Healthy sexual attitudes and awareness are important to an individual’s well-being and their relationship to others. Often a taboo topic among friends, family and even clients, it is imperative to acknowledge that “sexuality should be understood, discussed and embraced in an open manner, free of shame, guilt and moral restrictions” (E-AWR, 2006). While sexuality is a natural part of our human development, the attitudes and acceptance of sexual behaviors span a wide spectrum (Story, 1979). Counselors need to become familiar and comfortable with their own sexuality as an integral component to their overall wellness; mind, body and spiritual wellness is significant, especially for women (Sinclair & Myers, 2004). By better understanding their own sexuality, they are able to help others (Kirkpatrick, 1975). This four month book club/support group was specifically designed for female counselors-in-training to understand their own sexuality so they could gain comfort with the topic and normalize it for their clients.

Rationale, Instruments, and Method

This study investigated changes in sexual attitudes and awareness of nine female counselors-in-training using pre and post tests with two measurements: the Sexual Attitudes for Self and Others Questionnaire (SAS; Story, 1979) and the Sexual Awareness Questionnaire (SAQ; Snell, Fisher & Miller, 1991). Additionally, a focus group was held at the end of the last meeting to understand the subjective experiences of participants.

Results

The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used to analyze the data which showed that the support group elicited statistically significant changes on the SAS sexual attitudes for self (Z= -2.201, p=.028) and others (Z= -2.673, p=.008). Additionally, the results of the SAQ revealed that many participants felt increased sexual awareness (Z= -2.380, p=.017), consciousness (Z= -2.019, p=.043), and assertiveness (Z= -2.555, p=.011).

Discussion, Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The quantitative and qualitative results suggest that this sexuality book club/support group for female counselors-in-training provided the support and outlet to explore sexuality and gain exposure to a variety of sexual values and behaviors. The nature of a support group kept the sample small (n=9). While a higher sample size may yield more statistical power, the small group helped promote self-disclosure and comfort.

Implications for Chi Sigma Iota and for the Counseling Profession

This investigation is relevant to CSI’s wellness counseling research priorities as it relates to one’s sexual wellness. We see this support group/book club as a safe and fun way to develop sexual awareness and healthy sexual attitudes in female counselors-in-training. This study has relevance to the broader field of counseling as counselors’
awareness and attitudes regarding sexuality are important when addressing such issues with clients.

References


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