feedback from the facilitator of the experiential group (6%).

Test of Hypotheses

All tests of hypotheses used a conservative alpha level of $p<.01$ to control for an inflated alpha level or Type 1 error rate.

Test of Hypothesis 1

Research hypothesis 1 stated that there are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the strength of concern of master's level students over the dual roles held by the group facilitator.

The null hypothesis was that no difference in the strength of master's level students concern over the dual roles held by the experiential group facilitator based on their academic role of full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, or doctoral student. This was tested with a MANOVA using Wilks' lambda by comparing the participants' responses on item 10 of Section II (independent variable) and items 18 and 20 of Section III and item 29 from Section IV (dependent variable) of *the Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups.* The comparisons of means and standard deviations for each item and statistical results for Hypothesis 1 are presented in Table 16. The results of the MANOVA revealed no significant differences in the strength of master's level students concern regarding the dual relationships of the group facilitator based on the facilitator's academic role as full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, or doctoral student, Wilks' $\Lambda = .927$, $F(12,698)=1.702$, $p>.0l$, $\eta 2=.025$. Although there were no significant differences, mean scores for item 18 "I was comfortable with the dual roles of the facilitator" were moderately high in all areas, indicating students were comfortable overall with the dual relationships held by all facilitators of the experiential group regardless of the facilitator's academic role.

Table 16
Means, Standard Deviations, and Statistical Results for Hypothesis 1

	n	*M*	*SD*	Multivariate *F*	*p*	*ES*
				1.702	.062	.025
18. I was comfortable with the dual roles of the facilitator						
Full-time Faculty Member	98	4.04	1.074			
Adjunct Faculty Member	64	3.95	1.119			
Doctoral Student	23	4.00	.522			
Other	36	3.97	1.055			
Not Applicable	50	3.34	1.171			
20. I felt comfortable disclosing personal information in front of the facilitator						
Full-time Faculty Member	98	3.51	1.115			
Adjunct Faculty Member	64	3.58	1.124			
Doctoral Student	23	3.74	.915			
Other	36	3.58	.966			
Not Applicable	50	3.28	1.144			
29. I was concerned about being criticized by the facilitator						
Full-time Faculty Member	98	2.39	1.118			
Adjunct Faculty Member	64	2.47	1.221			

Table 16 Continued

Doctoral Student	23	2.04	.878
Other	36	2.25	.996
Not Applicable	50	2.50	1.055

Test of Hypothesis 2

Research hypothesis 2 stated there are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the strength of concern of master's level students over issues of confidentiality.

The null hypothesis anticipated no difference between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student and the strength of masters' level students concerns over issues of confidentiality. This was tested with a MANOVA using Wilks' lambda by comparing the participants' responses on item 10 of Section II (independent variable) and items 23, 24, 25 and 26 of Section III and item 28 from Section IV (dependent variable) of *the Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups.* The comparisons of means and standard deviations for each item and statistical results for Hypothesis 2 are presented in Table 17. The results of the MANOVA revealed no significant differences in the strength of master's level students concern regarding issue of confidentiality based on the facilitator's academic role as full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, or doctoral student, Wilks' Λ = .904, $F(20,879)=1.353$, $p>.0l$, $\eta 2=.025$. Although there were no significant differences, mean scores for Item 26 "I was concerned with other group

members breaking confidentiality" were moderately higher than mean scores for Item 23 "I was concerned with the facilitator breaking confidentiality," indicating that participants were more concerned with confidentiality being broken by other group members than the facilitator of the experiential group regardless of the academic role of the facilitator.

Table 17
Means, Standard Deviations, and Statistical Results for Hypothesis 2

				Multivariate		
	n	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	*ES*
				1.353	.138	.025
23. I was concerned with the facilitator breaking confidentiality						
Full-time Faculty Member	98	1.55	.826			
Adjunct Faculty Member	64	1.56	.794			
Doctoral Student	24	1.50	.590			
Other	37	1.84	1.118			
Not Applicable	51	1.90	.985			
24. I was comfortable with the amount of personal information disclosed by group members						
Full-time Faculty Member	98	3.90	.947			
Adjunct Faculty Member	64	3.73	.913			
Doctoral Student	24	3.79	.977			
Other	37	3.68	.944			

Table 17 Continued

Not Applicable	51	3.59	1.117
25. I felt pressure from other group members to disclose personal information			
Full-time Faculty Member	98	2.05	1.019
Adjunct Faculty Member	64	2.30	1.150
Doctoral Student	24	2.29	.999
Other	37	2.24	1.090
Not Applicable	51	2.22	1.205
26. I was concerned with other group members breaking confidentiality			
Full-time Faculty Member	98	2.26	.956
Adjunct Faculty Member	64	2.56	1.194
Doctoral Student	24	1.87	.850
Other	37	2.51	1.070
Not Applicable	51	2.63	1.199
28. I was open to disclosing personal information			
Full-time Faculty Member	98	3.67	.993
Adjunct Faculty Member	64	3.61	1.078
Doctoral Student	24	3.92	.654

Table 17 Continued

Other	37	3.59	.985
Not Applicable	51	3.49	1.120

Test of Hypothesis 3

Research hypothesis 3 stated that master's level students who believe that their facilitator was competent will report stronger feelings of comfort participating in the experiential group than master's degree students who believe that their facilitator was incompetent.

The null hypothesis indicated no differences between master's degree students' feeling of comfort participating in the experiential group and the strength of their belief that the facilitator was competent. This was tested with an ANOVA by comparing the participants' responses on item 15 of Section III (independent variable) and item 27 of Section IV (dependent variable) of *the Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups.* On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree)-5 (strongly agree), respondents disagreed that their experiential group facilitator was competent with a rating within the 1-2 range (n=26), were unsure if their experiential group facilitator was competent (n=19), and agreed that their experiential group facilitator was competent with a rating with the 4-5 range (n=231). The results of the ANOVA revealed significant differences between master's level students' feeling of comfort participating in the experiential group and the strength of their belief that the facilitator was competent. The means and standard deviations for each item and statistical results for Hypothesis 3 are presented in Table 18. The results indicated that master's level students are more comfortable participating in the experiential group when they believe that the facilitator is competent to lead the

experiential group. The strength of master's level students' comfort level and the belief that their facilitator was competent to lead the experiential group was moderately strong, as indicated by a moderately strong effect size of *ES*=.132, which accounted for 13% of the variance in participant responses regarding comfort level.

Table 18
Means, Standard Deviations, and Statistical Results for Hypothesis 3

	n	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	*ES*
				10.263	<.000	.132
15. I felt the facilitator was competent						
Strongly Disagree	10	3.90	1.197			
Disagree	16	2.50	1.095			
Unsure	19	3.58	.902			
Agree	105	3.57	1.055			
Strongly Agree	126	4.06	.932			

Test of Hypothesis 4

Research hypothesis 4 stated there are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the ethical concerns of master's level students.

The null hypothesis was that of no difference between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the ethical concerns

of master's level students. This was tested with a MANOVA using Wilks' lambda by comparing the participants' responses on item 10 of Section II (independent variable) and items 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26 of Section III (dependent variable) of *the Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups.* The comparisons of means and standard deviations for each item and statistical results for Hypothesis 4 are presented in Table 19. The results of the MANOVA revealed no significant differences in the strength of master's level students' concern of ethical issues based on the facilitator's academic status as full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, or doctoral student, Wilks' Λ = .777, $F(48,961)=1.359$, $p>.0l$, $\eta 2=.061$. Although no significant differences were found, mean scores for items 15 pertaining to the competence of the facilitator and item 18 pertaining to the dual roles of the facilitator were all moderately high, indicating a low level of concern by master's degree students regarding the ethical issues of facilitator competence and the dual roles held by the facilitator regardless of the academic status of the facilitator of the experiential group. In addition, the mean scores for item 21 pertaining to understanding that the level of personal disclosure does not affect the course grade were moderately high, indicating that regardless of the academic status of the facilitator, master's degree students understood that their level of self disclosure in the experiential group did not affect their grade in the group work course.

Table 19
Means, Standard Deviations, and Statistical Results for Hypothesis 4

				Multivariate		
	n	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	*ES*
				1.407	.024	.063
15. I felt the facilitator was competent						
Full-time Faculty Member	97	4.43	.990			
Adjunct Faculty Member	62	4.27	.926			
Doctoral Student	23	3.91	.949			
Other	37	4.03	1.166			
Not Applicable	46	3.65	1.178			
16. I felt the facilitator incorporated cultural sensitivity						
Full-time Faculty Member	97	4.09	1.052			
Adjunct Faculty Member	62	4.18	.967			
Doctoral Student	23	3.96	.767			
Other	37	4.00	1.130			
Not Applicable	46	3.76	.705			
17. The facilitator was an effective leader						
Full-time Faculty Member	97	4.24	1.068			
Adjunct Faculty Member	62	4.16	1.011			
Doctoral Student	23	3.70	1.105			
Other	37	3.86	1.228			

Table 19 Continued

Not Applicable	46	3.61	1.043
18. I was comfortable with the dual roles held by the facilitator			
Full-time Faculty Member	97	4.03	1.075
Adjunct Faculty Member	62	3.95	1.137
Doctoral Student	23	4.00	.522
Other	37	3.95	1.026
Not Applicable	46	3.35	1.159
19. The facilitator encouraged students to disclosed personal information			
Full-time Faculty Member	97	3.61	1.076
Adjunct Faculty Member	62	3.47	1.170
Doctoral Student	23	3.43	1.037
Other	37	3.54	1.095
Not Applicable	46	3.50	.913
20. I felt comfortable disclosing personal information in front of the facilitator			
Full-time Faculty Member	97	3.53	1.110
Adjunct Faculty Member	62	3.60	1.123
Doctoral Student	23	3.74	.915
Other	37	3.51	1.070

Table 19 Continued

Not Applicable	46	3.33	1.117
21. I understood my level of personal disclosure did not affect my grade			
Full-time Faculty Member	97	4.22	.960
Adjunct Faculty Member	62	4.21	.852
Doctoral Student	23	4.39	.499
Other	37	4.24	.683
Not Applicable	46	4.04	1.095
22. I felt pressure from the facilitator to disclose personal information			
Full-time Faculty Member	97	2.15	1.102
Adjunct Faculty Member	62	2.02	1.079
Doctoral Student	23	1.83	.717
Other	37	2.08	1.164
Not Applicable	46	2.14	1.138
23. I was concerned with the facilitator breaking confidentiality			
Full-time Faculty Member	97	1.54	.830
Adjunct Faculty Member	62	1.60	.819
Doctoral Student	23	1.48	.593
Other	37	1.73	.990

Table 19 Continued

Not Applicable	46	1.96	1.010
24. I was comfortable with the amount of personal information other group members disclosed			
Full-time Faculty Member	97	3.92	.898
Adjunct Faculty Member	62	3.74	.922
Doctoral Student	23	3.78	.998
Other	37	3.65	.978
Not Applicable	46	3.57	1.128
25. I felt pressure from other group members to disclose personal information			
Full-time Faculty Member	97	2.07	1.013
Adjunct Faculty Member	62	2.23	1.093
Doctoral Student	23	2.22	.951
Other	37	2.24	1.090
Not Applicable	46	2.26	1.255
26. I was concerned with other group members breaking confidentiality			
Full-time Faculty Member	97	2.27	.952
Adjunct Faculty Member	62	2.55	1.197
Doctoral Student	23	1.87	.869

Table 19 Continued

Other	37	2.57	1.094
Not Applicable	46	2.70	1.227

Test of Hypothesis 5

Research hypothesis 5 stated master's level students who were not concerned with ethical issues in the experiential group will report that the experiential group was more instrumental in their development as a group counselor than master's level students who were concerned with ethical issues in the experiential group.

The null hypothesis was that of no difference in master's level students' belief that their experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor between master's level students who were concerned with ethical issues in the experiential group and those who were not concerned with ethical issues in the experiential group. This was tested with a MANOVA using Wilks' lambda by comparing the participants' responses on items 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26 of Section III (dependent variables) and item 32 of Section IV (independent variable) of *the Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups.* The comparisons of means and standard deviations for each item and statistical results for Hypothesis 5 are presented in Table 20. The results of the MANOVA did reveal a significant difference in the strength of master's level students' belief that their experiential group was instrumental in the development as a group counselor and master's level

students who were and were not concerned with ethical issues in the experiential group, Wilks' Λ = .635, $F(24,492)=5.234$, $p<.0l$, $\eta 2=.203$.

Table 20
MANOVA Results for Hypothesis 5

				Multivariate		
	n	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	*ES*
				5.234	< .000	.203
15. I felt the facilitator was competent						
Disagree	46	3.33	1.156			
Agree	186	4.38	.906			
Unsure	28	4.11	.832			
16. I felt the facilitator incorporated cultural sensitivity						
Disagree	46	3.39	.954			
Agree	186	4.25	.867			
Unsure	28	3.68	1.090			
17. The facilitator was an effective leader						
Disagree	46	3.02	1.183			
Agree	186	4.34	.876			
Unsure	28	3.57	1.034			

Table 20 Continued

18. I was comfortable with the dual roles of the facilitator			
Disagree	46	3.11	1.215
Agree	186	4.17	.929
Unsure	28	3.18	.983
19. The facilitator encouraged students to disclose personal information			
Disagree	46	3.46	1.110
Agree	186	3.55	1.081
Unsure	28	3.64	.870
20. I felt comfortable disclosing personal information in front of the facilitator			
Disagree	46	2.80	1.276
Agree	186	3.79	.932
Unsure	28	3.11	.994
21. I understood that my level of personal disclosure did not affect my grade in the course			
Disagree	46	3.61	1.145
Agree	186	4.42	.747
Unsure	28	3.82	.819

Table 20 Co ntinued

22. I felt pressure from the facilitator to disclose personal information			
Disagree	46	2.93	1.272
Agree	186	1.85	.984
Unsure	28	2.71	1.084
23. I was concerned with the facilitator breaking confidentiality			
Disagree	46	2.13	1.166
Agree	186	1.47	.729
Unsure	28	2.07	.858
24. I was comfortable with the amount of personal information other members disclosed			
Disagree	46	3.28	1.148
Agree	186	3.94	.861
Unsure	28	3.50	.962
25. I felt pressure from group members to disclose personal information			
Disagree	46	2.63	1.271
Agree	186	1.99	.978
Unsure	28	2.61	1.100

Table 20 Continued

26. I was concerned with other group members breaking confidentiality			
Disagree	46	2.93	1.306
Agree	186	2.22	.974
Unsure	28	2.89	1.133

Based on the significant results of the MANOVA, an ANOVA was conducted on each dependent variable as a follow-up test. The results of the ANOVA analyses are presented in Table 21. Twelve ANOVA procedures were conducted which resulted in eleven significant differences. It is important to note that the effect sizes (*ES*) for all the significant dependent variables were large, indicating a strong relationship to the belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor. The dependent variable item 15 pertaining to the competence of the facilitator (*ES* = .155), item 16 pertaining to the cultural sensitivity of the facilitator (*ES* = .156), item 17 pertaining to the effectiveness of the facilitator as a group leader (*ES* = .232), item 18 pertaining to the comfort level of students regarding the dual roles of the facilitator (*ES* = .224), item 20 pertaining to the comfort level of disclosing personal information in front of the facilitator (*ES* = .150), item 21 pertaining to the understanding that personal disclosure did not affect the course grade (*ES* = .148), item 22 pertaining to pressure from the facilitator to disclose personal information (*ES* = .175), item 23 pertaining to concern that the facilitator would break confidentiality (*ES* = .108), item 24 pertaining to being comfortable with the amount of personal information disclosed by group

members (*ES* = .129), item 25 pertaining to pressure from group members to disclose personal information (*ES* = .098), and item 26 pertaining to concern that group members would break confidentiality (*ES* = .112) contributed to the significant *F*. Participants who agreed that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor rated these items higher in agreement than participants who did not believe the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor. The only dependent variable that did not contribute to the significant *F* was item 19 "The facilitator encouraged students to disclose personal information." The relationship between master's level student's belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor and all significant

Table 21
ANOVA Results for Follow-Up Tests on Hypothesis 5

Items	*F*	*p*	*ES*
15. I felt the facilitator was competent	12.386	<.000	.155
16. I felt the facilitator incorporated cultural sensitivity	12.580	<.000	.156
17. The facilitator was an effective group leader	20.494	<.000	.232
18. I was comfortable with the dual roles of the facilitator	18.006	<.000	.224
19. The facilitator encourage students to disclose personal information	1.811	.127	.026
20. I felt comfortable disclosing personal information in front of the facilitator	11.971	<.000	.150
21. I understood that my level of personal disclosure not affect my grade in the course	11.985	<.000	.148
22. I felt pressure from the facilitator to disclose personal information	14.493	<.000	.175
23. I was concerned with the facilitator breaking confidentiality	8.139	<.000	.108
24. I was comfortable with the amount of personal information disclosed by group members	10.134	<.000	.129
25. I felt pressure from group members to disclose personal information	7.489	<.000	.098
26. I was concerned with group members breaking confidentiality	8.667	<.000	.112

Test of Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 stated there are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the comfort level experienced by master's level students when participating in the experiential group.

The null hypothesis was that of no difference in strength of comfort level of master's level students' between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student. This was tested with an ANOVA by comparing the participants' responses on item 10 of Section II (independent variable) and item 27 of Section IV (dependent variable). The results of the ANOVA revealed no significant differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the comfort level experienced by master's level students when participating in the experiential group. The means and standard deviations for each item and statistical results for Hypothesis 6 are presented in Table 22. Although no significant differences were found between the academic status of the facilitator, the mean scores for facilitators who were full-time faculty members and doctoral students were slightly higher than mean scores for facilitators who were adjunct faculty members, indicating students were more comfortable participating in experiential groups when the facilitator was a full-time faculty member or doctoral student than an adjunct faculty member.

Table 22
Means, Standard Deviations, and Statistical Results for Hypothesis 6

	n	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	*ES*
				2.356	.054	.033
10. Academic role of facilitator						
Full-time Faculty Member	99	3.92	.995			
Adjunct Faculty Member	66	3.50	1.206			
Doctoral Student	24	4.04	.806			
Other	38	3.68	1.016			
Not Applicable	53	3.58	1.167			

Test of Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 stated there are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on master's level students' experience of the experiential group.

The null hypothesis was that of no difference in strength of master's level students' experience of the experiential group between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student. This was tested with a MANOVA using Wilks' lambda by comparing the participants' responses on item 10 of Section II (independent variable) and items 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36 of Section IV (dependent variable) of *the Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups.* The comparisons of means and standard deviations for each item and statistical results for Hypothesis 4 are presented in Table 23. The results of the MANOVA

revealed no significant difference in the strength of master's level students' experience of the experiential group between experiential groups facilitated by full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and a doctoral student, Wilks' Λ = .847, $F(40,976)=1.092$, $p>.0l$, $\eta 2=.041$. Although no significant differences were found, the mean scores of item 33 pertaining to suffering short-term stress, item 34 pertaining to suffering long-term stress, and item 35 pertaining to feeling the experiential group was damaging to the student's psychological health were higher for groups facilitated by adjunct faculty members and others, indicating that students felt slightly greater stress when participating in an experiential group facilitated by a adjunct faculty member or other.

Table 23
Means, Standard Deviations, and Statistical Results for Hypothesis 7

				Multivariate		
	n	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	*ES*
				1.127	.255	.042
27. I was comfortable participating						
Full-time Faculty Member	95	3.93	.970			
Adjunct Faculty Member	65	3.51	1.214			
Doctoral Student	23	4.00	.798			
Other	36	3.67	1.042			
Not Applicable	52	3.58	1.177			
28. I was open to disclosing personal information						

Table 23 Continued

Full-time Faculty Member	95	3.74	.936
Adjunct Faculty Member	65	3.57	1.089
Doctoral Student	23	3.91	.688
Other	36	3.58	.996
Not Applicable	52	3.50	1.111
29. I was concerned about being criticized by the facilitator			
Full-time Faculty Member	95	2.38	1.093
Adjunct Faculty Member	65	2.45	1.225
Doctoral Student	23	2.04	.878
Other	36	2.25	.996
Not Applicable	52	2.44	1.056
30. I was concerned about being criticized by group members			
Full-time Faculty Member	95	2.77	1.207
Adjunct Faculty Member	65	2.71	1.208
Doctoral Student	23	2.30	1.020
Other	36	2.67	1.095
Not Applicable	52	2.87	1.172
31. The group discussed issue that were relevant to my development			

Table 23 Continued

as a group counselor			
Full-time Faculty Member	95	3.81	1.055
Adjunct Faculty Member	65	3.65	1.124
Doctoral Student	23	3.04	1.107
Other	36	3.69	.980
Not Applicable	52	3.37	1.067
32. I felt the group was instrumental in my development as a group counselor			
Full-time Faculty Member	95	4.00	1.000
Adjunct Faculty Member	65	3.69	1.274
Doctoral Student	23	3.43	1.161
Other	36	3.94	1.120
Not Applicable	52	3.54	1.320
33. I suffered short-term stress			
Full-time Faculty Member	95	2.27	1.241
Adjunct Faculty Member	65	2.57	1.457
Doctoral Student	23	1.96	1.147
Other	36	2.50	1.254
Not Applicable	52	2.50	1.407

Table 23 Continued

34. I suffered long-term stress			
Full-time Faculty Member	95	1.46	.755
Adjunct Faculty Member	65	1.69	.900
Doctoral Student	23	1.43	.590
Other	36	1.64	.762
Not Applicable	52	1.54	.874
35. I felt the group was damaging to my psychological health			
Full-time Faculty Member	95	1.38	.746
Adjunct Faculty Member	65	1.54	.831
Doctoral Student	23	1.35	.573
Other	36	1.61	.838
Not Applicable	52	1.60	.955
36. I felt the group was challenging			
Full-time Faculty Member	95	3.76	1.049
Adjunct Faculty Member	65	3.82	1.014
Doctoral Student	23	3.26	1.322
Other	36	3.75	1.079
Not Applicable	52	3.67	.964

Item 37 of the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups* invited participants to share their comments and personal experiences in regard to participating in the experiential group. Of the 330 participants who completed the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups*, 38% chose to respond. The responses were analyzed resulting in the identification of 3 major themes in addition to 3 sub-themes. The themes are listed in Table 24.

The most prominent theme that emerged was an overall negative experience from participating in the experiential group (45%). Within this theme, 3 sub-themes emerged which categorized why participants described their experience as negative. The 3 sub –themes included ethical concerns, ineffectiveness of experiential group, and feelings of stress/anxiety. Within the 45% of participants who described their overall experience in the experiential group as negative, 67% of participants reported it was due to ethical concerns. Nine participants believed the facilitator of the experiential group was incompetent to lead the group. This corresponds with the frequency data from Item 15 in Table 5 which indicated that 5.7% of all participants strongly disagreed or disagreed that the facilitator was competent to lead the group. An additional 9 participants felt they were uncomfortable with the amount of personal information disclosed by other group members. This corresponds with the frequency data from Item 24 which indicated that 8.8% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed that they felt comfortable with the amount of personal information disclosed by group members. Other noteworthy ethical concerns reported by participants included: being uncomfortable disclosing personal information (4 participants), being uncomfortable with peer dual relationships (4 participants), being uncomfortable with the dual relationship of the facilitator (3 participants), believing the

facilitator was ineffective as a group leader (3 participants) and not understanding that personal disclosure affected his/her grade in the course (3 participants). Twenty percent of participants, who indicated their overall experiential group experience was negative, indicated it was due to feelings of stress and/or anxiety. Three participants indicated they suffered long-term stress due to the experiential group, corresponding to Item 34 in Table 6 stating that 3.2% of participants suffered long-term stress due to the experiential group. One participant stated, "I still have moments where I feel physically sick and shaky from the experience." Another student described his/her experience as "Very stressful, I still ruminate sometimes 2 years later." The remaining 13% of participants who shared they had a negative experience indicated it was due to the ineffectiveness of the experiential group to teach group counseling skills.

The next theme that emerged was those participants who had an overall positive experience in the experiential group (40%). Participant responses included "Being part of the experiential group gave me great insight into the group process" and "I believe an experiential component is critical to successful training in group work." The final theme that emerged was those participants who had an initial negative experience but who were able to see the benefits of the experience (15%). This is exemplified by one participant who stated, "I think being part of an experiential group was imperative to my success as a group leader; however, part of that was being vulnerable and experiencing emotional distress which is hard to do."

Table 24
Themes of Open-Ended Question Inviting Comment on Personal Experience in the Experiential Group

Theme	n	%
Negative experience	56	45.0
Ethical concerns	38	67.0
Feelings of stress/anxiety	11	20.0
Ineffectiveness of exp. group	7	13.0
Positive experience	49	40.0
Negative experience with benefits of exp. group	19	15.0

Item 38 invited participants to share their recommendations for improving the experiential component in the group work course. Of the 331 participants who completed the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups*, 38% chose to respond. The responses were analyzed resulting in the identification of 26 themes. The themes are listed in Table 25.

Table 25
Themes of Open-Ended Question Seeking Recommendations to Improve Experiential Group Component

Theme	n	%
Group members should assume character roles	9	9.0%
Group member self-disclosure should be limited	9	9.0%
Group members should not be fellow peers	8	8.0%

Table 25 Continued

Students should participate in a therapy group of their choosing not affiliated with the counseling program	8	8.0%
Students should be screened by faculty for readiness before being allowed to participate in experiential group	6	6.0%
The instructor of the group work course and the facilitator of the experiential group should be two different individuals	6	6.0%
The facilitator of the experiential group should be competent and have understanding of how to stop inappropriate group member behavior	6	6.0%
The facilitator of the experiential group should not be a faculty member	6	6.0%
If the group members are the facilitators of the experiential group, the instructor should be actively involved	5	5.0%
More time should be allowed to process individual group member reactions	4	4.0%
Group work should consist of more than one course	4	4.0%
The experiential groups should be longer in length and more intense	4	4.0%
The facilitator of the experiential group should thoroughly discuss expectations, confidentiality, and the purpose of the group	4	4.0%
The group work course should not be taken in the beginning of the program	3	3.0%
Additional knowledge and experience in group leadership	3	3.0%
The experiential group should consist of a “small” number of students	3	3.0%

Table 25 Continued

The facilitator of the group should not change weekly	3	3.0%
Additional knowledge of how to facilitate theme-oriented groups such as grief, sexuality, and addiction groups	2	2.0%
The experiential group facilitator should be culturally sensitive	1	1.0%
Students should be required to observe a therapy group in the community	1	1.0%
Online group work course members should have to meet at least once to practice skills as a live group	1	1.0%
The instructor of the course should be able to observe the experiential group and provide live feedback and supervision	1	1.0%
Students should be required to keep a journal	1	1.0%
Increased discussion on the roles group members assumed	1	1.0%
The experiential group should not be lengthy in time and should be less intensive	1	1.0%

SUMMARY

The results of the study were presented in this chapter. The first research hypothesis that anticipated differences in the strength of concern of master's level students regarding the dual roles held by the experiential group facilitator and experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student was not supported in this study. No significant differences were found between these two groups.

The second research hypothesis that anticipated differences in the strength of concern of master's level students regarding issues of confidentiality and experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student was not supported in this study. No significant differences were found between these two groups.

The third research hypothesis that anticipated differences in strength of level of comfort participating in the experiential group between master's level students who believed their experiential group facilitator was competent and master's level students who believed their experiential group facilitator was not competent was supported in this study. The results of the univariate analysis revealed significant differences between master's level students who believed their experiential group facilitator was competent and master's level students who believed their experiential group facilitator was not competent. Master's level students who believed their experiential group facilitator was competent had a stronger level of comfort participating in the experiential group. The relationship between master's level student's comfort level and their belief that their experiential group facilitator was competent was strong, as indicated by an effect size of .132.

The fourth research hypothesis that anticipated differences in strength of ethical concerns of master's level students regarding the experiential group and experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student was not supported in this study. No significant differences were found between these two groups.

The fifth research hypothesis that anticipated differences in the strength of the belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor between master's level students who were not concerned with ethical issues in the experiential group and

master's level students who were concerned with ethical issues in the experiential group was supported in this study. The results of the univariate analysis revealed significant differences between master's level students who believed the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor and master's level students who did not believe the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor. Master's level students who believed that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor had fewer ethical concerns regarding the experiential group. The effect sizes of all significant dependent variables were large, ranging from .098 to .232, which indicated a strong relationship between master's level student's ethical concerns and their belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor.

The sixth research hypothesis that anticipated differences in strength of the comfort level experienced by master's level students when participating in the experiential group and experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student was not supported in this study. No significant differences were found between these two groups.

The seventh research hypothesis that anticipated differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on master's level students' experience of the experiential group was not supported in this study. The results of the MANOVA analysis revealed no significant differences in the personal experiences of master's level students from participation in the experiential group and the academic status (full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, doctoral student) of the facilitator of the experiential group.

The results are discussed in Chapter 5. The relationship between the findings of this study and existing research is presented. Information pertaining to limitations of this current study and implications for future research are presented.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

A summary and discussion of the findings from this study are presented in Chapter Five. The results of the study are discussed in terms of prior research and limitations. Implications of the study for counselor educators are provided. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine the current best practices for how master's level counseling programs are structuring the experiential component of the group work course and to explore how these different structures impact student experience. Specifically, this study examined several components that the literature has suggested contribute to student experience such as ethical concerns of dual roles (Anderson & Price, 2001), confidentiality (Davenport, 2004), and personal disclosure (Fall & Levitov, 2002) in the experiential group.

Discussions of Findings for Research Question 1

In order to answer research question 1 "What are the current models of group work training in use by U.S. counseling programs," participants were asked to identify the type of leadership and course structure used in their first group work course in their master's degree program. There have been continued ethical concerns over a full-time faculty member facilitating the experiential group, mainly in regards to the dual roles of the facilitator (Davenport, 2004; Furr & Barrett, 2000; Goodrich, 2009). For example, students may feel apprehensive about self disclosing in front of the facilitator when he/she is a full-time faculty member and them having him/her again as an instructor in another course (Furr & Barrett, 2000;

Goodrich, 2009). In addition, full-time faculty members may have already formed a personal bond or relationship with some students in the experiential group and they may be concerned with perceived favoritism by other students (Pistole et al., 2008). Regardless of the inherent ethical concerns, the majority of participants (57.9%) responded that their group work course instructor did facilitate the experiential component and 59% of those participants also indicated that the instructor was a full-time faculty member. A possible explanation for these findings relates to the lack of availability of adjunct professors or outside professionals to lead the experiential group. It may be difficult for some counseling programs to allocate funds or find the resources to have an individual who is not a full-time faculty member facilitate the experiential group. Despite the ethical concerns, one advantage to the course instructor both facilitating the experiential group and grading the experience is that the course instructor is able to directly see the application of skills learned in the didactic portion of the course in the experiential component. If the course instructor notices students are struggling with a particular skill, he or she has the opportunity to re-direct students in the didactic portion. In addition, students may feel more comfortable and safe in the experiential group when the facilitator is a full-time faculty member because they have already developed a rapport with him/her and are knowledgeable of his/her competence.

Almost half of participants (49.1%) reported that they did not know the experiential group facilitator prior to the experiential group. Those participants who did know the facilitator prior to the experiential group, most commonly knew the individual in a role outside of the counseling department such as an advisor, former colleague, or from university sponsored activities. The vast majority of participants indicated that they did experience being a group

member (85.2%) and a group leader (53.3%) in the experiential group. This is in compliance with the requirements of ASGW (2000) and CACREP (2009) that state students must experience being a group member for a minimum of 10 hours in a small group activity. However, the results also indicated that almost half of all counseling students in the sample are not obtaining experience as a group leader in their group work course. Therefore, if counselors are asked to lead groups in the workplace, many counselors will have to seek out additional training in order to learn group leadership skills.

The results of this study also indicated that a small percentage of counseling students (17.8%) are being asked to limit self-disclosure in the experiential group through the use of innovative models such as using actors as group members (3.0%) as advocated by Fall and Levitov (2002) or by being instructed to develop a character role while acting as a group member (14.8%) as suggested by the *Simulated Group Counseling Model* (Romano, 1999). These statistics are noteworthy because little current data are found in the counseling literature regarding how many programs nationwide are implementing these types of group work models.

Discussions of Findings for Research Question 2

A frequency distribution of participant responses asking if the instructor of the group work course facilitated the experiential component, if the instructor observed the experiential group, and if the instructor was given feedback concerning the progress of the experiential group were used to answer research question 2 "Do the data support the findings of Anderson and Price (2001) in which group work instructors were increasingly vigilant about avoiding dual relationships by not facilitating the experiential group activity?"

In direct contrast to Anderson and Price's (2001) findings, the data show that a majority of group work course instructors (57.9%) were both the leader of the experiential group and the instructor of the course, compared to 2% as found by Anderson and Price. This is a substantial difference in findings between Anderson and Price's study (2001) and the current study which were conducted nine years apart. In addition, it was found that the percentage of instructors who did not lead the experiential group but did observe the experiential group is twice the percentage (66.4%) found by Anderson and Price (33%). Anderson and Price's research also found that when the group work instructor did not facilitate the experiential group, 41% of instructors did receive feedback from the facilitator of the experiential group regarding the group's progress while 22% of instructors did not receive feedback from the facilitator of the experiential group. The current data show that more instructors are receiving feedback from the facilitator of the experiential group (70%) and fewer instructors are not receiving feedback from the facilitator of the experiential group (6%).

Overall, the results of this study did not support the work of Anderson and Price (2001) who found that instructors were becoming more vigilant about avoiding dual relationships. One possible explanation for these results is that counselor educators are less concerned with the ethical issue of dual relationships due to the change in the admonition that all dual relationships are inappropriate or bad. In the past decade, research has been completed that suggests that group members may benefit from multiple relationships with their experiential group facilitator (Davenport, 2004; Kottler, 2004). Kottler (2004) has argued that dual relationships are not always harmful and can add richness to the group experience. Davenport (2004) has suggested that students can benefit from the knowledge that the facilitator is a competent instructor based

on their previous relationship with him or her as a faculty member. Another possible explanation for the difference in results between the data from this study and Anderson and Price's (2001) study relates to the sample population. Anderson and Price (2001) surveyed 99 graduate level students who were currently enrolled in the group work course in seven counseling programs in the Midwestern, Northeastern, and Southern United States. Because participants in this study were currently enrolled in a group work course, their recollection of the formatting of the course was very recent and assumedly easy to recall. In this study, the 330 participants were recruited from the American Counseling Association's (ACA) membership national database and had taken the group work course in the past five years. Due to a larger sampling size, the sampling error was decreased which resulted in a more representative sample. Although this study included a more nationally representative population of participants, the information gathered was based on a past experience that may have been harder for participants to accurately recall.

Discussions of Findings for Research Hypothesis 1

Research hypothesis 1 stated that there are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the strength of concern of master's level students over the dual roles held by the group facilitator. The results of this study did not support this hypothesis. Although Davenport (2004) argued that care should be taken by counseling programs when assigning a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, or doctoral student to facilitate the experiential group due to inherent ethical concerns, the results of this study indicated students were comfortable overall with the dual relationships held by all facilitators of the experiential group regardless of the facilitator's

academic status. One explanation for these results, which was previously mentioned in the discussion of the findings of research question 2, is the decrease in concern regarding the ethical issue of dual relationships due to the change in the admonition that all dual relationships are inappropriate or bad. Students may agree that multiple professional relationships with a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, or doctoral student are beneficial and enhance the group experience.

Discussions of Findings for Research Hypothesis 2

Research hypothesis 2 stated there are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the strength of concern of master's level students over issues of confidentiality. The results of the study revealed no significant differences between the two groups. Although there were no significant differences, mean scores for item 26 "I was concerned with other group members breaking confidentiality" were moderately higher than mean scores for item 23 "I was concerned with the facilitator breaking confidentiality," (M=1.87-2.63 vs M=1.50-1.90) indicating that participants were more concerned with confidentiality being broken by other group members than the facilitator of the experiential group regardless of the academic status of the facilitator. The findings of this study uphold the results of a study completed by Pistole et al. (2008), in which participants sought to limit personal disclosure in the experiential group due to concerns that other group members may share confidential information with other students in their program, exposing personal issues or weaknesses to future colleagues. Overall, the results of this study indicated that students do not limit their personal disclosure due to confidentiality concerns based on the academic status of the facilitator of the experiential group.

Discussions of Findings for Research Hypothesis 3

Research hypothesis 3 stated that master's level students who believe that their facilitator was competent will report stronger feelings of comfort participating in the experiential group than master's degree students who do not believe that their facilitator was competent. The results of the study revealed significant differences between the two groups. The effect size, using ANOVA, was *ES* =.132, indicating a moderate effect. It has been noted in the counseling literature that participating in the experiential group can be uncomfortable for some counseling students (Anderson & Price, 2001; Davenport, 2002; Hall et al., 1999); however, the reason for students being uncomfortable has not been fully researched and therefore counselor educators have not been able to identify ways to increase student comfort level in the experiential group. The results of this study indicated that students were more uncomfortable participating in the experiential group when they had ethical concerns that their facilitator was not competent to lead the group. These results concur with the results of an informal study done by Davenport (2004) in which students reported feeling uncomfortable and having a negative experience in the experiential group directly due to concern over the competency of their facilitator. An explanation for this result is that when students do not believe their facilitator is competent to lead the group, they may limit their participation as a group member, therefore decreasing the effectiveness of the group experience and their comfort level.

Discussions of Findings for Research Hypothesis 4

Research hypothesis 4 stated there are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the ethical concerns of master's level students. The results of this study did not support this hypothesis.

Although no significant differences were found, mean scores for items 15 (M=3.91-4.43) pertaining to the competence of the facilitator and item 17 (M=3.35-4.03) pertaining to the dual status of the facilitator were all moderately high, indicating a low level of concern by master's degree students regarding the ethical issues of facilitator competence and the dual roles held by the facilitator regardless of the academic status of the facilitator of the experiential group. In addition, the mean scores for item 21 (M=4.04-4.39) pertaining to understanding that the level of personal disclosure does not affect the course grade were moderately high, indicating that regardless of the academic status of the facilitator, master's degree students understood that their level of self disclosure in the experiential group did not affect their grade in the group work course. Overall, the results of the study indicated that the academic status of the facilitator of the experiential group does not significantly affect student's concerns regarding ethics in the experiential group. One explanation for these results is the increased acceptance of dual roles or multiple relationships in the experiential group as discussed previously in this chapter. Another explanation is that counselor educators have become more aware of how the structure of the group work course and the experiential group, including the academic status of the facilitator, affect the occurrence and frequency of ethical concerns and have developed group work courses with this in mind. For example, Fall and Levitov (2002) developed a course work model using actors as group participants in the experiential group, therefore, eliminating personal self-disclosure and limiting the ethical concerns of dual relationships and confidentiality. As a result of counselor educators implementing course structures which limit ethical concerns, students are less concerned with ethical issues associated with their experiential group.

Discussions of Findings for Research Hypothesis 5

Research hypothesis 5 stated master's level students who were not concerned with ethical issues in the experiential group will report that the experiential group was more instrumental in their development as a group counselor than master's level students who were concerned with ethical issues in the experiential group. The results of the MANOVA did reveal a significant difference between the two groups revealing eleven ethical issues which contributed to the strength of students' belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a counselor. They included item 15 pertaining to the competence of the facilitator, item 16 pertaining to the cultural sensitivity of the facilitator, item 17 pertaining to the effectiveness of the facilitator as a group leader, item 18 pertaining to the comfort level of students regarding the dual roles of the facilitator, item 20 pertaining to the comfort level of disclosing personal information in front of the facilitator, item 21 pertaining to the understanding that personal disclosure did not affect the course grade, item 22 pertaining to pressure from the facilitator to disclose personal information, item 23 pertaining to concern that the facilitator would break confidentiality, item 24 pertaining to being comfortable with the amount of personal information disclosed by group members, item 25 pertaining to pressure from group members to disclose personal information, and item 26 pertaining to concern that group members would break confidentiality. All significant items had a large effect size, indicating a strong relationship to the belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor.

These results suggest that when the structure of the group work course and experiential group is laden with the ethical pitfalls of dual roles, confidentiality, competency, and personal disclosures, students may not achieve a high level of understanding of group process and, as a

result, do not believe that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor. Many counselor educators have written extensively on the need to minimize these ethical concerns, especially those related to dual relationships, in order to foster a comfortable environment for students (Goodrich, 2008). Although these ethical concerns are inherent in teaching a small group experience (Fall & Levitov, 2002; Furr & Barret, 2000), their occurrence and frequency often depend on the structure of the course. Fall and Levitov (2002), as stated earlier, advocated for the use of actors as group members in the experiential group in order to eliminate personal disclosure while Furr and Barret (2000) suggested using adjunct faculty members to facilitate the experiential group in order to limit dual relationships.

Discussions of Findings for Research Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 stated there are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on the comfort level experienced by master's level students when participating in the experiential group. The results of this study did not support this hypothesis. It could be that the term comfort level was not operationally defined in this study and that a finer analysis of what constitutes comfort level is the key to understanding the variables that affect it. Although no significant differences were found between the academic status of the facilitator, the mean scores for facilitators who were full-time faculty members and doctoral students were slightly higher than means cores for facilitators who were adjunct faculty members, indicating students were more comfortable participating in experiential groups when the facilitator was a full-time faculty member or doctoral student than an adjunct faculty member. Although researchers have suggested that if the facilitator is an adjunct professor, students may be less concerned about ethical concerns of dual

roles and confidentiality and therefore more comfortable participating in the experiential group (Furr & Barrett, 2000; Pistole et al., 2008), the results did not support this theory. One possible explanation is that students did not make a distinction between the roles of full-time faculty members and adjunct faculty members; instead, viewing both roles as equal to each other. On a positive note, this could mean that the quality of adjunct professors is very high and students are unable to discern them from full-time faculty members. On the other hand, this may indicate that full-time faculty are not well known by their students and are not engaging in supportive relationships with them.

Discussions of Findings for Research Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 stated there are differences between experiential groups facilitated by a full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and a doctoral student on master's level students' experience of the experiential group. The results of the study revealed no significant differences between the three groups. One possible explanation for these results is that students participating in the experiential group are more focused on the personal characteristics of the facilitator and do not consider the academic status of the facilitator as pertinent to their experience. Although no significant differences were found, the mean scores of item 33 (M=1.96-2.57) pertaining to suffering short-term stress, item 34 (M=1.43-1.69) pertaining to suffering long-term stress, and item 35 (M=1.35-1.61) pertaining to feeling the experiential group was damaging to the student's psychological health were higher for groups facilitated by adjunct faculty members and others, indicating that students felt slightly greater stress when participating in an experiential group facilitated by a adjunct faculty member or other. One possible explanation for these results is that students may have felt less support from or trust in an adjunct faculty member or "other"

individual who led the experiential group, as evidenced by one participant when he/she remarked, "I think I would have gotten more out of participating in a group where the leader was a full-time faculty member that we all respected and trusted to show us what to do." Overall, these results show that student's experience in the experiential group is not significantly affected by the academic status of the facilitator, indicating that students are more focused on the qualities of the facilitator and how they can enhance their knowledge of the group experience.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study relate to sampling bias, collection of the data, and the design of the survey instrument. The first limitation that may have had an impact on this study involved sampling bias. Sampling bias may have resulted because it was necessary for participants to have an email address, access to a computer, and some knowledge of technological skills in order to complete the survey. In addition, because participants were not required to complete the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Group*, members of the American Counseling Association (ACA) who chose to respond may not have been representative of the entire population of ACA members. The next limitation is also related to sample representativeness. Sampling bias may have resulted because the only individuals who participated in the survey were ACA members, a group committed to counselor development and ethics. Thus, there may be a bias toward rating items related to counselor development and ethics more positively or higher. There was a disproportion of participants who agreed that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor (71.4%) compared to participants who did not agree that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor (17.5%). In addition, counselors who had taken the group

work course in their master's program and were not members of ACA were excluded from this study, due to lack of resources to identify them, resulting in an upward bias of the responses. In order to limit sampling bias, participants who were asked to participate in this study were drawn from the national ACA membership directory, in an effort to increase sample representativeness. In addition, in an effort to get all requested participants to complete the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups*, multiple reminders were sent to participants via email. However, it should be noted that those counselors who participated in a small group experience but were not members of ACA were excluded in this study,

Limitations in the design of the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups* included question construction. The survey may not have accurately measured masters' level student's attitudes and experiences as they pertain to the experiential component in their first master's level group work course. The survey was limited due to its use of retrospective memory by participants. Since participants may have completed the group work course as long as 5 years prior to participating in this study, it is possible that their recollection of events and/or details concerning the structure of the course and experiential group is not correct. In addition, this survey assumed that participants were aware of the academic status of the facilitator of the experiential group, specifically the difference between full-time faculty and adjunct faculty members. The survey is also limited in its ability to account for changes in opinion that may have occurred over time. Participants' attitudes regarding ethical situations and the importance of the experiential group may have been different if measured during or immediately following participation in the experiential group. This survey measured the attitudes of participants only at the time that they answered the survey. It did not account for

changes in attitude that were a result of personal or professional growth which was achieved by the participants in the time since they completed the group work course.

Implications for Counselor Educators

The results of this study were intended to bring greater awareness to counselor educators when structuring the group work course, specifically the experiential component. By building on previous studies which identified the most commonly used formats when structuring the experiential group (Anderson & Price, 2001; Merta et al., 1993), the results of this study contribute to the knowledge base of counselor educators regarding the components that affect student experience and concern over ethical matters while participating in the experiential group.

The findings of this study indicated that the academic status of the facilitator does not contribute to student experience or student's concern over ethical issues in the experiential group. This finding goes against a large amount of research and best practices which have been documented regarding how to structure the experiential group based on the academic status of the facilitator. One factor that did contribute to student experience was students' belief that their facilitator was competent to lead the experiential group. Students reported being more comfortable participating in the experiential group when they felt the facilitator was competent. This finding implies that counselor educators should focus their efforts on identifying competent individuals who understand group leadership and group process instead of focusing on the academic status or title of the person assigned to lead the experiential group. The results of this study also indicated that students feel more comfortable participating in the experiential group, regardless of the academic status of the facilitator, as long as they believe he/she is competent to lead the group.

Another component that contributed to student experience was student's concern over ethical issues in the experiential group. When students were more concerned with ethical issues, the strength of their belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor was weakened. Specifically, the ethical concerns that contributed to a decreased belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a counselor included: competence of the facilitator, cultural sensitivity of the facilitator, effectiveness of the facilitator as a group leader , dual roles of the facilitator, comfort level of disclosing personal information in front of the facilitator, understanding that personal disclosure did not affect the course grade, pressure from the facilitator to disclose personal information, concern that the facilitator would break confidentiality, being comfortable with the amount of personal information disclosed by group members, pressure from group members to disclose personal information, and concern that group members would break confidentiality. Counselor educators should structure the group work course and the experiential group with the associated ethical pitfalls in mind, in hopes to increase students' belief that the experiential group is pertinent to their development as a group counselor.

It is important to note that approximately 30% of participants reported suffering short-term stress due to participation in the experiential group and approximately 75% of participants viewed the experiential group as challenging. These results indicate that participation in the experiential group is a source of stress for many master's degree students and this should be taken into consideration when structuring the group work course. In addition, it is concerning that a small number of participants (approximately 4%) felt the experiential group was damaging to their psychological health and suffered long-term stress due to participation in it. Although

the group work course and the experiential group should be laying the foundation for group counselors, in a few cases, students are suffering from these educational experiences.

The results of this study corroborate the findings of Hall et al. (1999) which indicated a small percentage of participants (2.0%) do suffer long-term stress as a result of the small group experience. The percentage of participants who reported that they suffered long-term stress or were psychologically damaged in this study is twice that as found by Hall et al. (1999), indicating that the occurrence of this phenomenon may be higher than previously thought. These results highlight the significance of the landmark research completed by Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles (1973) in which they identified group casualties. Group casualties occur when individuals incur psychological damage as a direct result of a group experience. Lieberman et al's. (1973) found that as many as 12% of students who participated in encounter groups could be considered group casualties six months after the group ended. Using Lieberman et al., (1973) definition, 4% of participants in this study could be considered group casualties of the experiential group.

In an effort to decrease the incidence of group casualties resulting from participation in the experiential group, it is crucial that counselor educators focus on providing a competent group leader to facilitate the group. The facilitator should emphasize the purpose of participating in the experiential group and set boundaries for students' participation and self disclosure. In addition, it may be useful for the facilitator to conduct follow-up sessions with individual group members in order to process their reactions to the small group experience both during and following the group work course. This process could assist facilitators to identify students who are at risk of becoming group casualties.

Counselor educators should also take into consideration recommendations from former students on how to improve the experiential group. Participants in this study shared their thoughts on how to improve the group experience. The most common recommendations from participants centered on limiting self disclosure, including having group members assigned character roles by the facilitator. Another common suggestion was that group members not be assigned to an experiential group with peers. Some suggestions for achieving this are to have the experiential group consist of counseling students from different cohorts within the same program or to incorporate students from other disciplines in the experiential group. One further recommendation by participants in this study is allowing students who are uncomfortable participating in the experiential group to participate in a therapy group of their choice not affiliated with the counseling program. Utilizing the recommendations received from participants in this study could aid counselor educators in decreasing the incidence of group casualties and increasing the effectiveness of the experiential group in training competent group workers.

The results of this study have implications for the guidelines set by the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW). ASGW (2000) requires that students participate as a group member and/or group leader for a minimum of 10 hours. Eighty five percent of participants in this study indicated that they experienced being a group member while only 53.3% of participants reported that they experienced being a group leader. These results indicate that although most counseling programs in the United States are following the requirements set by ASGW, a significant number of students are not experiencing group leadership in the group work course. ASGW should take this into consideration when examining the purpose of the

experiential group and how to balance the need for knowledge of group leadership skills and group process by counseling students.

The results of this study also have implications on the current training models being utilized to teach group work in counseling programs. Because this study found that students' ethical concerns contributed to their belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a counselor, counselor educators should try to incorporate models which seek to limit ethical issues such as dual relationships, confidentiality, and self-disclosure. For example, Davenport (2004) offered a group work model which limits the ethical issue of self disclosure by assigning character roles when acting as a group member. This training model also limits the ethical issue of dual relationships by having a licensed counselor, usually from the University Student Counseling Service, facilitate the group. Similar to the training model suggested by Davenport (2004), most training models in the counseling literature have focused on limiting dual roles or multiple relationships in the experiential group. Although the results of this study did indicate that ethical concerns due impact student experience, it was also found that the academic status of the facilitator (full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, and doctoral student) did not affect student experience or comfort level. As a result, future training models may not have to monitor the academic status of the facilitator of the experiential group as closely as previously thought. However, it is evident from participant comments in the open-ended items used to collect data in this study that participants were concerned with the multiple relationships held with fellow counseling students. The impact of these types of multiple relationships should continue to be monitored and limited in future training models, perhaps through limiting self-disclosure.

Implications for Future Research

A replication of this study using a more representative sample of the country's post-master's degree counselors would be beneficial. Use of alternative survey methods such as a paper and pencil survey in addition to an electronic survey would help to ensure that counselors without email and Internet access would be included in the sample. In addition, selecting participants who are not affiliated with ACA, a group dedicated to counselor development and ethics, may decrease the desire for participants to answer survey items regarding counselor development and ethics favorably or higher. Other possible ideas for future study include: examining if there are differences in skill acquisition for master's students when they report having a negative experience in the experiential group; identifying the qualities and characteristics that master's degree students attribute to competent experiential group facilitators; examining if the previous group leadership experience of the facilitator impacts student skill acquisition; and exploring whether prior group experience by group members affects their experience in the experiential group.

Furthermore, qualitative studies that focus on the personal experiences of students participating in the experiential group could greatly enhance counselor educators' awareness of how to better structure and implement the experiential component of the group work course. A qualitative study could go beyond identifying components of the experiential group that contribute to student's personal experience, providing insight regarding how and why specific components such as leadership structure, course structure, and ethical concerns contribute to the personal experience. Additional research pertaining to the prevalence of group casualties in the experiential group is needed. The results of this study indicated that the current group casualty

rate is twice that (4% vs. 2%) found by Hall et al. (1999). Also of benefit would be research completed on the effectiveness and student experience of specific training models published in the literature. This research would be important in ascertaining if the ethical issues the instructor believes are limited by the format of the course is verified by students.

Conclusions

This study examined master's level students' personal experiences and ethical concerns while participating in the experiential component of their first group work course. In addition, the structure of the group work course was also examined. The goals of this study were to identify the current models of group work training in use by U.S. counseling programs and identify the components that contribute to master's level students' personal experiences and ethical concerns regarding the experiential component.

The findings of this study suggested that the most common group work training model is to have a full-time faculty member both instruct the group work course and facilitate the experiential group. The results also revealed that when the instructor of the group work course and the facilitator are two individuals, the instructor had more knowledge of what occurred in the experiential component either through direct observation or through reports by the facilitator than previously indicated by Anderson and Price (2001). The findings of this study do suggest that the requirements of CACREP (2009) and ASGW (2000) regarding counseling students engaging as a group member for 10 hours in the experiential component are being met by most U.S. counseling programs. Seventy percent of participants reported experiencing being a group member; however, only approximately 50% of participants reported experiencing being a group leader. The data also show that only a small percentage of counseling programs (18%) are using

actors as group members or asking students to develop character roles in lieu of disclosing personal information.

Concern over ethical concerns was found to be an important component in students' comfort level and belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor. Specifically, the issue of facilitator competence was significant to students' comfort level. It is important to note that participants' belief that the facilitator was competent was not affected by the academic status of the facilitator (full-time faculty member, adjunct faculty member, doctoral student). When participants believed their facilitator was competent to lead the experiential group, they rated their comfort level while participating in the experiential group higher. In addition, the ethical issues of dual roles, competence, confidentiality, and self-disclosure were found to be components that affected participants' belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor. When participants reported having more ethical concerns in the experiential group, this negatively affected their belief that the experiential group was instrumental in their development as a group counselor. These results support the conclusions of previous research which indicated that care needs to be taken when structuring the group work course and the experiential component in order to safeguard students from ethical issues which may contribute to a negative group experience (Connolly, Carns, & Carns, 2005; Davenport, 2004; Goodrich, 2008).

The most prominent theme to emerge from the open-ended questions was that the majority of master's level students had a negative experience while participating in the experiential group. Most participants who reported having a negative experience attributed it to ethical concerns. When participants were asked what changes to the group work course and/or

experiential component they would suggest, the most frequent responses included that group members should assume character roles, group member self-disclosure should be limited, group members should not be peers, and that students should be allowed to participate in a therapy group of their own choosing outside of the counseling program.

Responses to the open-ended questions also contained positive themes which indicated that many participants believed the experiential group experience assisted them in learning more about group process and was fundamental in their counselor training. In addition, although some participants had an initial negative experience, they were later able to see the benefits of the experience. It is evident that counseling students' experiences participating in the experiential group and how the structure of the group work course affects their experience need further research. This study touched upon the current training methods of group counselors and some of the ethical issues which affected student's experience in the experiential group. It appears that counselors are not only willing to share their personal experiences from the experiential component but also to suggest recommendations to enhance it for future counselors in training.

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Appendix A

Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups

Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups

Section I: Personal Information

Please provide the following personal information:

1. Sex
_____Male
_____Female

2. Race
_____White
_____Black, African American, or Negro
_____American Indian or Alaska Native
_____Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
_____Puerto Rican
_____Cuban
_____Asian Indian
_____Chinese
_____Filipino
_____Japanese
_____Korean
_____Vietnamese
_____Native Hawaiian
_____Guamanian or Chamorro
_____Samoan
_____Middle Eastern
_____Other_____

3. Age ____

4. Year of master's degree graduation _____

701 In the course of one month, how often do you lead counseling groups at your current job?
___

Section II: Type of Leadership and Course Structure

NOTE: The experiential component referred to throughout this survey is defined as a small group experience consisting of master's level counseling students in conjunction with a course in group work. The purpose of the experiential component is to provide a personal growth experience to students where they are able to observe and/or experience being a group member and group leader. The experiential component in group work may be called a laboratory group, personal growth group or task group.

701 Did the instructor of the first group work course you took in your master's degree program also facilitate the experiential component?

_____Yes _____No _____ I don't remember

7. If yes, was the instructor a
a. _____ full-time faculty member
b. _____ adjunct faculty member
c. _____ Other_____
d. _____ I do not remember
e. _____ Not Applicable

8. If the instructor did not facilitate the experiential group, did the instructor observe the experiential group?

____ every group meeting _____ frequently _____ seldom _____ never _____ N/A

9. If the instructor did not facilitate the experiential group or observe it, was he given feedback concerning the progress of the experiential group? _____ Yes _____ No _____I don't know

10. Was the experiential group facilitator a:
a. _____ full-time faculty member
b. _____ adjunct faculty member
c. _____ doctoral student
d. _____ Other_____
e. _____ I do not remember

11. Did you know the experiential group facilitator in another role before he/she facilitated the group?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Not Applicable

12. If you answered yes to question 11, how did you previously know the experiential group facilitator? If you answered no, please mark as (e) Not Applicable.
a. _____ professor
b. _____ therapist
c. _____ graduate student
d. _____ other _____
e. _____ Not Applicable

13. Please indicate if you experienced any of the following items when participating in the experiential component. Check all that apply.
a. _____ I *experienced* being a group member
b. _____ I *experienced* being a group leader

c. _____ The group members were actors, or others outside the counseling program portraying character roles
d. _____ As a group member, I was instructed to develop a character role different from myself to role play in the group for all sessions.
e. _____ I participated in an outdoor challenge course as part of the experiential component.
f. _____ I took the group work class as an online course

14. What grade did you receive in the first group work course you took as a student in your master's degree program?
a. __ A b. __ B c. __ C d. __ D e.__ F f. __ I don't remember

Section III: Ethical concerns

Please read the following statements and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement regarding ethical concerns in the experiential component of your first group work course. You will be rating each item on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being unsure, 4 being agree, and 5 being strongly agree.

15. I felt the *group facilitator* was competent to lead the experiential group.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

16. I felt the *group facilitator* incorporated cultural sensitivity into the experiential group.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

17. The *group facilitator* was an effective group leader.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

18. I was comfortable with the dual roles (example: instructor and facilitator, professor and facilitator, doctoral student and facilitator) held by the *group facilitator*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

19. The *group facilitator* encouraged students to disclose personal information.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

20. I felt comfortable disclosing personal information in front of the *group facilitator*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

21. I understood that my level of personal disclosure did not affect my grade in the course.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

22. I felt pressure from the *facilitator* to disclose personal information about myself in the experiential group.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

23. I was concerned with *the facilitator* breaking confidentiality.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

24. I was comfortable with the amount of personal information *other group members* disclosed.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

25. I felt pressure from *other group members* to disclose personal information about myself in the experiential group.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

26. I was concerned with *other group members* breaking confidentiality.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Section IV: Student experience in the experiential group

Please rate the following statements concerning your *overall* experience in the experiential component of your first group counseling course. You will be rating each item on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being unsure, 4 being agree, and 5 being strongly agree.

27. I was comfortable participating in the experiential group.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5

28. I was open to disclosing personal information about myself.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

29. I was concerned about being evaluated or criticized by the *group facilitator*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

30. I was concerned about being evaluated or criticized by *other group members*.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

31. The group discussed issues I felt were often relevant to my development as a group counselor.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

32. I felt the experiential group was instrumental in my development as a group counselor.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

33. I suffered short-term stress due to the experiential group.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

34. I suffered long-term stress due to the experiential group.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

35. I felt the experiential group was damaging to my psychological health.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

36. I felt the experiential group was a challenging experience.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Section V: Personal experience

37. Please use the space below for any comments you may have regarding the experiential component of your group work course. Include any specific ethical dilemmas which arose in the course of the experiential group.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

38. What recommendations would you make to improve the experiential group component of the group work course?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B

Permission from Dr. Rebecca Anderson

From: "Anderson, Rebecca"
<Anderson.Rebecca@MHSIL.com>
Add to Contacts

To: "bstpierre14@yahoo.com" <bstpierre14@yahoo.com>

Ms. St. Pierre: I give you permission to use survey questions from my previously published article.

Best wishes on your project.

Rebecca Anderson

Rebecca D. Anderson, PhD, ABPP(Rp)

Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Manager, Neuromuscular Specialty Services, Bariatric Surgery Program

Memorial Medical Center

701 N. First St.

Springfield, IL 62781

Phone: 217-788-4381

Fax: 217-757-7191

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Appendix C

IRB Approval Letter

University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

University of New Orleans

Campus Correspondence

Principal Investigator:	Louis V. Paradise
Co-Investigator:	Betsy K. St.Pierre
Date:	April 19, 2010
Protocol Title:	"The use of experimental groups in the training of group workers: Student attitudes and instructor participation"
IRB#:	08Apr10

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures described in this protocol application are exempt from federal regulations under 45 CFR 46.101category 2, due to the fact that the information obtained is not recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Exempt protocols do not have an expiration date; however, if there are any changes made to this protocol that may cause it to be no longer exempt from CFR 46, the IRB requires another standard application from the investigator(s) which should provide the same information that is in this application with changes that may have changed the exempt status.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best wishes on your project.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Laird, Ph.D., Chair

UNO Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

Appendix D

First Electronic Message to Participants

First Electronic Message to Participant

Dear ACA member,

I am writing today to request your assistance with my dissertation study titled *The Use of Experiential Groups in the Training of Group Workers: Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation.* I have developed a survey (*Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups*) that asks members of ACA who currently have a master's degree in counseling to report their attitudes regarding the ethical implications in the experiential group of their group work course. The survey asks about the comfort level and feelings associated with participation in the experiential group. In addition, the survey asks about the type of instructor leadership involved in the experiential group. I plan to use the data from the survey to identify student's perceptions of ethical concerns regarding participation in the experiential group, assess student attitudes and reactions to participation in the experiential group, and determine current trends in instructor participation in the experiential group.

Participation is anonymous; there is no way to identify you after you submit your responses. The approximate completion time for the total instrument ranges from 15-20 minutes. Please contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon (504-280-3990) at the University of New Orleans for answers to questions about this research, your rights as a human subject, and your concerns regarding a research-related injury. If you are willing to participate and contribute to this important study please click on the following link to connect to the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups:*

http://www.surveymonkey.com.

If you are not connected automatically, then you can cut-and-paste the link into the address box on your web browser and then press enter.

Your answers on this survey will provide important information that may prove useful as a consideration in the structure of the experiential component of group work courses in counselor education programs. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequence. The risks associated with this study are minimal. If you would like more information about this study or if you wish to discuss any discomforts you may experience, please send your request to the principal investigator for this study, Dr. Louis V. Paradise, by email lparadis@uno.edu or by telephone, 504-280-6026.

Thanks in advance for your participation.

Betsy St.Pierre, LPC
Doctoral Candidate
University of New Orleans
University of New Orleans, Lakefront Campus
New Orleans, LA 70148
bstpierr@uno.edu

Appendix E

Second Electronic Message to Participants

Second Electronic Message to Participant

Dear ACA member,

If you have already participated in this study by completing the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups* thank you again for your participation.

If you have not had the opportunity to participate, please take approximately 15 minutes to read the following information and follow the hyperlink to complete the Survey.

I have developed a survey (*Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups*) that asks members of ACA who currently have a master's degree in counseling to report their attitudes regarding the ethical implications in the experiential group of their group work course. The survey asks about the comfort level and feelings associated with participation in the experiential group. In addition, the survey asks about the type of instructor leadership involved in the experiential group. I plan to use the data from the survey to identify student's perceptions of ethical concerns regarding participation in the experiential group, assess student attitudes and reactions to participation in the experiential group, and determine current trends in instructor participation in the experiential group.

Participation is anonymous; there is no way to identify you after you submit your responses. The approximate completion time for the total instrument ranges from 15-20 minutes. Please contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon (504-280-3990) at the University of New Orleans for answers to questions about this research, your rights as a human subject, and your concerns regarding a research-related injury. If you are willing to participate and contribute to this important study please click on the following link to connect to the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups:*

http://www.surveymonkey.com.

If you are not connected automatically, then you can cut-and-paste the link into the address box on your web browser and then press enter.

Your answers on this survey will provide important information that may prove useful as a consideration in the structure of the experiential component of group work courses in counselor education programs. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequence. The risks associated with this study are minimal. If you would like more information about this study or if you wish to discuss any

discomforts you may experience, please send your request to the principal investigator for this study, Dr. Louis V. Paradise, by email lparadis@uno.edu or by telephone, 504-280-6026.

Thanks in advance for your participation.

Betsy St.Pierre, LPC
Doctoral Candidate
University of New Orleans
University of New Orleans, Lakefront Campus
New Orleans, LA 70148
bstpierr@uno.edu

Appendix F

Final Electronic Message to Participants

Final Electronic Message to Participant

Dear ACA member,

This is one last reminder to participate in my dissertation study titled *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups.* Because participation in the survey is confidential in order to protect your identity, I cannot determine who has and has not had the opportunity to participate. **If you have already participated in this study by completing the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups*, thank you again for your participation.** If you have not, please take approximately 15 minutes to read the following information and follow the hyperlink to complete the survey.

I have developed a survey (*Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups*) that asks members of ACA who currently have their master's degree in counseling to report their attitudes regarding the ethical implications in the experiential group of their group work course. The survey asks about the comfort level and feelings associated with participation in the experiential group. In addition, the survey asks about the type of instructor leadership involved in the experiential group. I plan to use the data from the survey to identify student's perceptions of ethical concerns regarding participation in the experiential group, assess student attitudes and reactions to participation in the experiential group, and determine current trends in instructor participation in the experiential group.

Participation is anonymous; there is no way to identify you after you submit your responses. The approximate completion time for the total instrument ranges from 15-20 minutes. Please contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon (504-280-3990) at the University of New Orleans for answers to questions about this research, your rights as a human subject, and your concerns regarding a research-related injury. If you are willing to participate and contribute to this important study please click on the following link to connect to the *Survey of Student Attitudes and Instructor Participation in Experiential Groups:*

http://www.surveymonkey.com.

If you are not connected automatically, then you can cut-and-paste the link into the address box on your web browser and then press enter.

Your answers on this survey will provide important information that may prove useful as a consideration in the structure of the experiential component of group work courses in Counselor Education Programs. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw consent and

terminate participation at any time without consequence. The risks associated with this study are minimal. If you would like more information about this study or if you wish to discuss any discomforts you may experience, please send your request to the principal investigator for this study, Dr. Louis V. Paradise, by email lparadis@uno.edu or by telephone, 504-280-6026.

Thanks in advance for your participation.

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Vita

Betsy K. St.Pierre earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology in 2003 from Nicholls State University. She earned a Master of Education degree in Psychological Counseling in 2005 from Nicholls State University and completed the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Counselor Education at the University of New Orleans in December 2010.

She is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and Board Certified LPC supervisor in the state of Louisiana and an Approved Clinical Evaluator (ACE). Betsy is a member of the American Counseling Association (ACA), Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), and Louisiana Counseling Association (LCA).

Betsy has experience as a licensed mental health professional and clinical evaluator for an intensive mental health rehabilitation agency that services children and adults who suffer with mental illness. She has presented at a state conference on doctoral study in counseling.