# Standards of Training for Group Workers

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Abstract

Comparing and contrasting group counseling standards of the American Counseling Association, Association for Specialists in Group Work, and Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Educational Related Programs is complex and necessitates awareness of cultural diversity and ethical issues to train competent and effective group leaders. Four categories are used to analyze the standards: experiential, academic, observation, and supervision. Supervision encompasses all the categories. Thus, three models of supervision are presented. Supervision and multicultural competence is discussed, and an additional CACREP core curriculum area on spirituality and religion, as an aspect of multicultural competence, is suggested and explored.

*Keywords:* ACA, ASGW, CACREP, counselor education, group standards, supervision, diversity, spirituality, religion, competency

# Standards of Training for Group Workers

Group counseling and psychotherapy has its origins dating back decades. Its growth and study has sparked increasing interest in the helping professions as its benefits and treatment outcomes are realized (Stockton, Morran, & Krieger, 2004). However, group work differs from individual therapy and counseling in a variety of ways. The amount of variables within this mode increases exponentially with the amount of individuals and unforeseen factors within a group. A group counseling leader must be aware of these variables as well as the ethics involved in order to conduct group work with the positive impact that can be facilitated. Thus, the task is ahead to answer the question as to how to best train leaders in group counseling to handle these complicated and multilayered aspects of group counseling. Barlow (2004) addresses this topic in four distinct areas: experiential, supervision, observation, and academic. It is within these categories that a picture can begin to form of the standards of training needed for group workers. This picture will then be evaluated in light of the existing standards within the major governing bodies of the American Counseling Association (ACA), the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW), and the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Educational Related Programs (CACREP).

## Need for Standards

The need for understanding and setting standards for group work can be summed up in the following quote: “Group leaders are not born, they are trained” (Barlow, 2004, p. 113). As with most disciplines, work that is excellent is not born out of simple talent or inherent qualities. These factors only go so far. Specific training must be in place in order to achieve desired outcomes.

Counseling as a discipline is relatively new compared to other disciplines such as psychology (Gladding, 1994). This factor can facilitate confusion among those outside the discipline regarding things such as services being offered. An example is found in the literature for group counseling. Terms for the same topic range from group counseling, group psychotherapy, group therapy, and even "12-step programs" (Stockton, Morran, & Krieger, 2004). This confusion can lead to not only frustration on the part of clients choosing the right services for themselves, but also potential harm to the client.

Harm to a client can occur where there is a lack of knowledge and even clarity of proper ethics within group counseling. As will be shown, the ethics codes are vague at best when it comes to guiding group leaders on how to conduct groups ethically. Issues such as confidentiality, screening, and avoiding harm all take on new meanings within the context of group counseling. These factors lead Barlow (2004) to call for group leaders to "unlearn" the ways they have done individual counseling in order to conduct successful groups. Thus, several governing bodies have established some ground rules to working with groups.

## Governing Bodies

Three main governing bodies will be discussed in their establishment of standards for group workers. While each has its own levels of expertise and detail regarding these standards, there are applicable areas about which all group workers need to be informed. These governing bodies include the American Counseling Association (ACA), the Association for Specialist in Group Work (ASGW), and the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Educational Related Programs (CACREP).

**American Counseling Association**

The first and most established governing body is the ACA. It maintains and publishes the code of ethics that governs the work of all counselors within the field. However, in viewing the most recent publication in 2014, there are only three sections that can be applied to group workers within these ethics. Sections A.9.a, A.9.b, and B.4.a all have some reference to group work in counseling (ACA, 2014). The first two sections deal with screening clients and protecting clients, while the latter deals with the issue of confidentiality. However, while these guidelines deal with ethics on a broad, general scale, they are severely lacking in the best practice to actually perform group work.

The code states that group workers should screen clients based on their "needs and goals" being "compatible with the goals of the group" (ACA, 2014, A.9.a). However, does a group worker make sure all clients come from the same background and worldview? Should the group worker seek to have a diverse group in order to challenge and work to "push people's buttons" as Barlow (2004) recommends? There is little clarity in this ethics standard as to how this should practically be applied in a best practice mentality. There could be a way to adhere to this standard in one setting that would differ in another. This also applies to the ethics of protecting clients. The question comes up regarding what constitutes a "reasonable" precaution taken to protect clients. With the number of variables in group work, how a group worker navigates this dilemma is important.

The final ethics standard deals with explaining and setting the parameters for confidentiality in group work. As stated before, the question arises as to how this is done practically. Confidentiality cannot be completely guaranteed in group work (Yalom, & Leszcz,

2005). Thus, does this mean group workers can discuss what happens in group with others without referencing specific individuals? There is no clarity in practice for how group workers can adhere to this ethics standard.

Consider how the following case study would play out: You are leading a therapy group at a local Christian counseling agency. The stated goal of the group is to help individuals who have lost a loved one to suicide. During one session, a group member states that all those who commit suicide will "go to hell," which begins to spark debate among the group members. Feeling singled out, the initial member states that he or she will discuss what transpired in group with his or her pastor in order to gain more information.

As can be seen, there are many difficult situations within this scenario. Upon more review, proper pre-planning would greatly aid in knowing how to screen clients, as well as how to deal with the issue of confidentiality. Yet, novice or untrained group workers, at times, do not have the skills necessary to think through these issues (Ohrt, Ener, Porter, & Young, 2014). The need for more detailed and structured standards is clear; these standards are beginning to be developed practically through other governing bodies.

**Association for Specialists in Group Work**

The ASGW is a division of the ACA and has published several documents that establish training standards and best practices for group workers. ASGW was born out of a need to fill in the gaps where the ACA Code of Ethics falls short in relation to group work (Thomas & Pender, 2008). The first document published was the Professional Standards for the Training of Group Workers in 1983. It was revised in 1990, and again in 2000 (Wilson, Rapin, & Haley-Banez, 2000). The first publication of the document established 9 competencies, 17 skill competencies,

and clock-based experience requirements. It also differentiated between core competencies for all counselors and specialization training necessary for those wanting to conduct group work on a regular basis (Wilson, Rapin, & Haley-Banez, 2000). Among the requirements for specialization training are four areas of competency, which include task and work group facilitation, group psychoeducation, group counseling, and group psychotherapy. While these areas of specialization have added clarity to the practicality of conducting group work well, they were not without their criticisms. Some argued that these areas of specialization were too idealistic and lacked real-world implementation within a group setting (Zimpfer, Waltman, Williamson, & Huhn, 1985). However, subsequent revisions of this document have allowed more clarity as well as better integration with the CACREP standards.

In response to some of this criticism, the ASGW published another document to provide even more clarity in the real-world practice of group work. The Best Practices Guidelines was originally published in 1998, with another revision in 2007 (Thomas & Pender, 2008). While the Professional Standards document is focused on the training environment, the Best Practices is focused on the many problems with practically running an effective group. This document is broken up into three sections: planning, performing, and processing. Within the planning section, aspects of screening, preparation, ethics, and even use of technology are addressed. The performing section deals with aspects such as adaptation, how to create meaning for group members, and diversity. Finally, the processing section focuses on the self-evaluation of the group members and group leader, proper evaluation and follow-up, and consultation (Thomas & Pender, 2008). It can be argued that this document is a more relevant resource for those seeking to engage in group work. However, even many of these specifics have variables within them.

Thus many of these documents are pointing toward a more experientially-based training for group workers.

It would be difficult to move on from the ASGW without acknowledging that multicultural and social justice issues have driven much of the discussion even within ASGW's own journal (Singh, Merchant, Skudrzyk, & Ingene, 2012; Bemak, & Chung, 2004). The ASGW even published the Multicultural and Social Justice Competence Principles for Group Workers in 2012, which was designed to facilitate the empowerment of individuals within a society, provide definitions for common social justice terms, and develop group workers' competency in these areas. They specify that multicultural and social justice competency encompasses three domains: awareness of self and group members, strategies and skills, and social justice advocacy (Singh, Merchant, Skudrzyk, & Ingene, 2012). One of the many positives about this document and thrust of interest is the practical outlining of what group workers should do if privilege and oppression are found in their work. The group worker should embrace his or her role as a change agent, develop the skills to make changes, develop the ability to take actions, and to actively identify issues of privilege and oppression.

All of the above criteria are important in the practice of group work. However, the difficulty remains on the best way to train future group workers with these necessary skills. The final governing body deals specifically with how to train future group counselors with as many of these skills as necessary.

**Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Educational Related Programs**

CACREP was established to develop counseling training standards, to recognize a complex society, and to strengthen program improvement and best practices, among other goals

(CACREP, 2019). CACREP specifically accredits graduate counseling programs in order to produce graduates who demonstrate knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions.

There are six sections to the organization of the 2016 CACREP standards: learning environment, professional counseling identity, professional practice, evaluation in the program, entry-level specialty areas, and doctoral standards for counselor education and supervision (CACREP, 2015). While group work is not specifically listed as one of these six sections, it is addressed within the professional counseling identity section. It is listed as the sixth area of curriculum development entitled "Group Counseling and Group Work." Areas of focus under this section include theoretical foundations, group process and development, therapeutic factors and group effectiveness, and functions and characteristics of effective group leaders (CACREP, 2015).

Each of the criteria found under group counseling and group work provides guidance for group workers and also requires some experience with group work (10 hours minimum per academic term). Additionally, while it is more expansive than the short criteria in the ACA Code of Ethics, there is more work that can be done to further train and develop effective group workers.

## Group Worker Standard Comparison

Armed with an understanding of the standards that have been set in place by the main governing bodies, the standards can be evaluated based on Barlow's (2004) four categories: experiential, supervision, observation, and academic. This model of evaluating learning has a strong pedagogical foundation (Fuhriman & Burlingame, 2001; Dies, 1994).

### Experiential

In looking at the requirements for group workers in the ACA Code of Ethics, it became clear that there were numerous ways in which the codes could be interpreted. Thus, experience can help guide a student or group worker where simply reading cannot. Due to the nature of group work, it is important that the group leader does not become detached from the group so that he or she can discern the group dynamics and stages (Barlow, 2004). These reasons are the factors behind the ASGW and CACREP maintaining some standards for building group experiences into the training of group workers. The ASGW sets the standard for core training experience at a minimum of 10 hours (20 hours are recommended) of observation and participation in group work (Wilson, Rapin, & Haley-Banez, 2000). However, the experience requirement grows significantly for the four specialization areas. The ASGW states the group experience requirements as: Task/Work Group Facilitation (30 hours; 45 hours are recommended), Group Psychoeducation (30 hours; 45 hours are recommended), Group Counseling (45 hours; 60 hours are recommended), and Group Psychotherapy (45 hours; 60 hours are recommended) (Wilson et al., 2000). It is also suggested that the experience within these four areas stay centered to the age and clientele of the student's area of specialty. CACREP additionally set guidelines for experience requirements with groups at a 10 hours minimum per academic term (CACREP, 2015).

All of these requirements point to the fact that experience truly brings understanding in conducting group work. It can be argued that individuals who embark on facilitating a group without proper prior experience can fall into many of the traps that befall a group that is not run well. How a student can gain this experience is another area for discussion. There are many issues such as dual relationship with an instructor, confidentiality, and receiving feedback. These

will be discussed more. However, the challenge remains that there are no clear guidelines of how to facilitate this experience practically. Still, the need for experiencing group remains paramount to standards of training for group workers.

**Academic**

The area of academic training is perhaps the largest form of all the standards across the governing bodies. The ASGW spends considerable time detailing the skills that must be learned and acquired in the academic setting of training. CACREP's entire existence is based on setting academic standards in this area. While they are not as fleshed out as the ASGW, they are still beneficial and required for all graduate programs. Issues such as preparation, theory, screening, interventions, group stages, evaluation, and ethics are all covered in the ASGW standard practices document (Thomas & Pender, 2008).

While not every institution has been evaluated, a brief look at established programs show not only a good cross section of core training, but also a complete lack of specialized training (Ohrt, Ener, Porter, & Young, 2014). This lack of specialized training could be due in part to the time constraints of programs to cover such a large swath of information and skills. Perhaps it would be beneficial to create a separate certification for specialization apart from the academic setting. Similar to group certification that is offered through the American Group Psychotherapy Association, the American Psychological Association's (APA) branch (Gladding, 1994). This would take the pressure off of the schools and programs to provide the necessary academic teaching and shift focus back on the industry and its setting of standardization among group counselors.

**Observation**

While observation can fall into the experience category, there are some differences. Observation is mentioned in the ASGW standards as well as the CACREP general standards for counselors. The advantage that observation has over experience is the ability to decouple personal identity from skill acquisition. A student may be able to critique a video or observe a group they are not a part of more easily than if they are actually a group participant. As Barlow (2004) states, the goal is to invite mastery rather than expect students to be masters. In this way, modeling can take place and students are better able to compare and contrast group worker skills and styles.

**Supervision**

The final aspect of training cannot be separated from experience and observation. It is only through supervision that the feedback loop to the student is complete. All of the experience requirements for the ASGW and CACREP entail supervision in order to allow students to learn by gaining invaluable experience. Barlow (2004) recommends focusing on four areas of group supervision to include: what is needed; at which level; who should do it; and what resulted. By answering each of these four questions, students get the necessary feedback from their professors and leaern to be their own sources of critique once supervision is no longer required. All of these aspects aid in developing the group leader into an effective catalyst for change that is the hallmark of all good groups.

### Supervision and Multicultural Competence

CACREP, the ACA, and the ASGW set forth standards requiring “that professional counselors demonstrate diversity and advocacy knowledge and skills or competencies” (Chang, Barrio Minton, Dixon, Meyers, & Sweeney, 2012, p. 185). Furthermore, CACREP expects

counselor educators to demonstrate leadership ability when confronting social inequity (Chang et al., 2012). CACREP is the foremost accrediting agency for counselor education whose purpose is to further educational standards and to facilitate professional counselor competence (Bohecker, Schellenberg, & Silvey, 2017; CACREP, 2015). The intent of the CACREP standards is to promote clarity and simplification within the requirements and to help unify the profession of counseling (CACREP, 2015). While programs are required to meet all core content areas, there is flexibility when choosing what areas to emphasize (CACREP, 2015). Programs are encouraged to utilize creativity and innovation in fulfilling the spirit and purpose of the standards (CACREP, 2015). The core curriculum standards for *Group Counseling and Group Work* includes the following criteria:

a. theoretical foundations
b. group process and development
c. therapeutic factors and group effectiveness
d. functions and characteristics of effective group leaders
e. group formation: recruiting, screening, and selection
f. types of groups and conducting groups in varied settings
g. ethical and cultural considerations for designing and facilitating groups
h. direct small group experiences: 10-hour minimum per academic term. (CACREP, 2015).

Yalom and Lesczc (2005) emphasize the importance of supervision in group counseling. How supervisors treat their supervisees should reflect professional ethics and values (Yalom & Lesczc, 2005). “If we want our trainees to treat their clients with respect, compassion, and

dignity, that is how we must treat our trainees" (Yalom & Lesczc, 2005, p. 548). Yalom and Lesczc (2005) indicate that supervision gives counselor educators the opportunity to observe and gain information about counselor behavior that impacts the group process. "Supervision that is unduly critical, shaming, or closed to the trainee's principal concern will not only fail educationally, it will also dispirit the trainee" (Yalom & Lesczc, 2005, p. 549). Supervision in group work is a way that counseling leaders can empower others in developing multicultural competencies and advocating for the oppressed (Chang et al., 2012). "Without supervision, group leaders may not identify mistakes or generate new plans of action; instead, they become stuck in a cycle of repeated, ineffective interventions" (Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2019, p. 237).

A model of supervision that addresses one's perception of self and how one subsequently engages others in a group context is the Heuristic Model of Nonoppressive Interpersonal Development (HMNID; Ancis & Ladany, 2001; Chang et al., 2012). This model utilizes an assessment of multiple dimensions and identity variables where counselor educators learn and discover "patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors about themselves, their supervisees, and their clients across various demographic variables" (Ancis & Ladany, 2001; Chang et al., 2012, p. 191). For each variable, individuals are identified as belonging to "one of two groups: socially oppressed group (SOG, or target group) or socially privileged group (SPG, or dominant group)" (Ancis & Ladany, 2001; Chang et al., 2012, p. 191). Development of interpersonal functioning is measured according to four phases: "adaptation, incongruence, exploration, and integration" (Ancis & Ladany, 2001; Chang et al., 2012, p. 191). Adaptation is characterized by conformity, apathy, and complacency with the dominant culture (Ancis & Ladany, 2001; Chang et al., 2012). Incongruence occurs when new experiences contradict previous beliefs (Ancis & Ladany, 2001;

Chang et al., 2012). Exploration begins when one recognizes and evaluates one's belonging to the SPG or SOP (Ancis & Ladany, 2001; Chang et al., 2012). Awareness of oppressive interaction, diversity, and commitment to advocacy and change marks the final phase of integration (Anis & Ladany, 2001; Chang et al., 2012).

Another model of group supervision is Chang's, Hays', and Milliken's (2009) social constructivist approach (Chang et al., 2012). According to this theory, the purpose of supervision is to expand counselor educator awareness of contextual issues impacting the group counseling process and to encourage an understanding of the multiple meanings that can influence "self-awareness, client issues, and community collaboration" (Chang et al., 2009; 2012, p. 192). Cognitions and reality are considered malleable and are influenced by interaction with others (Chang et al., 2009; Chang et al., 2012).

A model of supervision that blends multicultural counseling competencies (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992), HMNID (Ancis & Ladany, 2001), and Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom, Engelhart., Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956) is the Synergistic Model of Multicultural Supervision (Chang et al., 2012). Bloom's Taxonomy stimulates cognitive complexity and includes the following six instructional levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom et al., 1956; Chang et al., 2012). The other aspects of the model integrate "the cognitive, affective, and behavior domains; and develop the knowledge necessary to work with clients from diverse backgrounds" (Chang et al., 2012, p. 192). The content and process of supervision is attended to "through structured interventions" as supervisees engage in self-reflective exercises and cognitive growth increases (Chang et al., 2012, p. 192).

Chang et al. (2012) recommend triadic and group supervision to facilitate counseling advocacy and leadership skills of counselor educators. Asking counselors-in-training to present cases in which they are required to apply their theoretical approaches and demonstrate leadership and advocacy skills is a way to meet CACREP standards in *Professional Counseling Orientation and Practice, Social and Cultural Diversity, Human Growth and Development, Counseling and Helping Relationships, Group Counseling and Group Work*, and *Research and Program Evaluation* (CACREP, 2015; Chang et al., 2012). Furthermore, encouraging counselor educators to attend to salient identity factors of clients can assist them in understanding what they may be overlooking or assuming and how this influences the counseling process (Chang et al., 2012).

**Spirituality and Religion**

One area of concern is the need for religious and spiritual standards in the training of group workers (Bohecker et al., 2017). Although spirituality and religion are recognized as a salient factor by the ACA and its division of the Association for Spiritual and Religious Issues in Counseling (ASERVIC), a majority of counselors seem to be unaware of the ASERVIC competencies (Bohecker et al., 2017; Reiner & Dobmeier, 2014). Additionally, those who know of the competencies may not fully address them in counselor training nor use them in counseling settings (Bohecker et al., 2017). This may be because many individuals do not understand differences between spirituality and religion (Bohecker et al., 2017). Furthermore, spirituality is often interwoven with religion and is not viewed as a distinct concept (Bohecker et al., 2017). Bohecker et al. (2017) distinguish religion as an external practice that occurs within the context of culture, whereas spirituality is an internal and subjective dimension of all humankind that transcends culture and religion.

The ACA considers spirituality an integral aspect of holistic wellness (Bohecker et al., 2017; Myers, 2009). However, there seems to be an inconsistency between standards of training in counselor education and the endorsed competencies (Bohecker et al., 2017). Bohecker et al. (2017) point out that a de-emphasis on spirituality and religion occurred when the 2016 CACREP Standards no longer included a definition of spirituality and relocated spirituality and religion within the *Social and Cultural Diversity* curriculum area without adequately delineating these terms. Therefore, Bohecker et al. (2017) advocated for an additional CACREP core curriculum area addressing spirituality and religion.

Providing consistent standardized guidelines for counselor training in spirituality and religion will contribute to the mental and emotional well-being of clients (Bohecker et al., 2017). Clients prefer to have their spiritual and religious issues addressed in therapy as these beliefs impact worldview and behavior (Bohecker et al., 2017; Rose, Westefeld, & Ansley, 2001). Issues such as spiritual abuse, crises of faith, and countertransference can seriously impact the counseling process (ASERVIC, 2019; Casquarelli & Benoit, 2017; Matthews & Snow, 2018). However, many counselors feel that they are not adequately trained in addressing spiritual or religious concerns, and research has identified barriers when incorporating spirituality and religion in counselor training (Bohecker et al., 2017). Barriers can include inadequate understanding of the significance of spirituality and religion, misunderstanding about separation of church and state, lack of comfort with discussing a sensitive topic, and insufficient preparation (Bohecker et al., 2017). Thus, counselors often require further training to meet client needs (Bohecker et al., 2017).

Although certification programs in spirituality are available, there are no consistent standards or oversight for them (Bohecker et al., 2017; CACREP, 2015). Furthermore, these programs are often limited to a particular faith or denomination, and access can be restricted in secular settings (Bohecker et al., 2017). Bohecker et al. (2017) assert that spiritual and religious training should be standardized within the CACREP core curriculum rather than sought as postgraduate education. The proposed core standards aim to train students to assist clients in developing wellness and healthier coping strategies based on their individual religious and spiritual beliefs (Bohecker et al., 2017).

Infusing spirituality and religion into the CACREP core curriculum would promote the values of wellness, prevention, and development that are integral to the standards (Mellin, Hunt, & Nichols, 2011; Reilly, 2016). Spiritual values can be the most significantly held cultural values of clients (Bohecker et al., 2017; Burke, 1998-1999). Neglecting this aspect of wellness increases the likelihood of unethical client treatment (Bohecker et al., 2017). Standardization of spirituality and religion as a CACREP core curriculum requisite would help to provide consistent criteria in counselor education and would improve solidification of counselor identity, best practices, and holistic wellness (Bohecker et al., 2017). Furthermore, this would strengthen CACREP as an advocate for global wellness and would better prepare counselors to meet complex and diverse needs (Bohecker et al., 2017). The proposed core curriculum area of *Spirituality and Religion* includes the following criteria:

a. spiritual and religious history and development of counseling
b. spirituality, spiritual identities, faith-based cultures, and

world religions

c. models of faith, spiritual, and religious development

d. spiritual and religious supervision, collaboration, and consultation

e. spiritual and faith-based wellness, functioning, and identity

f. spiritual/religious perspectives of clinical assessment, case conceptualization, and diagnosis and treatment planning

g. competencies for addressing spiritual and religious issues

h. working with diverse spiritual and religious systems

i. interviewing and assessing individuals, couples, and families from diverse spiritual/religious backgrounds

j. identification of spiritual/religious values and appropriate treatment, planning, and intervention strategies

k. impact of spiritual/religious beliefs on:

grief/loss process, rituals, behaviors, aging, intergenerational influences, crisis/trauma, addictions, human sexuality, couple/family functioning, infidelity, violence, abuse, and health issues

l. ethical/culturally relevant strategies for referrals and consultation with spiritual leaders

*Note.* The curriculum standards were reviewed by an expert panel of 11 counselor educators. (Bohecker et al., 2017)

**Future Research**

There are many ways in which the *Spirituality and Religion* curriculum could be implemented within CACREP *Group Counseling and Group Work* standards (Bohecker et al., 2017). The suggested *Spirituality and Religion* core area could be blended within *Social and Cultural Diversity* or *Human Growth and Development* in a group context, or an individual course could be included in degree plans (Bohecker et al., 2017). For example, an elective course on Eastern-based mindfulness was offered to counseling students at Northwestern University to improve self-care, and it received positive reviews (Campbell & Christopher, 2012; Reilly, 2016). However, Reilly (2016) observed that an additional course may not be practical or desirable in addition to the 60-hour CACREP requirement. Also, some approaches, such as Eastern-based mindfulness, may not fit well into a didactic framework (Reilly, 2016). Thus, experiential groups were advocated for when implementing mindfulness or other similar approaches (Reilly, 2016). Similarly, Bohecker, Vereen, Wells, and Wathen (2016) implemented a mindfulness experience small group (MESG) with counselors-in-training that involved guided meditation, attention to the body and emotions, compassion to self, and development of interpersonal skills. An increase in self-awareness and the ability to manage emotions were found as a result of the MESG which can help prevent countertransference and projecting onto others (Bohecker et al., 2016; Reilly, 2016). Reilly (2016) advocated for Bohecker et al.'s (2014) MESG as fulfillment of the CACREP Group Work standard of having direct experience as a member of a group and identifies the benefits of mindfulness in counselor education, such as navigating developmental anxiety in healthier ways and internalizing self-efficacy. In light of the ASERVIC (2019) competencies of tailoring practices to fit spiritual and/ or religious views, offering Centering Prayer as an alternative to Eastern-based mindfulness small groups for those

who would like instruction in a Western-based, Christian approach to guided meditation could be beneficial to counselor educators and is an area where more research is needed (Knabb, 2012).

Bohecker et al. (2017) suggested an infusion of a broad range of the history of religion and spirituality in counselor education that covers Western, Eastern, and nonreligious beliefs such as: Native American spirituality, Islam, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Sikhism, Taoism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Confucianism, agnosticism, atheism, and humanism. ASERVIC Competencies addressing appropriate consultation and referral with leaders could also be included (Bohecker et al., 2017). Various models of wellness and the influence of religious and spiritual origin, upbringing, and development would be explored in consideration of various factors such as gender, age, ability, etc. (Bohecker et al., 2017). Exploration of counselor attitudes, values, and beliefs about spirituality and religion would be integrated into experiential group activities, process groups, and/ or blended internet classes with the aim of reflecting on one's personal spiritual development, increasing self-awareness, and developing self-confidence when addressing client spiritual and religious issues (Bohecker et al., 2017).

## Conclusion

CACREP, ACA, and ASGW recognize that group counseling is complex and requires sensitivity to cultural diversity and ethical dilemmas (ACA, 2014; ASGW, 2012; CACREP, 2015). Therefore, creating flexible training standards that hold counseling leaders accountable can be challenging (Chang et al., 2012). Barlow (2004) suggested four group categories when comparing group work standards of the ACA, ASGW, and CACREP: experiential, academic, observation, and supervision. Supervision is the most complex as it encompasses the other three

and is another area in need of research (Barlow, 2004; Chang et al, 2012; Yalom & Lesczc, 2005).

To address this complexity, three models of group counseling supervision were discussed: the HMNID (Ancis & Ladany, 2001), Chang et al.'s (2009) Social Constructivist Model, and the Synergistic Model of Multicultural Supervision (Bloom et al., 1956; Chang et al., 2012; Sue et al., 1992). Each model addresses leadership and advocacy skills when confronting social justice issues in group counseling with the intention of promoting cognitive malleability (Chang et al., 2012). Identifying barriers that impede human growth and development and advocating for and with clients requires counselor educators to develop "cognitive complexity, the ability to differentiate and integrate information about themselves, their clients, and the myriad external factors that may influence client well-being and growth" (Chang et al, 2012, p. 203).

Salient factors, such as spirituality and religion, clearly impact counselor educators and their clients as recognized by ACA's division of ASERVIC (ASERVIC, 2019; Bohecker et al., 2017). To neglect or overlook this critical holistic aspect of the person is unethical (Bohecker et al., 2017). "Lack of attention to social and cultural differences or poor leadership may result in propagation of harmful societal dynamics during group counseling" (Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2019, p. 130). Therefore, future research is suggested to support additional CACREP training standards that adequately address spirituality and religion and to unify professional counseling standards (Bohecker et al., 2017). Advocacy on behalf of the counseling profession, counselor educators, and clients is essential to the promotion of "human dignity and wellness for all" (Chang et al., 2012, p. 203).

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