Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

The good, the bad and the uncertainty: Trainees' perceptions of the personal development group

Journal Item

How to cite:

Moller, Naomi P. and Rance, Nicola (2013). The good, the bad and the uncertainty: Trainees' perceptions of the personal development group. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 13(4) pp. 282–289.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2013 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1080/14733145.2012.754482>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

The Good, the Bad and the Uncertainty:

Trainees' perceptions of the personal development group

Moller, N. P. & Rance, N. (2013): The good, the bad and the uncertainty: Trainees' perceptions of the personal development group. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research: Linking research with practice*, 13 (4), 282-289.

Corresponding author: [details]

The Good, the Bad and the Uncertainty: Trainees' perceptions of the personal development group

Background: Views about the purpose and role of personal development groups (PD group) in the counsellor training process are varied. Some argue they enhance self-awareness, self-exploration, the ability to be congruent and, ultimately, that they make for better practitioners. Others argue there is no clear evidence for such benefits and that they can actually be damaging to trainees. *Aims:* This study aimed to explore the beliefs of 25 trainees enrolled on counselling diploma or counselling psychology doctoral courses. It looked in particular at their perceptions of the purpose of PD groups and their expectations regarding support, difficulties and the scope of their participation. *Method:* Data was collected using open-ended questions in an anonymous survey and was subjected to a thematic analysis. *Results:* Trainees appeared to hold mixed – and sometimes conflicting – views about the PD group. For some it was a positive endeavour that facilitated learning about self and clients, and helped in the processes of developing counselling skills and keeping the training group healthy. For others it was a feared space which could elicit negative emotional experiences, and impact negatively on both learning outside of the PD group and the health of the group itself. Still others were unclear about its purpose. Hope/idealisation (of the process, the facilitator and course tutors) were also evident in the trainees' responses. *Implications:* Implications of these findings for counselling training are discussed.

Keywords: counselling training; personal development; personal development groups; qualitative research

Introduction

The personal development of counselling trainees is seen as a core component of training (e.g., Johns, 1996; Mearns, 1997; see also: BPS, 2010; BACP, 2009). Despite its importance however, it has been suggested that both the concept and route to personal development is poorly defined (Donati & Watts, 2005; Irving & Williams, 1999; Williams & Irving, 1996). Nonetheless, in current practice, and as evidenced by the number of courses requiring trainees to take part in some form of PD group (Lennie, 2007; Moller, Alilovich & Mundra, 2008; Wilkins, 2006), personal development groups (PD groups) are widely accepted as a means to foster personal development in trainees.

With roots stretching back to the 'T' (training) groups devised by Kurt Lewin in the 1940s (Galbraith & Hart, 2007; Hutten, 1996), today PD groups as used in British counselling training typically have an open agenda and are non-directive, closed, confidential and exempt from being directly assessed (Payne, 1999, 2004). Typical in some ways of process-type therapeutic groups, because of their context within training courses, PD groups have some unique characteristics: (1) group members are in default academic competition with each other; (2) group members have extensive contact with each other outside the group (Lennie, 2007); (3) elements of the PD group participation may be used to indirectly assess students (Rose, 2008); and (4) if the PD group is also facilitated by a course tutor, as is the case in some courses (Moller, Alilovich & Mundra, 2008), there is the potential for dual roles (Shumaker, Ortiz & Brenninkmeyer, 2011). These characteristics matter because they potentially impact students' interactions in the group, i.e. their willingness to engage or to take risks.

Courses use PD groups because they are theorised to help develop trainees' relationship skills, personal awareness and ability to identify and address their own

issues (Hutten, 1996; Johns, 1996; Robson & Robson, 2008). In addition to promoting personal development, PD groups are also theorised to enhance trainees' practice skills (Sinason, 1999). However it needs to be noted that the body of theoretical writing on the topic is limited and rather general, and that some have claimed there is no clear theoretical rationale to support either the posited benefits of PD groups or the supposed link between these benefits and enhanced clinical skills (Galbraith & Hart, 2007; Payne, 1999).

Importantly, the empirical evidence that is available is also limited – i.e. no research thus far has sought to explore the impact of PD groups on trainee's counselling skills by incorporating client outcome data. Some research has explored student experiences and perceptions of experiential groups in the US where, rather differently than in Britain, such groups are typically used within Master's level group therapy courses to foster understanding and skills relevant to group work (e.g. Anderson & Price, 2001; Kline, Falbaum, Pope, Hargraves & Hundley, 1997; Ieva, Ohrt, Swank & Young, 2009; Luke & Kiweea, 2010; Smith & Davis-Gage, 2008). A limited British literature also exists on the use of PD groups within counselling training (e.g. Hall et al., 1999; Lennie, 2007; Payne, 2001; 2004, Robson & Robson, 2008). The findings from these studies, all of which were conducted during or after the group experience, suggest that while most trainees find such groups positive (e.g., Fairhurst & Merry, 1999; Ieva, Ohrt, Swank & Young, 2009; Small & Manthei, 1988), others may experience 'general discomfort' (Anderson & Price, 2001), 'an uncomfortable level of anxiety' (Kline, Falbaum, Pope, Hargraves & Hundley, 1997), 'forms of psychological damage' (Hall et al., 1999) or even 'severe negative outcomes' (Lieberman, 1981) with this type of learning. Robson and Robson (2008) highlight most succinctly just how divergent trainees' experiences can be: "For some students, the PD group appears to be the most

powerful experience of their counsellor training. For others, they never really seem to understand or engage in its purpose” (p. 371).

Whilst the causes of this disparity in trainee experience of PD groups remain unclear, there are a number of issues that might usefully be considered as underlying factors. For example, PD groups vary enormously in nature and structure (Galbraith & Hart, 2007; Shumaker, Ortiz & Brenninkmeyer, 2011); trainees vary in terms of the degree to which they will learn and develop in groups (Irving & Williams, 1995) and their “openness to genuine exploration” (Rose, 2008, p. 2); and facilitators vary both in terms of the way in which they run groups and the extent to which they feel it appropriate (or desirable) to inform (or not) group members about the purposes of the group (Johns, 1996).

Whilst some of these factors cannot be overtly managed (e.g. trainees cannot be forced to participate or to learn), others can and both researchers and theoreticians have, over the years, made recommendations regarding the ways in which PD groups should be implemented. Several writers (Irving & Williams, 1996; Johns, 1996), for example, have highlighted the importance of making explicit the underlying assumptions, aims, purposes and process of the PD group, arguing that not doing so may create a power imbalance which can leave group members feeling manipulated (Corey, 2000).

At the course/institution level, greater clarity about the purpose of PD groups in training has also been recommended (e.g. Dryden and Feltham, 1994). Rose (2008), for example, suggests that time and effort should be devoted to “thinking through coherent and transparent policies about the relationship of the group to the course as a whole and its role in assessment” (p. 2). Arguably this should include specifics about how PD group participation is expected to contribute to the student becoming a better practitioner of the course model (e.g. psychodynamic or person-centred).

Reviewing the theory and research on PD groups reveals that the theoretical rationale for PD groups in training is weak and the empirical support limited, with a suggestion that while many experience PD groups as positive to their personal and professional development, others find this type of group experience highly anxiety provoking and even damaging. If PD groups are used, however, the recommendation appears to be that courses prepare trainees by being explicit about what they are and what they are expected to achieve. In order to do this in a way that is meaningful to the trainees and addresses such issues as their questions and doubts, it would clearly be beneficial to know more about their assumptions, hopes and fears. No prior research has explored the perceptions and assumptions of two groups of trainees BEFORE they began their PD group therefore this is what this study set out to do.

Method

Research philosophical assumptions

The study was conducted from within an essentialist, realist framework that focuses on the explicit meanings in the data. The analysis aimed to provide a rich account of the responses and was conducted inductively or in a “bottom-up” / data-driven way, without an a-priori attempt to fit the data into theory.

Researcher as instrument

At the time of data analysis NR was a fourth-year counselling psychology trainee; she had been in a year-long PD group as part of a Certificate in Counselling and a three-year long PD group as part of her Doctorate in Counselling Psychology. NM was providing training to diploma-level counsellors and doctoral-level counselling psychologists and had experienced a range of trainee responses to the PD group; she had also been in group therapy, a year-long PD group as part of a Certificate in Counselling, and had

facilitated a variety of groups. Prior to the analysis of the data, the researchers outlined their preconceptions about the use of PD groups in counselling psychology and counselling training. Briefly, although NR's four years personal experience as a PD Group member was frequently uncomfortable and occasionally painful, she ultimately found it to be an enlightening process which enabled her to discover more about herself and her own role in groups. NM found her experience of PD groups when training sometimes painful but ultimately useful; as a trainer she has had experience of trainees reporting struggling with PD groups and questioning their usefulness.

Participants

The participants were 12 counselling psychology trainees and 13 counselling diploma trainees. Their ages ranged from 21 to 61 years. Five of the trainees were men. Three of the trainees described their ethnicity as "Asian/Asian British," and two as "Black or Black British". Questionnaires were distributed among two consecutive groups of counselling psychology trainees (17 trainees total; giving an overall response rate of 71%), and one cohort of diploma students (20 trainees; providing an overall response rate of 65%). The diploma and counselling psychology students were required to attend a year-long, weekly, fixed-membership, open-agenda, 90-minute PD group led by a facilitator external to the course team. Trainee engagement in the group was not directly assessed although trainees were required to reflect on their experience in the group in written assignments. For both cohorts a course entry pre-requisite was one hundred hours of counselling training; for some trainees this meant that they had some prior experience of PD groups.

Data Collection

The data in this study was collected using qualitative questionnaires, an anonymous data collection method which reduces social desirability pressures on participants to produce

only positive responses, is ideally suited for sensitive topics, and provides an opportunity to gather data from a larger group of participants than is possible with other data collection methods (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The method thus allowed tutors for the two programmes to invite all current first year trainees to participate in the study; those who expressed an interest were provided with the study questionnaire and participants handed completed questionnaires back to course tutors in sealed envelopes.

The questions for the survey were developed to explore trainee's understanding of the rationale for PD groups in counsellor training. Researchers developed a set of potential questions which were then reviewed with counsellor training staff and modified following feedback. The final questionnaire comprised five questions investigating trainee perceptions of the purpose of PD groups (*'Please describe your thoughts and feelings about the relationship between participation in a personal development group and counsellor training?'*; *'Why do you think participation in a personal development group is required by the Programme?'*), whether they anticipated difficulties as a result of participation, how they thought the programme might best support them to participate and what they thought the scope of their participation should be. Demographic information was also collected.

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the university's internal ethics committee. Trainees were reminded that they were under no obligation to participate in the project. Data was anonymised before analysis.

Data analysis

The analysis proceeded according to the steps listed by Braun & Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis. This began with data transcription, familiarisation with the data by multiple readings and an initial noting of ideas. Next, preliminary coding was conducted across the data set and these codes were then collected into potential themes. The initial coding of themes was conducted separately for half of the data by each researcher and then the reading of the data mutually agreed to enhance the credibility and dependability

of the findings (Morrow, 2005). The first researcher then completed the data analysis and did the initial organisation of themes, which was then reviewed and re-worked by both researchers until final agreement was reached. At this point the analysis was reviewed and checked by a colleague who had not been involved in the data analysis process. In addition to this iterative process of analysis and review, the quality of the analysis was also enhanced through creation of a clear analytic audit trail, including the generation of hierarchical theme tables which allowed tracking of individual participant quotes through codes, to sub-themes and finally themes. In addition, the researchers fostered their reflexive engagement with the research through ongoing research discussions.

Results

The three main themes were 'The Good', 'The Bad' and 'The Uncertainty'.

The Good

The theme 'The Good' encapsulated what appeared to be four positively-perceived, interlinked functions of the PD group, namely, learning about self, learning about clients, developing counselling skills and keeping the group healthy. Thus for many students the PD group was seen as a highly valued vehicle for personal development, in terms of increasing their self-awareness: *"It's about increasing our self awareness. About learning to accept ourselves. To think about the judgements we make about people"* (Trainee 14); *"I see it as a necessity for trainees to participate in such a group in order to become more self-aware, fully functioning and even "whole" persons"* (Trainee 1). Participation was also perceived to highlight areas requiring further work: *"Seeing how you react to others' thoughts and feelings helps us realise what our issues*

are” (Trainee 10); *“It can also reveal potential triggers and vulnerabilities we need to be aware of (in ourselves) as counsellors”* (Trainee 4).

For other trainees the PD group was perceived as a vessel for enabling them to better understand and cope with their clients' experiences, *“To see things from a client's perspective”* (Trainee 14), or as Trainee 17 stated: *“Hearing different views about one issue gives you an insight to how your clients might be thinking.”* Trainees also regarded the PD group as a place for the development of counselling skills, such as listening and reflecting, and learning about relational dynamics: *“I think it helps the individual develop counselling skills”* (Trainee 22); *“It also helps in understanding the impact each individual can have on the group and therefore [promotes] deeper understanding of the impact I would have with a client or group of clients”* (Trainee 8). Furthermore, all three of these functions ('learning about self', 'learning about clients', 'developing counselling skills') were seen as contributing to the trainees' overall development as practitioners. As Trainee 21 put it: *“I hope ... that ultimately it will facilitate good practice for me as a counsellor.”*

The PD group was also viewed by some as a resource for maximising the learning opportunities offered elsewhere on the course by creating a more cohesive, well functioning group: *“I imagine the most helpful aspect will be in developing the group itself in order to function better on the training”* (Trainee 9); *“To resolve issues that may come up within the group which would fracture the group and impair peer learning”* (Trainee 3). The PD group was thus seen as serving a number of purposes, all of which could potentially facilitate trainees' development as practitioners.

The Bad

Students also voiced concerns about the potential for the PD group to be both a negative experience in and of itself, and one that might have knock-on sequelae in other areas of

the course. It was striking from the language used by some of the trainees that they were exceedingly worried about the potential for the PD group to be a distressing experience. Words such as 'cautious', 'wary', 'apprehensive', 'painful', 'dread', 'anxiety', 'fear', 'intimidating', 'scary' and 'vulnerable' punctuated their responses. In particular, the trainees appeared to be concerned that they might be misunderstood or negatively judged: *"I have had some very painful experiences in PD groups. Sometimes I feel safe in them, some not ... I also fear and dread these groups"* (Trainee 11). Or as Trainee 18 stated: *"I feel cautious about disclosing my inner preoccupations ... to those who may not understand me."* There was also concern about what PD groups might stir up: *"Personal issues might be touched on which might leave me feeling raw and unsafe"* (Trainee 13).

Although not explicitly vocalised, the trainees' responses also suggested that they were troubled by the possibility that the PD group might be an unsafe space: *"Not sure I will have adequate support or understanding in dealing with very difficult issues"* (Trainee 22); *"My main fear is around confidentiality"* (Trainee 18); *"I don't want to be forced; to say things"* (Trainee 23). Further, in contrast to the belief expressed in the theme 'The Good', some trainees were also concerned that participating in a PD group might weaken rather than strengthen the peer relationships: as Trainee 23 stated, *"I suppose I am worried about having negative feelings towards someone in the group."*

Students also worried that issues or problems raised in the PD group might spill over into other areas of the course, in particular impacting skills practice sessions:

In a previous personal development group I did find it difficult being in this situation with the group and then being in a role play with the same people. I felt I was being client and therapist with the same group and that was difficult. (Trainee 10)

The theme 'The Bad' thus encapsulated the concerns raised by some of the students about the potential for the group to be, at worst, harmful, and at best not particularly useful. As one trainee stated: *"...I suppose my doubt is how beneficial will it be? I'm not sure that it will be the best use of time"* (Trainee 6).

The Uncertainty

'The Uncertainty' describes the very many areas in which the trainees appeared anxiously uncertain about the PD group. For example, a number of trainees were clearly quite unsure about the purpose of the PD group or why they were expected to participate: *"Having a PD group in the training seems a bit odd at the moment. The purpose of it is unclear"* (Trainee 9); *"Not sure of what exactly I want to achieve or am expected to achieve"* (Trainee 24). Or as Trainee 25 said: *"I am not entirely clear on what I have to gain from PD group."* One trainee did not appear to see the PD group as part of their training at all: *"I really enjoy the spirit of the group and it feels like a good break from counsellor training"* (Trainee 24).

Trainees also appeared unsure about why participation was required by the programme. The words *'perhaps'*, *'maybe'*, *'not sure'* and *'don't know'* were used on several occasions and one trainee responded with a simple *"Good question"* to the item asking about why they thought the course required PD group participation (Trainee 6). Similarly, when it came to describing the nature of the group, it was noteworthy that the trainees' responses tended to draw upon other, more familiar, contexts as exemplars: *"I expect the personal development group to be an extension of the aims of personal therapy"* (Trainee 22); *"I suppose it's a form of supervision"* (Trainee 21); *"It's group therapy and this works alongside our own personal therapy"* (Trainee 14).

Uncertainty is also reflected in the starkly contrasting views of trainees regarding how they would bring themselves to the group. For example, Trainee 4 stated: *"I will fully engage in the group and be keen to meet my fellow trainees at a deeper level"* (Trainee 4) while Trainee 6 predicted that their participation would be limited: *"I doubt that I can open fully to a group of various others."* The trainees were also split when it came to the issue of whether or not there should be limits regarding what could be brought to the group with some saying that *"all issues and areas should be brought to the group"* (Trainee 12) while others were clear that *"Individuals' personal issues should be dealt with in therapy"* (Trainee 7).

In addition to explicit statements of uncertainty about the PD group and what it might mean for them, there were also covert expressions of doubt when the trainees appeared to be managing their anxiety through idealisation and normalisation. Such idealisation was particularly evident in the ways in which the group facilitator and course tutors were positioned: *"[If appropriate] the group leader would probably intervene wisely"* (Trainee 1); *"I have found the tutors to be helpful and caring and I am confident that any significant challenges/crises will be met with consideration and concern"* (Trainee 6). Similarly, when expressing the possibility that there might be tough moments, the trainees tended to normalise their fears and concerns and/or reframe them in a more positive light. Thus Trainee 2 stated: *"It does evoke nervousness which I think is normal"* while Trainee 12 stated: *"It could, however, be difficult if conflict arises and I find myself a focus of part of that, but I think that is a natural feeling and one that many/all group members will share."* Trainee 1 also exhibited this positive reframing when stating: *"I fully expect some difficult moments ... Hopefully however I can learn through that."* Taken as whole, the theme 'The Uncertainty' thus represents

the trainees' many levels of "not knowing" – both overt and covert – about the PD group.

Discussion

The results of this study offer new insight into the complex mixture of assumptions, hopes and fears that trainees may have on embarking on a PD group. These assumptions and expectations are important because they may contribute to outcome in PD groups, just as they do in individual therapy (Arnkoff, Glass & Shapiro, 2002). One finding that is particularly apparent is the level of confusion and ignorance some trainees have about the purpose and processes of PD groups. This echoes Johns' (1996) assertion that "trainees often find it notoriously difficult on many courses to understand the rationale and intention embedded in such groups" (p.118); and also suggests that the recommendations outlined earlier regarding the importance of making clear to trainees the purpose and processes of PD groups were not heeded for this group of trainees.

Despite the clear confusion in some trainees, the theme 'The Good' demonstrates that other trainees, even at the start of their training, have a clear understanding of the purposes of PD groups that is in line with their theorised role of fostering self-awareness, client understanding and therapeutic skills (Hutten, 1996; Johns, 1996; Robson & Robson, 2008; Sinason, 1999). Furthermore, the trainees also appeared to see an additional positive role of the group not previously mentioned in the literature - that of using the PD group to maintain the functionality of the training group members' relationships. This is an interesting addition to the literature that comes very much from the trainees' perspectives.

In addition to the perceived potential benefits, it was also clear that at least some of the trainees were concerned about the possible negative sequelae of participation in

the PD group. The theme 'The Bad' underlines the trainees' anxiety about the potential for being judged or misunderstood, feeling unsafe, schisms being created in the training group or their learning on the course being negatively impacted. This ties in with the findings mentioned earlier regarding the possibility that trainees in PD groups may experience 'general discomfort' (Anderson & Price, 2001), 'forms of psychological damage' (Hall et al., 1999) or even 'severe negative outcomes' (Lieberman, 1981). It also suggests that trainees may not be fully trusting of their peers or that they may have doubts about the facilitator and/or course leaders' ability to provide them with the safety they need to be fully open to all that the PD group has to offer. For, as Robson and Robson (2008) assert, "Safety needs to be experienced by group members before they can take the risk of learning about themselves or others" (p. 380).

It is recognized that eliminating trainee anxiety about participation in PD groups is probably impossible; in addition, group theorist Bion (1961) argues that anxiety and frustration is required for learning about 'hot buttons' and typical coping mechanisms (e.g. idealisation and normalisation as in the theme 'The Uncertainty'). Nonetheless, the level of anxiety revealed in this study as well as the potential for negative experiences that is raised in the literature does raise ethical issues for course leaders and suggests the importance of reducing trainees' anxiety both as an end in itself and also to eliminate barriers that might prevent trainees from using the PD group effectively.

Limitations

It was clear from participant responses that some participants had prior experience of PD groups through a counselling certificate. However participants were not asked directly about prior PD group experience, which meant that it was not possible to systematically explore how this impacted responses. Additionally, although generalizability is not expected with qualitative studies, it is important to note that this

study accessed trainees from one training institute. Though the trainees' responses reflect both uncertainty and anxiety/fear, they were, in general, relatively positive and this may reflect a response bias. A course tutor was involved in data collection which may have limited the extent to which the students felt they could be honest about their negative feelings. Trainees may also have been trying to convince themselves that all would be well and responded with positive thinking. Having paid a significant fee to do the training, they may have been seeking to reduce any uncomfortable dissonance that would arise should they get in touch with negative feelings resulting from something they were paying to do. Thus it is possible that the study context created a response demand; notably if this were the case it would suggest the potential for an even higher level of trainee anxiety and uncertainty.

Further research

As much as this study provides new insights, it also raises further questions. Future research must incorporate different training contexts and groups of trainees. It should also explore the perceptions of trainees at the end of their PD group experience, in order to explore the difference between initial expectations and the actual experience. Alternative data collection methods such as interviews (rather than qualitative survey) could allow for more detailed and potentially richer participant responses. Also given that data in this study consists of trainees' perceptions of PD groups, to make a clear argument for the value of PD groups in training it would be important to examine whether experience of PD groups can, in fact, be empirically related to greater counsellor proficiency or better client outcomes.

Implications for training

The confusion around the role of PD groups evidenced in this study implies that students need to be prepared for PD group participation and facilitated in using the

group to maximise their learning. Doing this may involve tutors/facilitators explaining how the PD group will work (e.g. ground rules, confidentiality and limits to confidentiality, and how to seek support in event of distress) and outlining what the course aims for the PD group are, including how it is expected to impact on the development of counselling skills and/or skills/attributes relevant to the theoretical orientation of the course. It may also involve facilitators encouraging group members to talk from the outset about their perceptions, expectations, fears and hopes; a sentiment echoed by Robson and Robson (2008): "The development of a 'group in mind' may be enhanced through open discussion of what each member hopes to learn from the group and what they feel they can offer" (p. 380). More broadly, as Irving and Williams (1995) stated, it needs to be remembered that trainees may differ in their ability to learn in groups. Thus course leaders should consider other avenues for self-development (e.g. through alternative forms of experiential learning and reflection) when developing counselling training courses. After all, PD groups may not be the only, let alone optimal, way to enhance trainees' personal development.

Acknowledgements: [details]

References

- Anderson, R. D. & Price, G. E. (2001). Experiential groups in counselor education: Student attitudes and instructor participation. Counselor Education and Supervision, 41(2), 111-119.
- Arnkoff, D. B., Glass, C. R. & Shapiro, S. J. (2002). Expectations and preferences. In J. C. Norcross (Ed.), Psychotherapy relationships that work (pp. 335-365). Oxford: OUP.
- Bion, W. (1961). Experiences in Groups and Other Papers. Tavistock, London.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3, 77-101.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013). Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners. Sage
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2009). Accreditation of Training Courses. Lutterworth: British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.
- British Psychological Society (2010). Qualification in Counselling Psychology – Candidate Handbook. Leicester: British Psychological Society.
- Corey, G. (2000). Theory and practice of group counselling. London: Brookes Cole.
- Donati, M. & Watts, M. (2005). Personal development in counsellor training: towards a clarification of inter-related concepts. British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 33(4), 475-484.
- Dryden, W. & Feltham, C. (1994). Developing Counsellor Training. London: Sage.
- Fairhurst, I. & Merry, T. (1999). Groupwork in client centred counselling training. In C. Lago & M. Macmillan (Eds.), Experiences in relatedness: Groupwork and the Person Centred Approach (pp. 49-62). Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.

- Galbraith, V. E. & Hart, N. M. (2007). Personal development groups in counselling psychology training: The case for further research. Counselling Psychology Review, 22(4), 49-57.
- Geertz, C. (1983). Local knowledge: Further essays in interpretive anthropology. New York: Basic Books.
- Hall, E., Hall, C., Harris, B., Hay, D., Biddulph, M. & Duffy, T. (1999). An evaluation of the long-term outcomes of small-group work for counsellor development. British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 27(1), 99-112.
- Hutten, J. M. (1996). The use of experiential groups in the training of counsellors and psychotherapists. Psychodynamic Practice: Individuals, Groups and Organisations, 2(2), 247-256.
- Ieva, K. P., Ohrt, J. H., Swank, J. M., & Young, T. L. (2009). The impact of personal growth groups on masters students' counselor and personal development. The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 34 (4), 351-368
- Irving, J. A. & Williams, D. I. (1995). Experience of group work in counsellor training and preferred learning styles. Counselling Psychology Quarterly 8(2), 139-144.
- Irving, J. A. & Williams, D. I. (1996). The role of small group work in counsellor training. Counselling, 7(2), 137-139.
- Irving, J. A. & Williams, D. I. (1999). Personal growth and personal development: concepts clarified. British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 27(4), 517-526.
- Johns, H. (1996). Personal development in counsellor training. London: Cassell.
- Kline, W. B., Falbaum, D. F., Pope, V. T., Hargraves, G. A. & Hundley, S. F. (1997). The significance of the group experience for students in counselor education: A preliminary naturalistic inquiry. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 22 (3), 157-166.

- Lennie, C. (2007). The role of personal development groups in counsellor training: understanding factors contributing to self-awareness in the personal development group. British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 35(1), 115-129.
- Lieberman, M. A. (1981). Analysing change mechanisms in groups. In B. Bates and A. Goodman (1986). The effectiveness of encounter groups. British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 14(3), 240-250.
- Luke, M. & Kiweewa, J. M. (2010). Personal growth and awareness of counselling trainees in an experiential group. The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 35 (4), 365-388.
- Mearns, D. (1997). Person-centred counselling training. London: Sage.
- Moller, N., Alilovich, K. & Mundra, N. (2008). What do we do about personal development? PD training in Counselling Psychology programmes. Counselling Psychology Review, 23(4), 100 – 103.
- Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counselling psychology. Journal of Counselling Psychology, 52(2), 250-260.
- Payne, H. (1999). Personal development groups in the training of counsellors and therapists: a review of the research. The European Journal of Psychotherapy, Counselling and Health, 2(1), 55-68.
- Payne, H. (2001). Student experiences in a personal development group: the question of safety. European Journal of Psychotherapy, Counselling and Health, 4 (2), 267-292.
- Payne, H. (2004). Becoming a client, becoming a practitioner: student narratives of a dance movement therapy group. British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 32(4), 511-532.

- Robson, M. & Robson, J. (2008). Explorations of participants' experiences of a Personal Development Group held as part of a counselling psychology training group: Is it safe in here? Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 21(4), 371-382.
- Rose, C. (2008). The Personal development Group – The Students' Guide. London: Karnac Books Ltd.
- Shumaker D., Ortiz, C. & Brenninkmeyer, L. (2011). Revisiting experiential group training in counselor education: A survey of Masters-level programmes. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 36 (2), 111-128)
- Sinason, V. (1999). In defence of therapy for training. In C. Feltham (Ed.), Controversies in Psychotherapy and Counselling. London: Sage.
- Small, J. J. & Manthei, R. J. (1988). Group work in counsellor training: Research and development in one programme. British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 16(1), 33-49.
- Smith, C. K. & Davis-Gage, D. (2008). Experiential group training: Perceptions of graduate students in counselor education programmes. Groupwork: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Working with Groups, 18 (3), 88-106.
- Wilkins, P. (2006). Professional and personal development. In C. Feltham & I. Horton (Eds.), The SAGE Handbook of Counselling and Psychotherapy (2nd ed) (pp. 158-165). London: Sage.
- Williams, D. I. & Irving, J. A. (1996). Personal growth: Rogerian paradoxes. British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 24(2), 165-172.