



Initiating Dialog and Reducing Bias Towards Individuals Who Perpetrated Sexual Offenses

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WHO IS IN THE ROOM?

What is your profession?

- ☐ Clinician
- ☐ Clinical Supervisor
- ☐ Corrections
- ☐ Legal
- ☐ Other

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Agenda

BACKGROUND

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LESSON DEVELOPMENT

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LET'S TRY IT OUT

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STUDY DESIGN

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DISCUSSION AND FUTURE STEPS

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Objectives

- ❑ Understand benefits of using experiential lessons, such as the experiential lesson to broach initial discussions about populations who are generally met with bias and mistreatment.
- ❑ Understand the need for more efficacious approach to learning about and working with individuals who have sexually offended.



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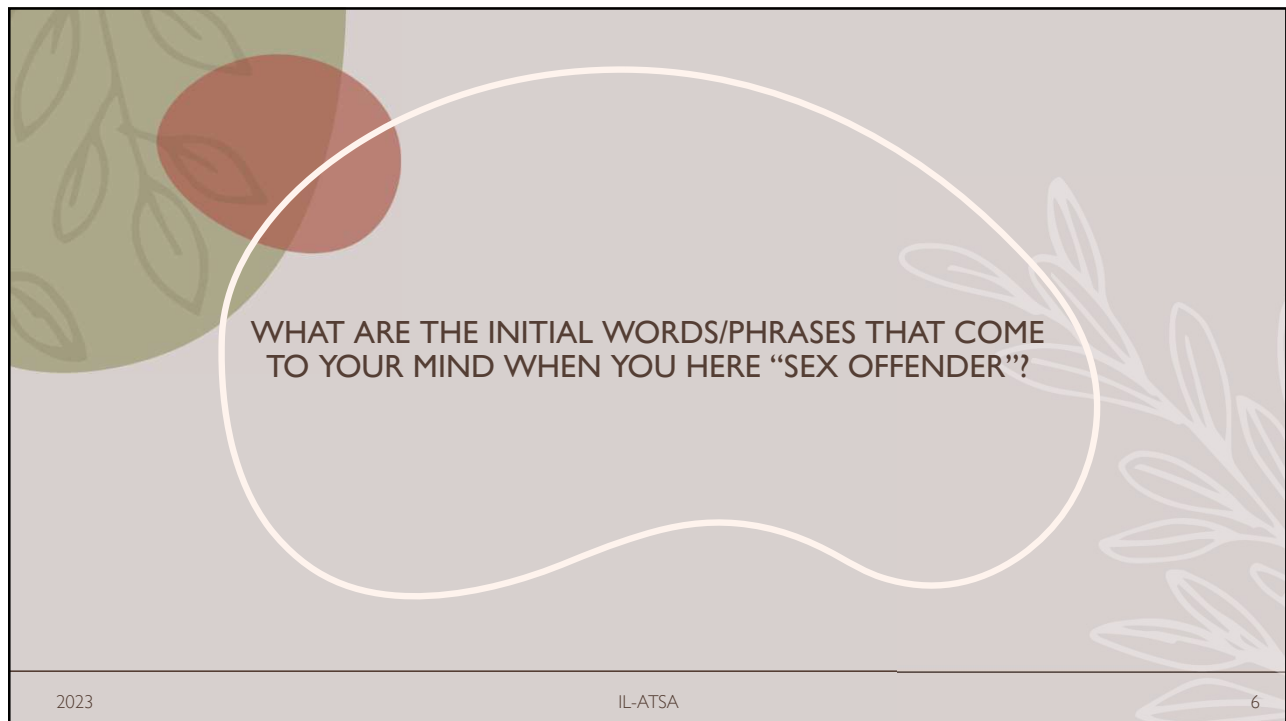
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Perceptions from Professionals

- ❑ Perceptions and views about individuals impact behaviors (e.g., therapeutic engagement, rapport development), beliefs regarding ability to change, and recommendations for sentencing/restrictions/risk level.
- ❑ Variations in attitudes across disciplines.
 - ❑ Those with greatest level of therapeutic contact (psychologists, parole officers) having more positive attitudes, compared to those involved in law enforcement processes
- ❑ For counselors, opinions about individuals who sexually offend are similar to public opinion (judgement, hate, disgust)
 - ❑ More positive perceptions among counselors with personal experience of sexual abuse victimization and/or previous personal and/or professional contact with those who sexually offend
- ❑ Scholars express importance of holistic education for helping professionals encountering clients with sexual attraction to minors and those who sexually offend.
 - ❑ Holistic preparation includes socio-environmental competence, humanistic caring, postures of nonjudgement, and conveying unconditional positive regard for the person.



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Rehabilitation

- After release, encounter various residency laws, variable parole regulations, and diverse rehabilitation supports designed to reduce risk of recidivism.
 - Legislation changes have not resulted in reduced recidivism
 - Legal provisions can be detrimental due to negative impacts on individual and their aim at a pro-social life
- Instead, aim to focus on psychosocial services aimed at addressing individual needs and goals to eliminate future offending behaviors and increase prosocial lifestyle productivity.
- Treatment works!
 - 5-year follow-up: Adults post-treatment- 10 to 15%
 - 5-year follow-up: Juveniles post-treatment- 2.75%
- Meta-analyses: Rates of recidivism for untreated is almost double rates for treated sexual offenders

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Barriers to Rehabilitation

INDIVIDUAL

- Increased stress
- Isolation
- Loneliness
- Poor self-esteem

SOCIETAL

- Hostile interpersonal reactions
- Social rejection
- Lack of prosocial supports
- Loss of prior relationships/supports
- Changes in access to social gatherings/activities previously enjoyed
- Lack of emotionally intimate romantic relationships
- Collapse of social supports/social and professional supports networks

SYSTEMIC

- Housing
- Gainful Employment
- Judgement and hostile treatment by service professionals
- Less ease of access to constructive leisure activities

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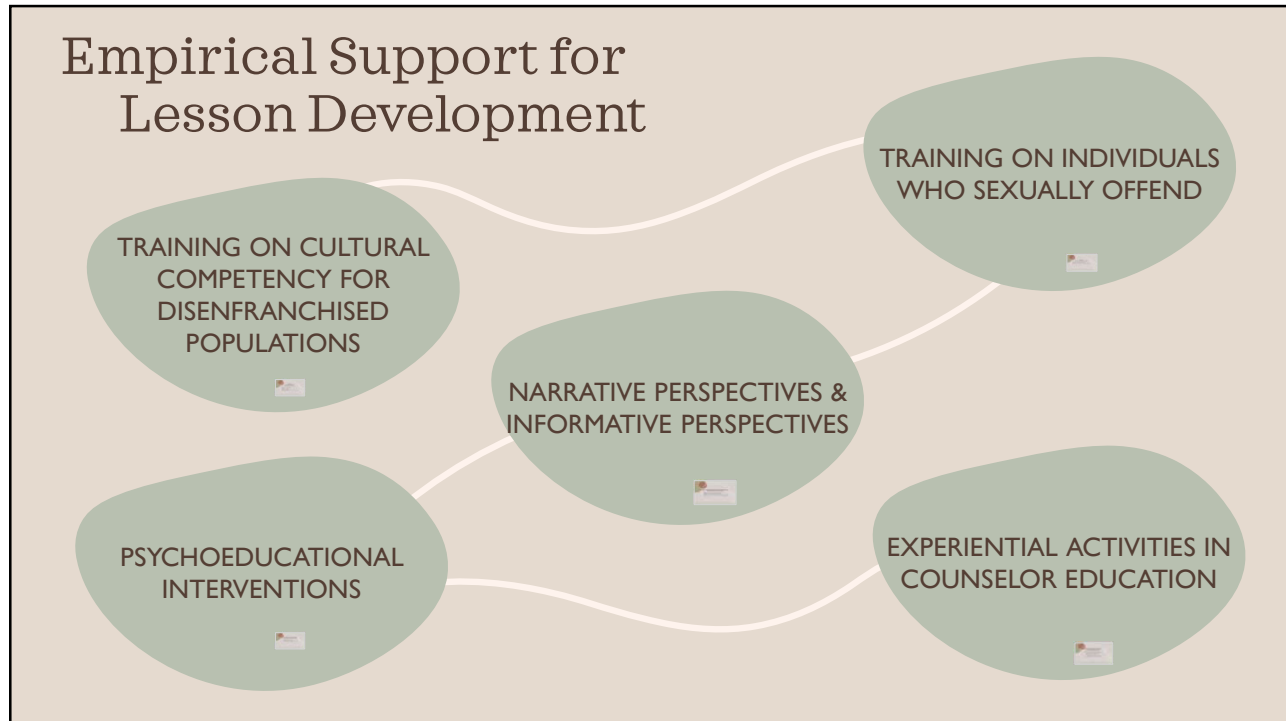
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Lesson Development

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Empirical Support for Lesson Development




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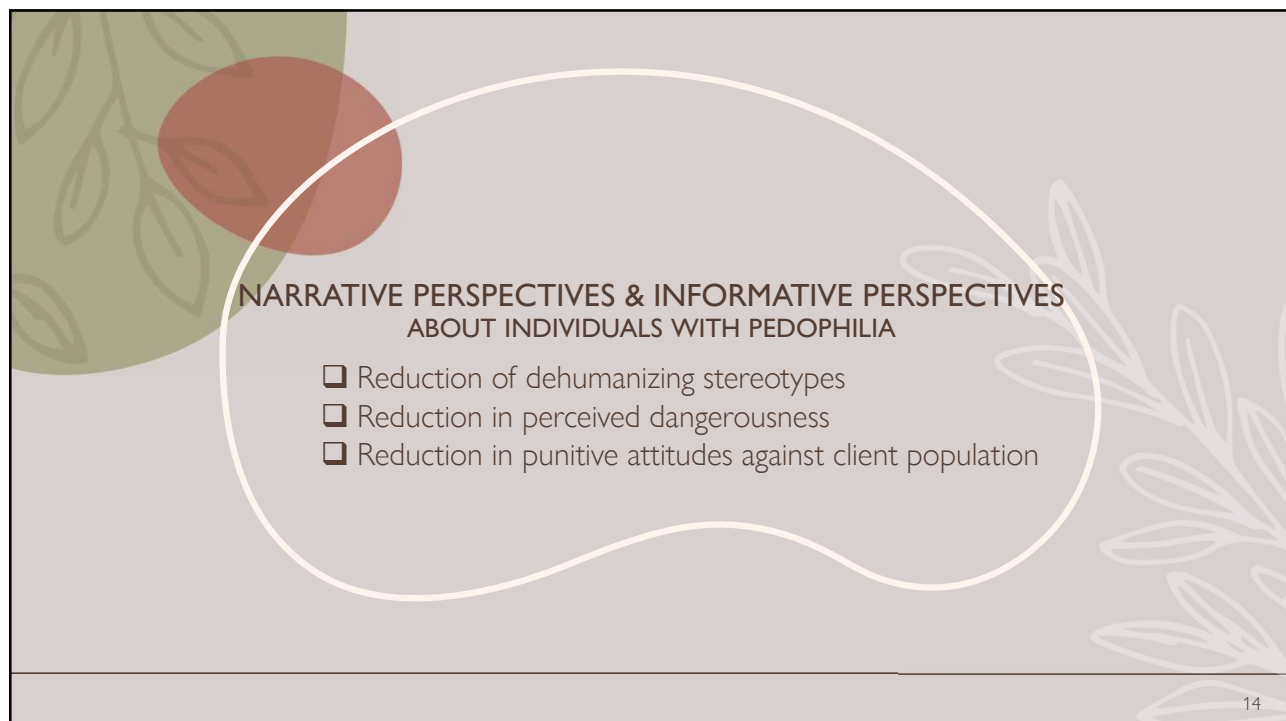


TRAINING
ON INDIVIDUALS WHO SEXUALLY OFFEND

- ☐ Reduction in negative bias perceptions
- ☐ Increased positive attitudes towards client population

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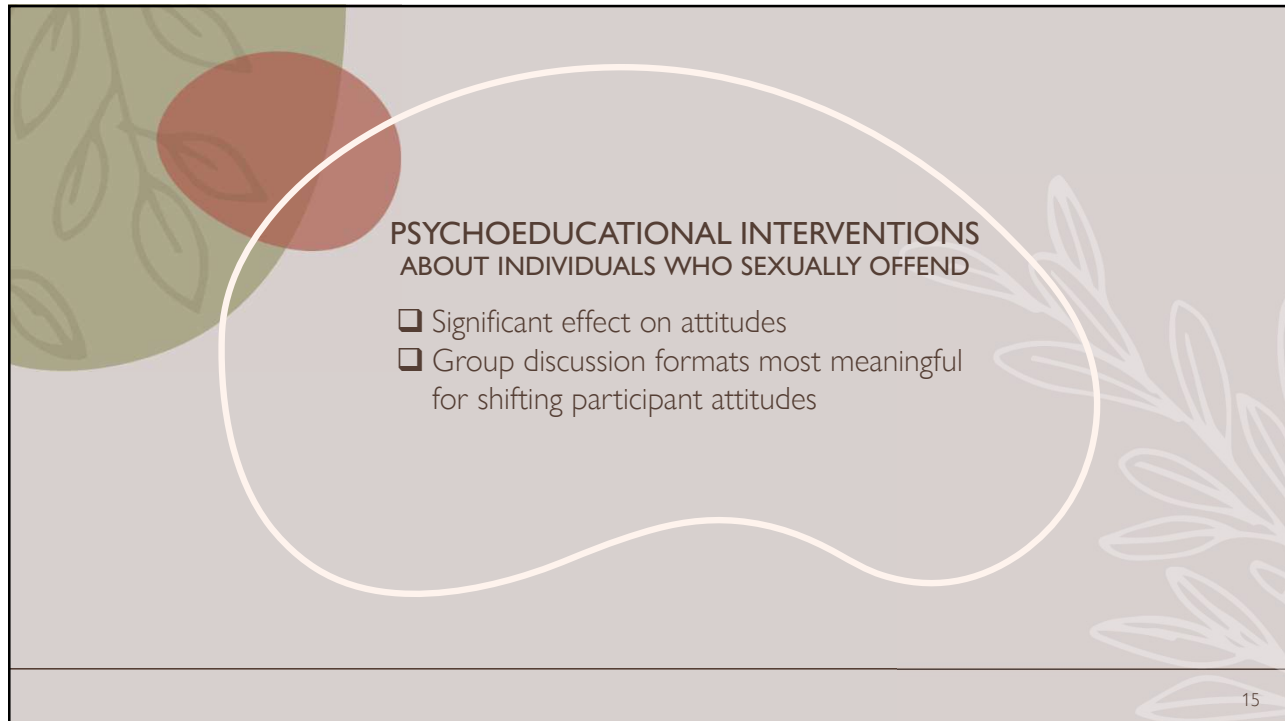


NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVES & INFORMATIVE PERSPECTIVES
ABOUT INDIVIDUALS WITH PEDOPHILIA

- ☐ Reduction of dehumanizing stereotypes
- ☐ Reduction in perceived dangerousness
- ☐ Reduction in punitive attitudes against client population

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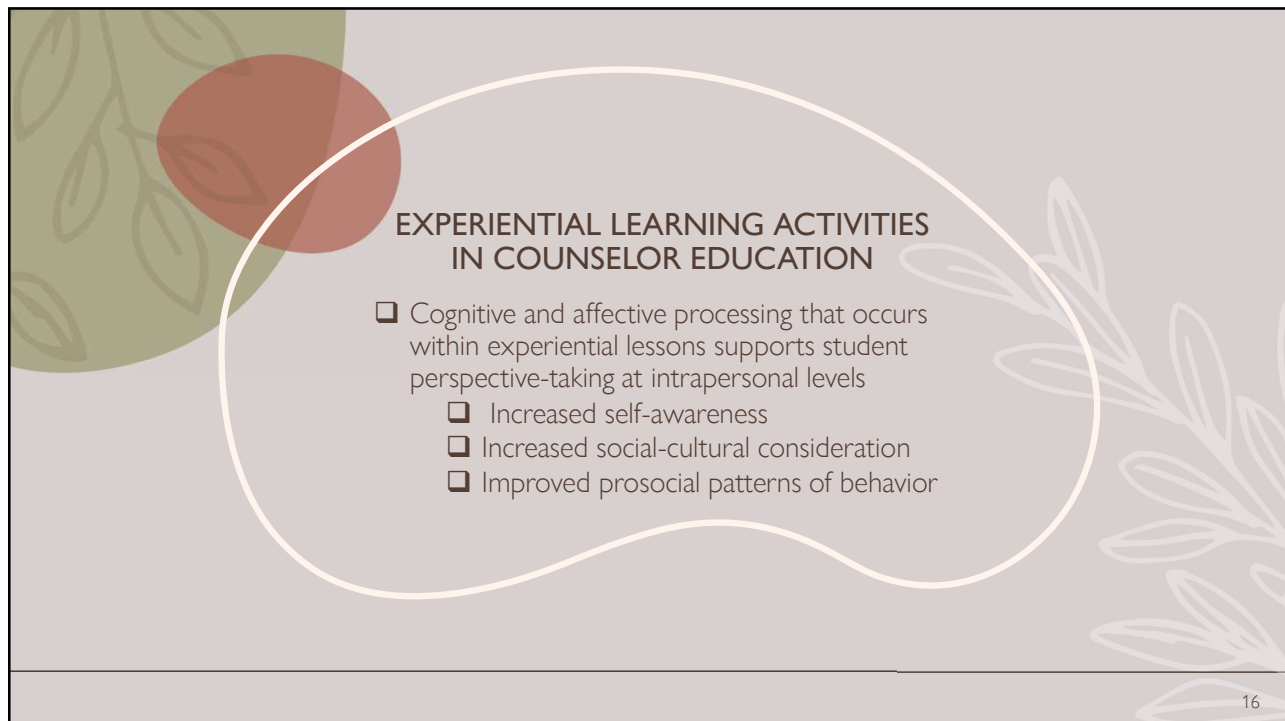


PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS
ABOUT INDIVIDUALS WHO SEXUALLY OFFEND

- ☐ Significant effect on attitudes
- ☐ Group discussion formats most meaningful for shifting participant attitudes

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EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES
IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION

- ☐ Cognitive and affective processing that occurs within experiential lessons supports student perspective-taking at intrapersonal levels
 - ☐ Increased self-awareness
 - ☐ Increased social-cultural consideration
 - ☐ Improved prosocial patterns of behavior

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Lesson Conceptualization

CHOICES THEY MAKE OBJECTIVES

Choices They Make

An experiential lesson inviting participants to consider some of the challenges, obstacles, and difficult decisions experienced by individuals engaging in post-treatment reintegration.

BASED ON "IN HER SHOES/IN THEIR SHOES" ACTIVITY

WASHINGTON STATE COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (WSCADV), 2001

- Developing humanistic views of individuals who sexually offend
- Increasing awareness and understanding of individuals' reintegration experiences
- Fostering empathy, inspiring action, and connecting students to daily realities of individuals who perpetrated sexual offenses
- Critical discussion of one's perceptions about impacts of systemic barriers on individuals pro-social goals achievement
- Encouraging thoughtfulness about actions one can take in one's personal and professional lives to support rehabilitation goals.

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Lesson Design



INDEPENDENT
IF/THEN
ACTIVITY



SMALL GROUP
DISCUSSION



LARGE CLASS
DISCUSSION



FINAL
REFLECTIONS



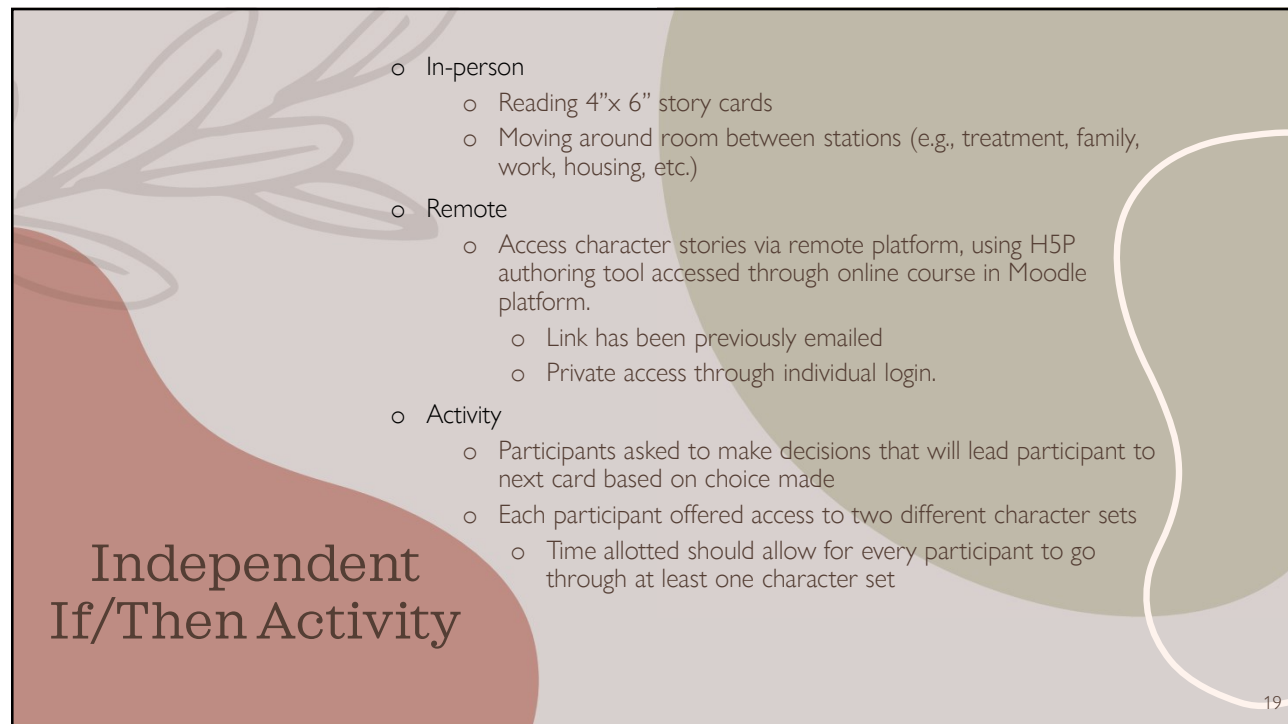
HANDOUT

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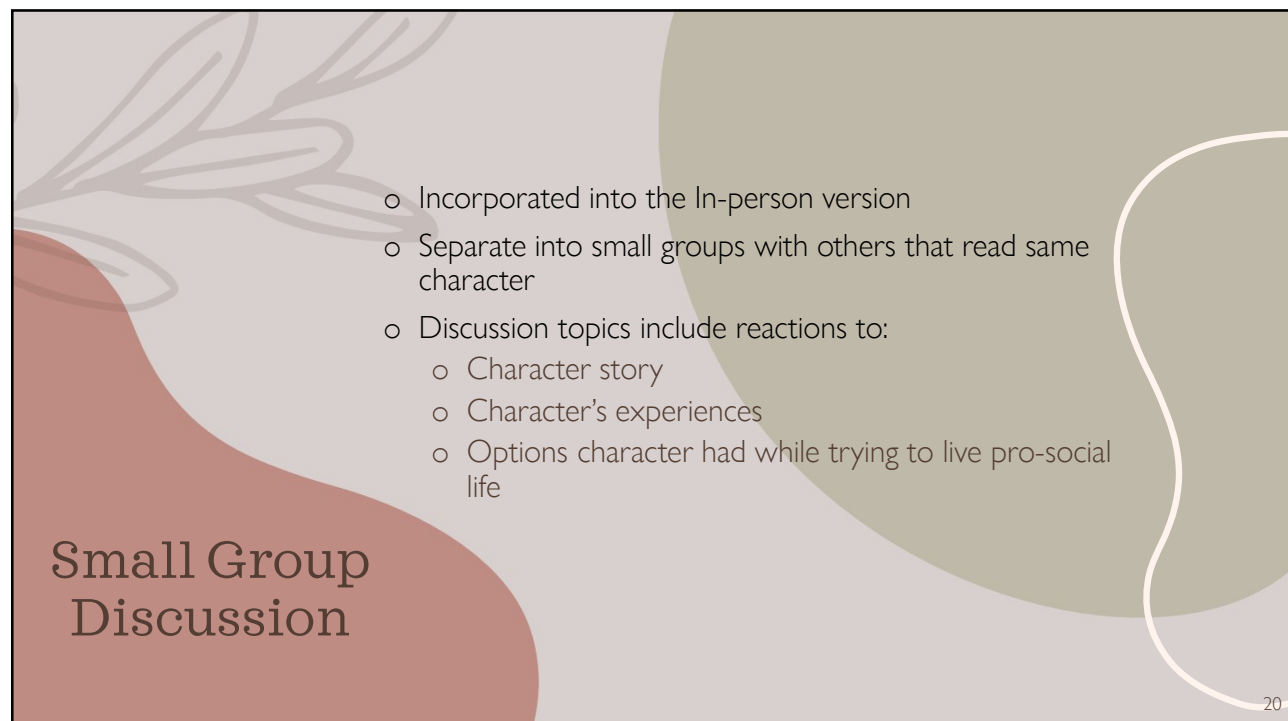


Independent If/Then Activity

- In-person
 - Reading 4"x 6" story cards
 - Moving around room between stations (e.g., treatment, family, work, housing, etc.)
- Remote
 - Access character stories via remote platform, using H5P authoring tool accessed through online course in Moodle platform.
 - Link has been previously emailed
 - Private access through individual login.
- Activity
 - Participants asked to make decisions that will lead participant to next card based on choice made
 - Each participant offered access to two different character sets
 - Time allotted should allow for every participant to go through at least one character set

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Small Group Discussion

- Incorporated into the In-person version
- Separate into small groups with others that read same character
- Discussion topics include reactions to:
 - Character story
 - Character's experiences
 - Options character had while trying to live pro-social life

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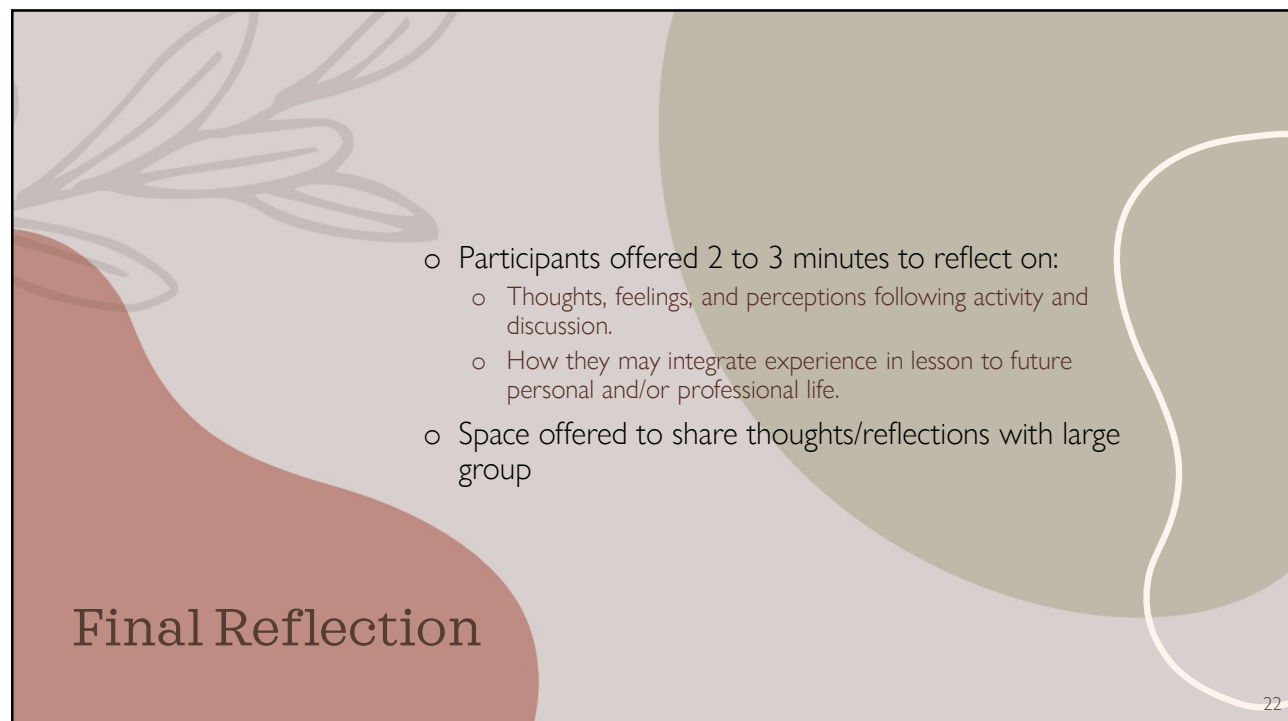
The slide features a background with abstract shapes in muted red, olive green, and grey, along with a faint line drawing of a plant in the top left. The title 'Classroom Discussion' is in a large, dark serif font on the left. A bulleted list of discussion topics is on the right. A small number '21' is in the bottom right corner.

Classroom Discussion

- Prompts presented by facilitators to elicit participant reflections and discussion
- Discussion topics:
 - Experience of being placed in role of these individuals
 - Perspectives about:
 - Resources available for individuals
 - Barriers to individuals successfully reintegrating into society
 - Support opportunities for characters
 - Impacts to perceptions of individuals who perpetrate sexual abuse

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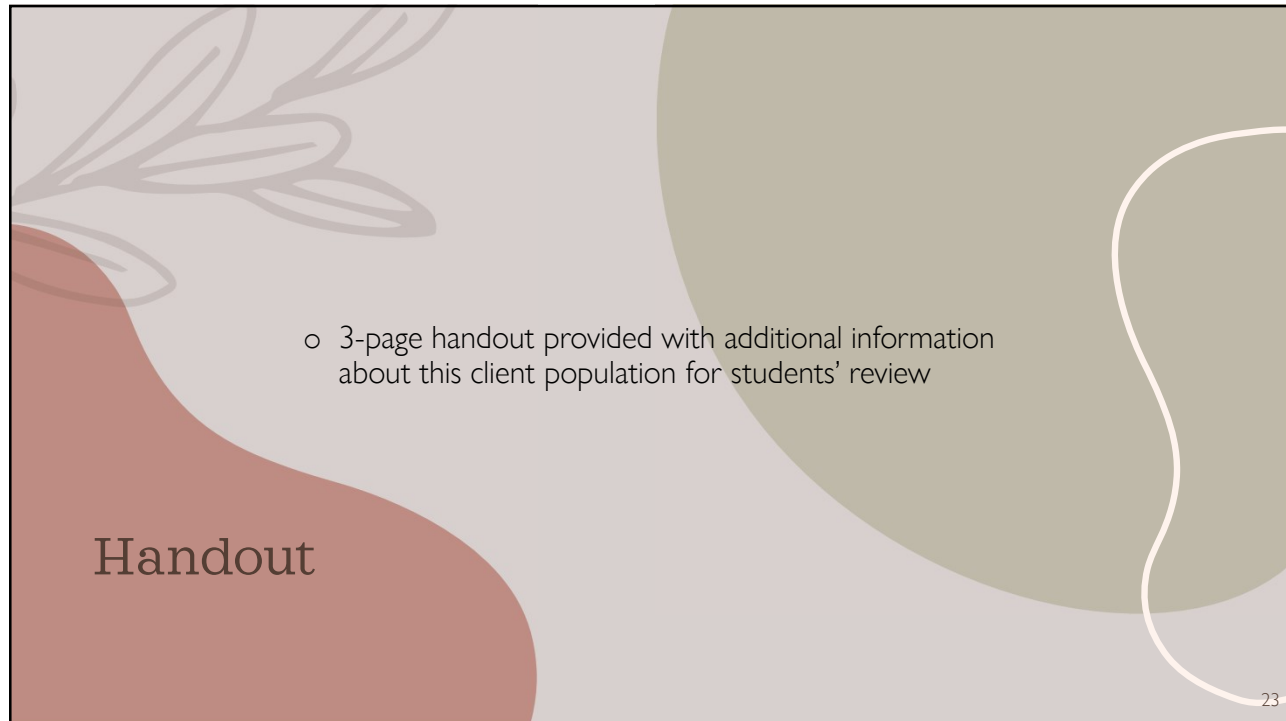
The slide features a background with abstract shapes in muted red, olive green, and grey, along with a faint line drawing of a plant in the top left. The title 'Final Reflection' is in a large, dark serif font on the left. A bulleted list of reflection prompts is on the right. A small number '22' is in the bottom right corner.

Final Reflection

- Participants offered 2 to 3 minutes to reflect on:
 - Thoughts, feelings, and perceptions following activity and discussion.
 - How they may integrate experience in lesson to future personal and/or professional life.
- Space offered to share thoughts/reflections with large group

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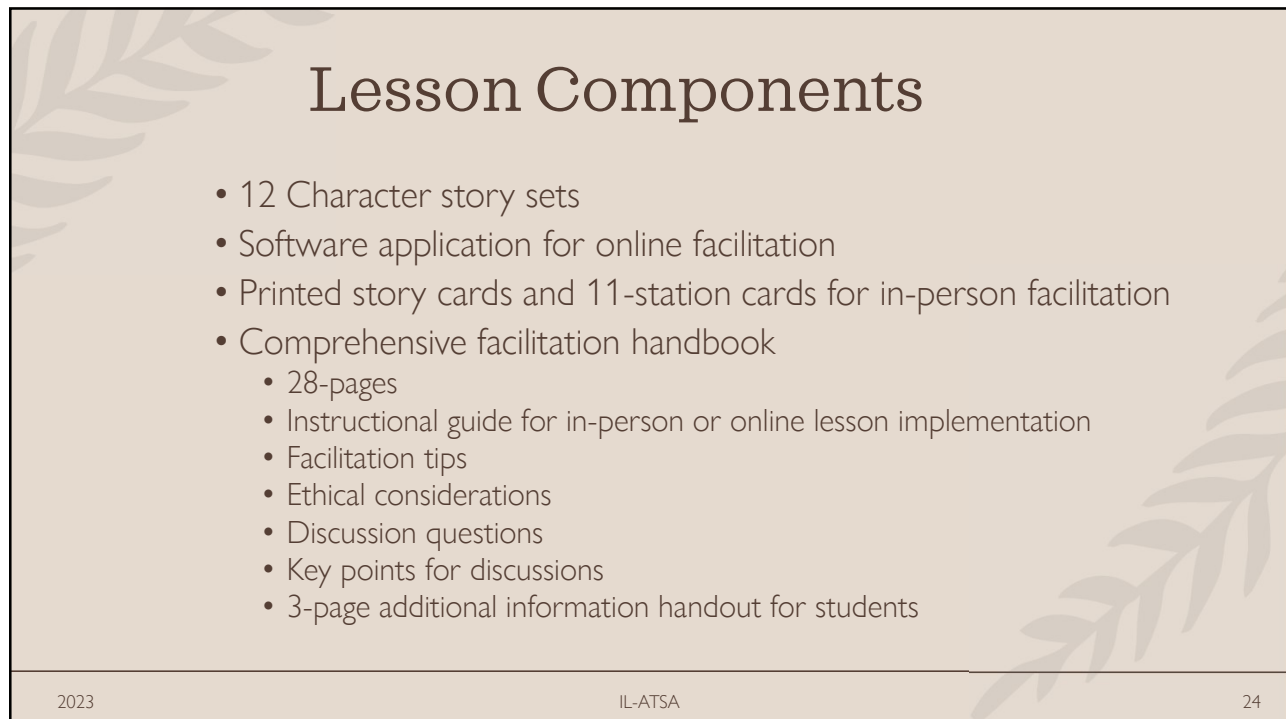


Handout

- o 3-page handout provided with additional information about this client population for students' review

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Lesson Components

- 12 Character story sets
- Software application for online facilitation
- Printed story cards and 11-station cards for in-person facilitation
- Comprehensive facilitation handbook
 - 28-pages
 - Instructional guide for in-person or online lesson implementation
 - Facilitation tips
 - Ethical considerations
 - Discussion questions
 - Key points for discussions
 - 3-page additional information handout for students

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Lesson Validation

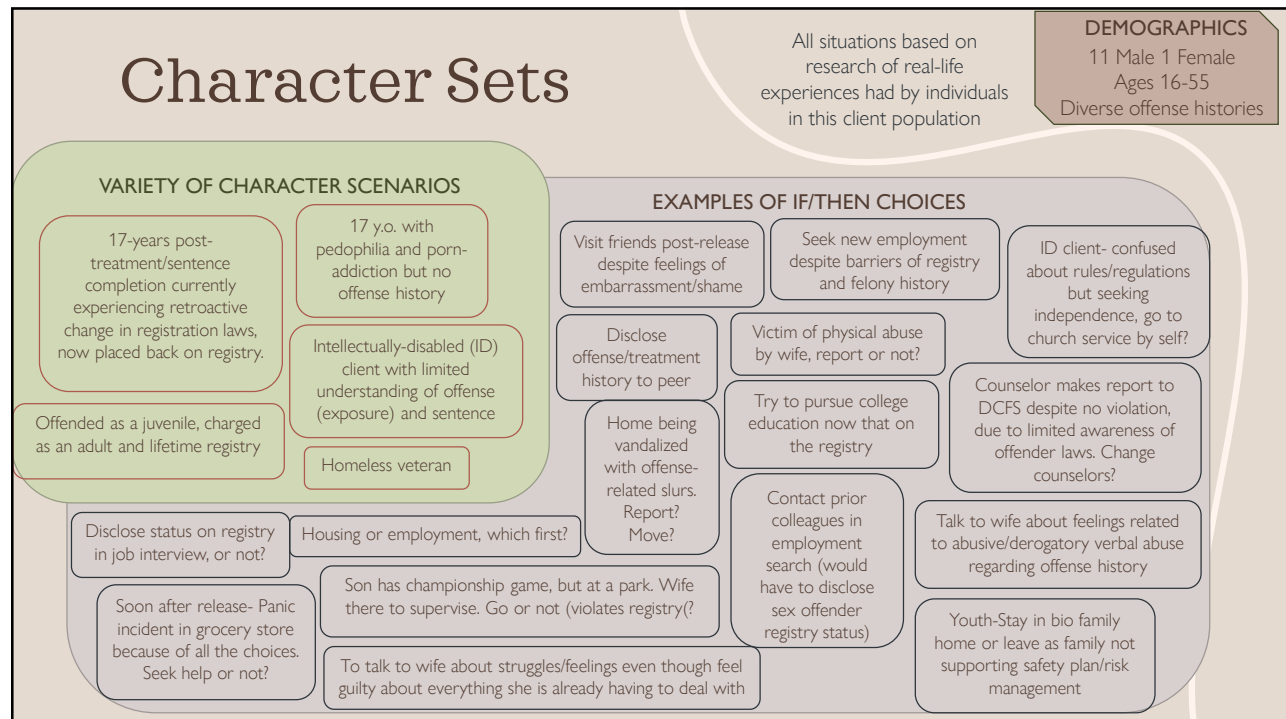
- Character sets reviewed for internal validity
 - 12 professionals/researchers in field of sexual offender treatment each reviewed two characters sets.
 - One professional in field reviewed all 12 character sets.
- Facilitator's Handbook reviewed
 - 2 Counselor education professors from different universities, 1 educational research consultant reviewed full handbook.

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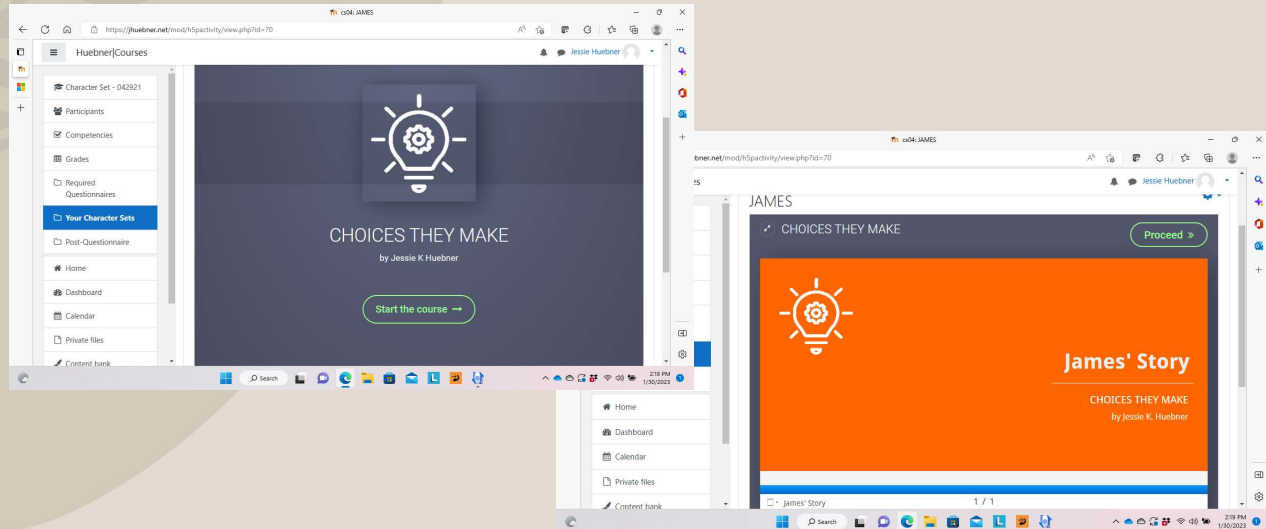
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Remote Application



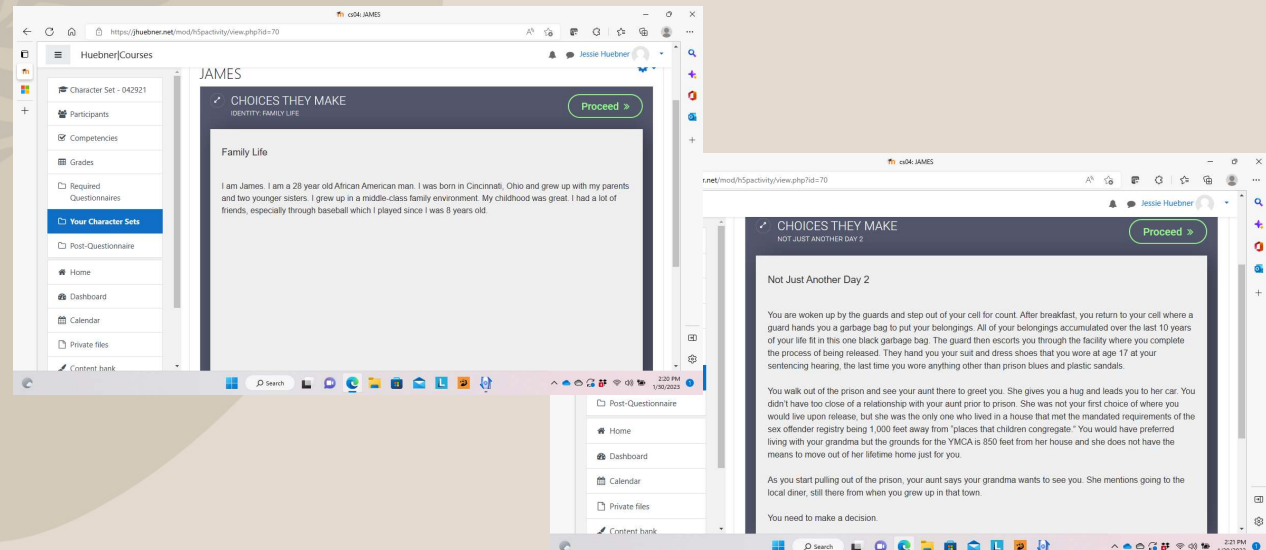
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Remote Application



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Remote Application

The image displays two screenshots of the HuebnerCourses application interface. The left screenshot shows a decision point titled "What is your decision?" with two options: "Decide to go to the local diner with your aunt and grandma." and "Decide that this has been enough excitement and activity for your first day and prefer to have a quiet dinner at your aunt's house with grandma." The right screenshot shows another decision point titled "What is your decision?" with two options: "Decide to be up front with PO Bailey and tell him that you drank and missed your curfew." and "Decide to not mention it to PO Bailey and hope that he doesn't send you for a urine drop anytime soon." Both screenshots show a sidebar menu with options like Character Set, Participants, Competencies, Grades, Required Questionnaires, Your Character Sets, Post-Questionnaire, Home, Dashboard, Calendar, Private files, and Content bank. The application is running in a web browser with the URL https://huebner.net/mod/h5pactivity/view.php?id=70.

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Remote Application

The image displays a screenshot of the HuebnerCourses application interface showing the end of the story. The main content area features a large lightbulb icon with a gear inside, and the text "THE END" followed by "This is the end of this version of James' story. Take a few minutes to sit quietly to reflect on James' experience." Below this text is a green button labeled "Restart the course". The sidebar menu is visible on the left, showing options like Character Set, Participants, Competencies, Grades, Required Questionnaires, Your Character Sets, Post-Questionnaire, Home, Dashboard, Calendar, Private files, and Content bank. The application is running in a web browser with the URL https://huebner.net/mod/h5pactivity/view.php?id=70.

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Independent If/Then Activity

- Read Identity Card for your character
- As you go through character's story, you will be given choices or directions that correspond with the stations positioned around the room.
 - Go to identified station and pick up next card for your character
 - Leave each card at its corresponding station after reading it
- Go through process until you reach the end of your character's story
 - Return Identity Card to facilitator
- Remember, as you place yourself in the role of these individuals, feel free to spread out, read where you are comfortable, and take a break or find a personal space if you need to.

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Discussion Prompts

- Small Groups
 - Grouped with other participants that read the same character story
 - “Talk about how you felt about the story, the individual's experiences, and the options or lack of options they had when trying to live a pro-social life.”
- Large Group Discussion
 - “How did it feel to be in the role of these individuals? Were you able to put yourself in this role to understand the “choices they make?”
 - “Were there any instances in the stories where you felt dissatisfied with the choices that were available for the individuals who were seeking support? (a) Do you think the options that were given are similar to the options available in your community? (b) Did you feel that the individuals have many places to turn for help? (c) What obstacles did the individuals run up against in their search for a positive life.”
 - “What made it difficult for these individuals to successfully reintegrate into society?”
 - “How did the actions of family, friends, neighbors, institutions, and others depicted in these stories actually put the individuals in a worse-off situation? How could these parties have better supported the individual?”
 - “Did anything in this exercise make you think differently about individuals that have perpetrated sexual abuse? If so, what was it and how did it change your thinking?”
- Independent Reflection
 - “I would now like you to take 2 to 3 minutes to sit quietly and reflect on your thoughts, feelings, and perceptions following this activity and discussion. Think specifically about how your experience today may be integrated into your future personal and/or professional life in potential interactions with individuals that have perpetrated sexual abuse, individuals reintegrating into society following imprisonment, and individuals on the sexual offender registry.”

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Study Design

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Study Objectives & Research Questions

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSES

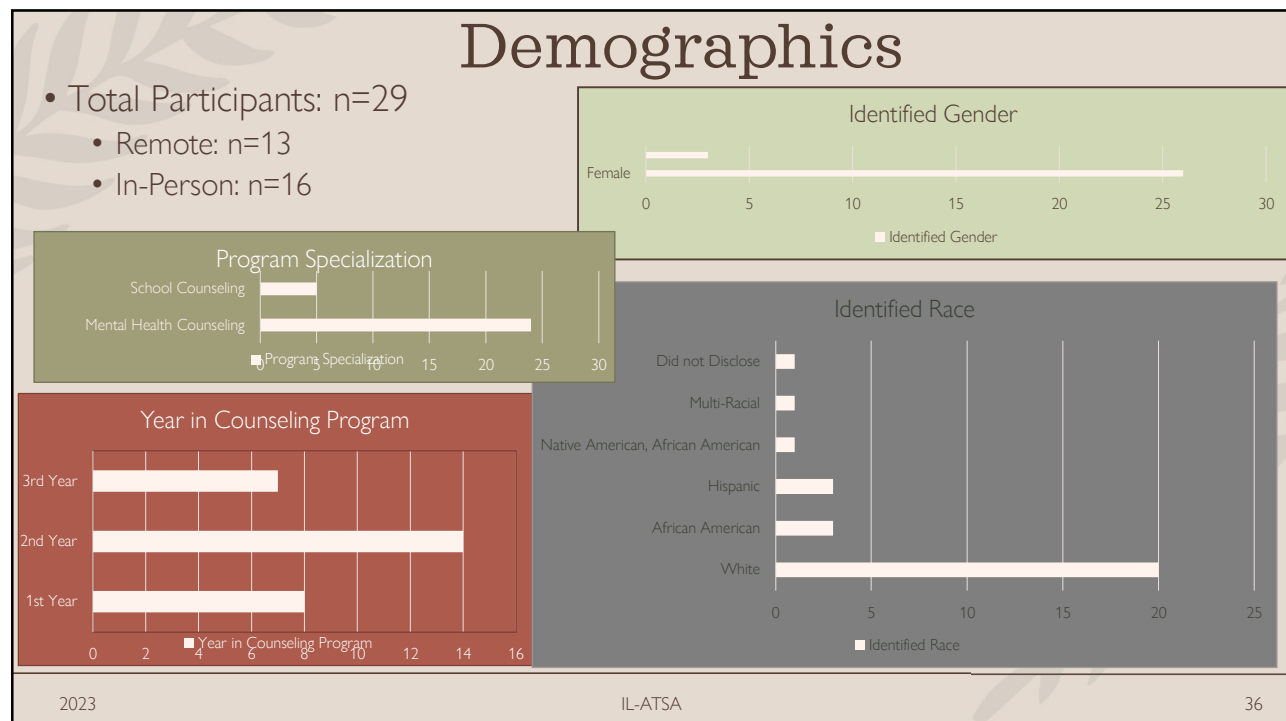
- Does participation in the *Choices They Make* lesson improve counseling student perceptions about individuals who perpetrated sexual offenses?
- Do students endorse knowledge and insight increases about individuals who sexual offended post *Choices They Make* lesson?
- Do students find value in *Choices They Make*?

QUALITATIVE ANALYSES

- How does *Choices They Make* lesson engagement influence counseling student perceived knowledge and insight about individuals who sexually offended engaging in reintegration?
- How do counseling students perceive *Choices They Make* as a method of instruction?

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COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEX OFFENDERS-REVISED SCALE (CATSO-R) --CHURCH ET AL, 2008

- 18-item self-report questionnaire
- 6-point Likert-type scale
- Higher scores = more-negative attitudes
- Pre-Test & Post-Test administration
- 4 Subscales
 - Social Isolation
 - Most sex offenders do not have close friends;
 - Most sex offenders keep to themselves
 - Capacity to Change:
 - Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time; Convicted sex offenders should never be released from prison
 - Severity/dangerousness
 - The prison sentences sex offenders receive are much too long when compared to the sentence lengths for other crimes [reversed scored]; Only a few sex offenders are dangerous [reversed scored]
 - Deviancy
 - A lot of sex offenders use their victims to create pornography; Sex offenders have high rates of sexual activity

LARGE-GROUP DISCUSSION

- Qualitative analysis of discussions about student experiences during individual if/then lesson portion including
 - Descriptions of student experiences imagining themselves as characters
 - Student reactions to character experiences
 - Student perspectives on lesson impact on their perceptions of individuals who previously sexually offended
 - Descriptions of how students might integrate their reflections and insight from the lesson into their future personal and professional interactions with individuals who perpetrated sexual offenses.

Data Collection

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

- Post-lesson delivery of Participant Evaluation form
- Out of 29 participants, 18 returned
- 6-Point Likert-type scale – perceptions of lesson, facilitation, timing, and benefits to future work.
- Written comments coded related to perception of lesson and/or recommended lesson adjustments

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Perceptual Changes About the Population

- Challenging to talk about this client population
 - “Anytime I talk about this topic, I get so flustered.”
- But admitted that discussing population and being aware of presenting perceptions/biases “is an important thing to understand about yourself.”
- Internal battles between knowledge of offending behaviors and societal/institutional punishments in place (registration, labels)
 - Found themselves “going back and forth between seeing them as a perpetrator and as a victim of judgement or society or whatever”



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Perceptual Changes About the Population (Cont.)

- Shared that participation in lesson:
 - Helped gain or increased their empathy for individuals who perpetrated sexual abuse
 - Improved insight into the importance of avoiding the use of labels or judging someone based on a labels
 - Highlighted that one's entire story is rarely known
 - Recognized the harm of generalizing individuals due to their identification in a specific group or population.
- Feelings of guilt about previously labeling individuals because of their prior behaviors.
 - “It may be part of their story, but that maybe isn't who they are as a person.”
 - “This activity helped me see the whole person instead of just the offense...that was really helpful.”
- Changes in overarching perceptions about individuals' capacity for change, potential for positive outcomes, and client's investment in living a healthy offense-free life.

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CATSO-R

Community Attitudes Towards Sexual Offenders-Revised

Paired sample t-tests

	Pre-Lesson		Post-Lesson		t(26)	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Social Isolation	13.3	3.42	13.6	3.7	.473	.6399
Capacity to Change	12.6	2.92	10.2	3	-4.961	.0000
Severity/Dangerousness	25.4	2.5	23.1	2.3	-6.609	5.22e-7
Deviancy	9.2	2.3	7.5	1.8	4.4745	.00135
Total Score	60.5	6.5	53.7	7.7	4.8008	.000057

Note. T-test alpha level was .05; Mean difference between pre- and post- noted by t statistic with negative value signifying decrease in participant negative attitude bias.

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Perceived Gains in Knowledge and Insight

- Placing self in character's role
 - One participant noted "having a hard time turning off [their] counselor hat" to make decisions as if they were the character, instead tending to always want to go for more help or supportive services.
 - "It also made me realize that people like this have to constantly make choices in the best interest of themselves."
- Emotional reactions during lesson
 - Being surprised when learning about the constant worry, fear, decisions, and limitations presented to individuals
 - Feeling disappointed about the societal and personal struggles people trying to pursue a healthy and safe lifestyle, and
 - Feeling discouraged:
 - When reading about people being treated unfairly by a counselor, family members, parole officer, or co-workers.
 - Also in imagining themselves as the character person, feeling "the loneliness and the isolation and the hopelessness that would go along with that. It was rough."

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Perceived Gains in Knowledge and Insight (Cont.)

- Noted increased knowledge about:
 - Sexual offender registration
 - Potential legal sentences for sexual offenses
 - How registration impacts individuals' opportunities for employment and housing
 - The difference between pedophilia and perpetuating sexual offense(s)
 - The internal struggles and feelings experienced by individuals attempting to follow all the reintegration rules and regulations.
- One participant identified increased insight into the "amount of obstacles that people with this specific charge have to overcome and how difficult it is to move forward."
 - Reflected that this activity helped increase insight about the importance of praising the positive growth made by clients post-incarceration and that despite the uncomfortable feelings that it may elicit, as a counselor, it will be important for them to "appreciate all of the different struggles that [clients] face."

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Perceived Gains in Knowledge and Insight (Cont.)

- Insight as it relates to helping professionals as activity helped increase understanding:
 - Systems are not really supportive for reintegration
 - There are limited places for individuals to go to for support
 - The importance of helping professionals making resources available to set them up to succeed.
- "It's almost as if the system is not designed for rehabilitation at all" counselors and other helping professionals "have to set them up to succeed or else how can we expect them to."
- Described the role of helping professionals is to "make sure that if they serve their time and do what they are supposed to, [we must help them] move forward instead of keeping them stuck in that place."
- Highlighted the importance for counselors to remind themselves about their position as a professional and the importance of unconditional positive regard:
 - Counselors need to "think about the person that is going to be in [the] room;" "even with things they have done that I don't agree with, [focusing on] how can I still show up for them and put my [judgmental] feelings aside."

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Perceived Value of Lesson

- Improved empathy.
 - Helped gain perspective of individuals on “the other side” of abuse.
 - “Really opened my eyes to specific examples of what this is like. Quite challenging!”
 - “This is something you don't always think about and when you do, it opens your eyes to so much more.”
- Overall reflections:
 - “In general, I found this activity really illuminating.”
 - Recommended future use of this lesson:
- Lesson design
 - “I thought the style of this activity was really helpful. I think it will definitely stick with me!”
 - Noted the format and directions were “very non-judgmental and that made it easy for me to share my opinion.”
 - Scored as “Extremely Value”:
 - Clarity of lesson and directions
 - Discussion prompts
 - Length of time for group discussion
 - Facilitator management.

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Discussion & Future Steps

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Discussion

- Previously, researchers found that when helping professionals communicate compassion and positive regard to clients, the potential for prosocial rehabilitation increases
- The *Choices They Make* lesson can contribute to breadth and depth of feeling empathy and communicating compassion during interactions with clients who sexually offended; and more broadly, clients with difficult histories in opposition to counselor's morals and values.
- Implementing if/then experiential lessons can support counselor's recognition of potential for change and differentiation of client from client prior behaviors.
- Lessons facilitated through supportive environments of counselor preparation programs, may increase the likelihood for ethical, non-judgmental counseling experiences for individuals with a history of poor and inadequate treatment experiences

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Implications for Counselor Preparation

- Results support:
 - Use of *Choices They Make*, and similar experiential lessons, to foster critical thinking and reflection on personal biases and perceptions about this client population.
 - Ability to deliver classroom lessons while collecting lesson efficacy data.
 - Using experiential activities to introduce complex topics with students of counseling
 - Using if/then activities to help students imagine themselves in circumstances of identified clients
 - Exposure to personal narratives of diverse client populations
 - Large group processing discussions to explore complex moral dichotomies.
- Future directions for counselor educators:
 - Encouraged to implement trauma-informed teaching approaches when delivering potentially triggering lessons
 - Cultivate safe and non-judgmental environments with students

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Limitations

- Small sample size with limited diversity of graduate counseling students
- Not all students from remote classroom lesson consented to have responses included (unknown if due to presenting perceptions, thoughts about lesson, or bias about client population)
- All data based on self-report and a significant portion of qualitative data obtained from classroom discussion-may have been offering socially desirable responses.
- Lesson facilitation conducted by principal researcher- may influence lesson outcomes and research results differently than if facilitated by course instructors

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Conclusion

- Need for counselor educators to prepare counseling trainees for interaction with and providing treatment for individuals who previously perpetrated sexual offenses.
 - Receiving adequate mental health care has been identified as a positive influence on successful reintegration
 - Negative attitudes and the use of a punitive, confrontational style by counselors has been found to negatively impact therapeutic relationships
- This study demonstrated benefits to incorporating the *Choices They Make* experiential lesson to support counselor preparation for efficacious engagement and treatment with this client population.
 - *Choices They Make*, and similar lesson activities, can increase awareness of existing biases, improve knowledge, increase insight, and offer a safe space to discuss compassionate practice when interacting with individuals who sexually offended and individuals with sexual attractions to minors.
 - As students critically discuss presenting biases and perceptions and develop increased empathy and understanding for individuals who sexually offended and individuals with sexual attractions to minors, the likelihood for future successful treatment for a client population frequently mistreated and under-treated.

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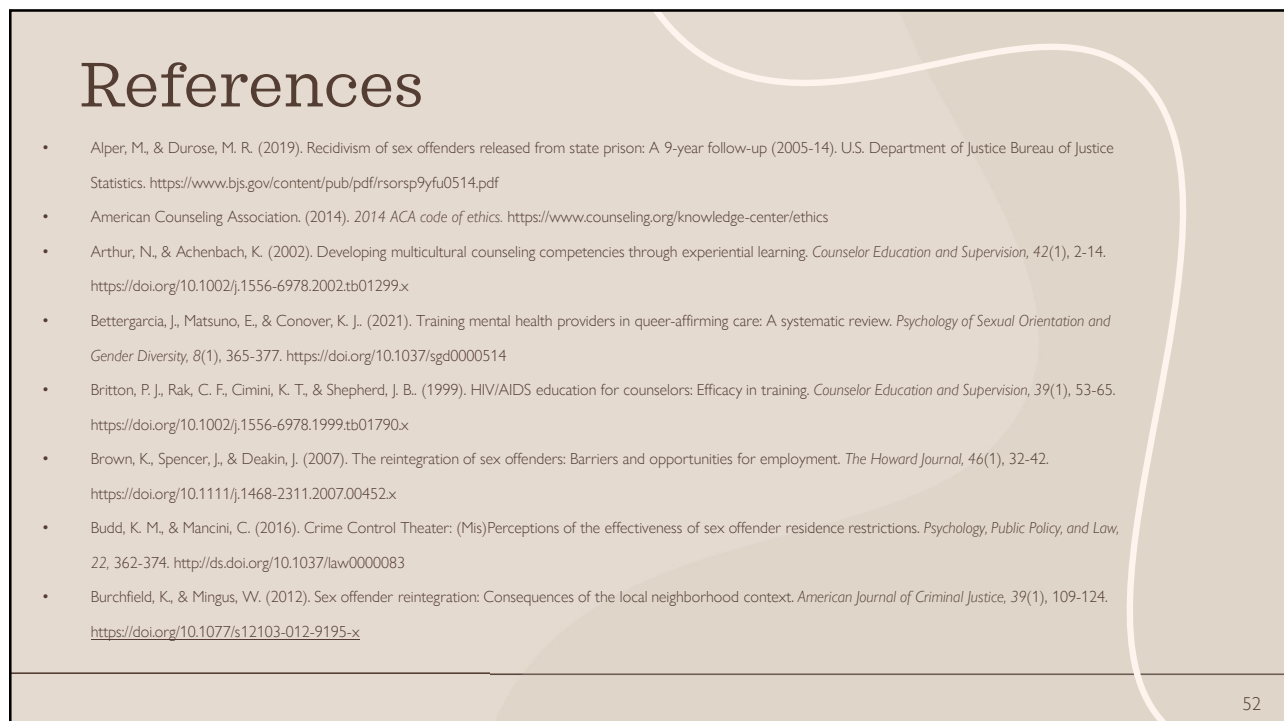
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