CSP 673: Group Counseling

A Course Redesign to Improve Counseling Students’ Group Skills

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Group Counseling

• Course for Professional School Counseling and Professional Community Counseling students

• Only course to learn group counseling skills before going into their practicum and internship
Group Counseling

- Complex counseling skills—must attend to individual members' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors at the same time as attending to the interactions of all the members.
- Groups are dynamic systems and there is a lot for trainees to manage.
Accreditation Requirements

- Provide group experience for students to be a member
- Provide group experience for students to lead a group
- Be attentive to complex ethics in the training of new group leaders
Group Membership: Old

- In previous semesters the class, separated into three groups, self-led their experiential groups
- Rotated once every 3 weeks to be watched by professor behind 1-way mirror
Group Membership: New

• Utilized new Doctoral Students to lead the three groups
• Groups were changed to psychoeducational with themes related to being successful in graduate school
• Decision making, loss, dealing with conflict, assertiveness, etc.
Group Membership: New

- Doctoral Students supervised in group supervision (by KLB) with no mention of students’ names
- Instructor (KLB) received supervision of supervision from mentor in department
Fish Bowl

- Fish Bowl is a group counseling training technique where the instructor and 5-7 volunteers get into center, have a group session while the rest of the class observes.
- Observers then give observations and feedback in class discussion.
Fish Bowl

• Some of skills taught inside fish bowl are from Gestalt theory
• Recognize their own anxiety
• How it manifests itself physically (tapping feet, blushing, crossed arms)
• Over course of term, how anxiety can be managed during group
Fish Bowl: Doc Student

- In the second half of term, a Doc student (one of the group leaders) joined to teach the class
- Co-led group counseling fish bowls
- Gave students experience with and opportunity to observe co-leading
- Spent time debriefing in class so students could see how one might conduct supervision when a group is co-led
Student Leadership

• In the second half of term, students each lead one group; group membership (split into 3 groups) stays consistent over the weeks
• Take turns leading 45 minute groups in a psychoeducational format
• Graded--only graded group experience for whole semester
Student Leadership

• Topics include: children of divorce, alcoholism; cutting/self-mutilation; spirituality; effective couples communication; bullying; crisis in schools; death and bereavement

• Student leaders must manage group while infusing content and attending to affect of group members
Effectiveness of Course

• Students’ group leadership has been quite good
• Many have mentioned in reflection papers that they plan to run more groups than they thought before the course
• Students respect complexity of group work, yet are excited to try it
• Students have developed their sense of self-awareness and anxiety management