

Chapter 2 **Professional Identity of Counselors**

Focus Questions

1. How do you respond when your friends and relatives ask you what you are studying in graduate school?

Points instructors may want to make:

- Defining counseling as a profession that is similar to another profession, such as psychology or social work, is not helpful in educating the public about the profession of counseling...or in helping counselors establish our unique professional identity.
- It would be best to explain that you are earning a master's degree in counseling, which is a professional degree that allows graduates to provide professional counseling and mental health services to the public.
- It would also be appropriate to explain the wellness orientation of counselors which is described below under question 2.

2. How do you think the wellness model of mental health espoused by counselors is different from the illness model or medical model of mental health?

Points instructors may want to make:

- In the illness or medical model of mental health, the first thing a mental health professional does is diagnose a client's mental or emotional disorder. Once the disorder has been treated successfully, the client is discharged until another disorder appears. Then the client returns to the professional again for treatment.
- The wellness model of mental health is founded on the following beliefs:
 - The best perspective for assisting individuals in resolving their emotional and personal issues and problems is the wellness model of mental health.
 - Most of the issues and problems individuals face in life are developmental in nature, and understanding the dynamics of human growth and development is essential to success as a helper.
 - Prevention and early intervention are far superior to remediation in dealing with personal and emotional problems.
 - The goal of counseling is to empower individuals to resolve their own problems independently of mental health professionals and to teach them to identify and resolve problems autonomously in the future.

3. What are some of the major challenges facing the counseling profession today?

Points instructors may want to make:

- Fragmenting into separate groups along the lines of specialties, instead of working toward public recognition as one unified profession of counseling.
- Working toward standardization of licensure requirements and school counselor certification requirements across the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and possessions of the United States.
- Ensuring that other mental health professional groups do not interfere with counselors diagnosing and treating mental and emotional disorders or limit the testing practices of counselors.

- Establishing job classifications in state governments and at the federal level for counselors

- **In-Class Activity**

Title: Counselor Professional Identity in the 21st Century

Learning

Goal: To understand contemporary issues facing the profession.

Procedures: Convene a class forum concerning the current state of the profession of counseling and challenges to the profession in the 21st century. Have students discuss measures they personally can take to promote the counseling profession. Also have students discuss what they would like to see happen in the profession in the short term (10 years) and the long term (25-50 years).

Discussion

Questions: What role can students play in the professionalization of counseling? What do you believe to be the major obstacles facing the counseling profession in the 21st century? Discussion topics may include problems with managed care, supervision provided by professionals other than counselors (e.g., social workers, psychologists), and non-uniformity of state laws concerning licensure and supervision requirements, or other problems.

Point/Counterpoint (Debate) Topics

Title: Is counseling a profession?

Learning

Goal: To consider the criteria for being considered a profession and to compare the status of counseling to those criteria.

Procedures: Allow students to volunteer for placement into 2 groups (preferably 3-5 students in each) to each take one of the positions described below and prepare a 5-minute argument in favor of that position. Have each group present its argument. Allow the groups to confer for 2 minutes and then have each group present its rebuttal to the other group's argument. Have the class members who served as the audience vote for which side was most persuasive.

Point: *Counseling should be considered to be a bona fide profession.*

vs.

Counterpoint: *Counseling should still be considered to be a semi-profession.*

Title: Is counseling truly a unique mental health profession that should have its own licensure?

Learning

Goal: To consider the differences and similarities between counseling and other, related mental health professions.

Point: *The counseling profession is unique and distinctly different from other mental health professions; therefore, counselors should have their own specific licensure process.*

vs.

Counterpoint: *There are more similarities than differences between counseling and other mental health professions and it would be more efficient and less confusing for consumers if there were just one state license as a “mental health professional.”*

Outside Class Activity

Title: Becoming a licensed professional counselor, becoming a national certified counselor, obtaining liability insurance, and joining ACA.

Learning

Goal: To begin taking the steps necessary to develop the identity of counselor.

Procedures: Ask students to visit the web site of their state licensure board to determine the procedures necessary to become licensed or certified as a counselor in the state. Have students present a plan to acquire the credential (how much supervised experience, who can supervise, what type of setting allows for hours toward licensure, how to register and study for the licensure test). Have students visit the web site of the National Board for Certified Counselors to learn about the National Certified Counselor credential. Have students present a plan concerning the steps they must take to acquire the credential. Have students visit the ACA web site and summarize the steps needed to become a member. Also have students obtain information regarding the purchase of ACA professional liability insurance, both in their status as practicum or internship students, and as working professional counselors after they complete their degrees.

Question for Self-Reflection/Journaling

Question: What is my responsibility to advocate for my profession, and what are some actions I will take, both now and when I am a counseling practitioner, to fulfill that responsibility?

Case Study

Mike is a newly hired counselor at your agency. He comes highly recommended and is an LPC. After talking briefly with Mike you find out that he graduated from a master's degree program in clinical psychology and was “grandparented” as an LPC. You also discover that his past clinical supervision has been with a licensed social worker.

Case Study Discussion

1. What issues are present that might possibly affect Mike's identity and role as a counselor?
2. How might Mike's supervisor and co-workers help Mike develop a strong identity as a counselor?

Short Paper or Oral Class Presentation Topics

1. Present on the American Counseling Association and the specialty areas within the association (e.g., ACES, ASCA, AMHCA). Have students discuss the advantages of being a member of ACA and one or more specialty divisions. Why is becoming a member of professional counseling associations important for one's identity as a counselor?
2. Have students interview counselors and other mental health professionals in the community or at their practicum site or a school or agency concerning their knowledge about the differences among the various mental health professionals. Have students present their results in class. Ask students to review current legislation issues in your state concerning the counseling profession (e.g., third party reimbursement legislation, privileged communication, funding of elementary school counselors, etc.). The state counseling association web site will have information available on state legislative initiatives. Have students discuss what they personally can do to get involved in the advancement of the profession.

Chapter 2: Professional Identity of Counselors

1. Counselors with a strong professional identity are able to do all of the following EXCEPT
 - a. describe the services their profession renders to the public.
 - b. articulate the similarities and differences between their profession and other similar groups.
 - c. show pride in belonging to the counseling profession.
 - d. demonstrate that they hold a master's degree from a CACREP-accredited program.
 - e. explain the philosophy that underlies the activities of counselors.

2. A core belief that members of the counseling profession hold concerning helping others with their mental health concerns is
 - a. it is important to identify the illness presented by the person asking for assistance.
 - b. the goal is to help the individual return to the level of functioning enjoyed before the illness occurred.
 - c. remediation is the most appropriate means in dealing with emotional and personal problems.
 - d. prevention and early intervention are the most appropriate means to deal with emotional and personal problems.
 - e. giving support often is all that is necessary for people to resolve their personal crises.

3. Within the counseling profession, the primary goal of counseling is to
 - a. help clients accomplish wellness.
 - b. cure illnesses of clients.
 - c. identify and treat mental illnesses.
 - d. understand the illnesses with which clients present for counseling.
 - e. help clients understand unresolved emotional issues.

4. Counselors who practice from a developmental perspective
 - a. focus on the physical development of their clients because physical development has a significant impact on the emotional well-being of clients.
 - b. focus on the intellectual development of their clients because clients must be taught to understand themselves and function more effectively.
 - c. see personal development as a difficult goal to attain that requires the help of counselors who understand the human condition.
 - d. view most problems people encounter as natural and normal because all developmental stages of life bring challenges.
 - e. believe that all stages of life traumatize clients and the counselor's role is to treat the trauma their clients have experienced.

5. Counseling aims to help clients
 - a. become autonomous and not need other people in their lives.
 - b. have a place to go that is comforting and supportive.
 - c. learn to counsel themselves.
 - d. have a person who can solve their problems for them.

- e. be empowered to problem-solve independently.
6. Within the counseling profession the primary national voluntary certification agency is
- a. American Mental Health Counselors Association
 - b. American Counseling Association.
 - c. American Association for Counseling and Development.
 - d. National Board for Certified Counselors.
 - e. National Registry of Certified Counselors.
7. The school counseling movement in the United States resulted as a consequence of which major event?
- a. the Russians launching Sputnik.
 - b. the assassination of John F. Kennedy.
 - c. the Cuban Missile Crisis.
 - d. APA's declaration that only psychologists at the doctoral level would be recognized as professionals.
 - e. the national legislation that ensured education for all handicapped persons.
8. All of the following are steps toward professionalization EXCEPT
- a. getting state laws passed that regulate the practice of the profession.
 - b. changing names to reduce identification with other professions
 - c. developing a code of ethics.
 - d. requiring members of the profession to possess specialized knowledge and skills.
 - e. offering services that are identical to services offered by other similar professions.
9. The most significant problem within the counseling profession today, according to the authors of the text, appears to be
- a. receiving third party reimbursement.
 - b. increasing salaries for master's level clinicians.
 - c. becoming a united and societally recognized profession.
 - d. conducting more experimental designed research studies.
 - e. convincing legislators to make counseling services available to everyone for a reasonable charge.
10. Certification is a process
- a. for school counselors exclusively.
 - b. through which official state agencies certify individuals as qualified to hold certain state jobs.
 - c. that protects the title of "counselor" in some states.
 - d. is always voluntary, whereas licensure is required.
 - e. that prevents individuals from practicing counseling unless they hold at least a master's degree.
11. All of the following statements about advertising one's services in an ethical manner are true, EXCEPT
- a. the ACA Code of Ethics imposes strict criteria and restrictions on advertising.
 - b. counselors must correct misrepresentations of their qualifications if they learn about such misrepresentations.
 - c. counselors are required to distinguish between paid and volunteer work experience when they advertise their qualifications.

- d. counselors must present their credentials accurately.
 - e. many counselors hold multiple credentials and it is ethical to list all relevant credentials on their business cards.
12. Professionalism in counseling includes all of the following EXCEPT
- a. being intrinsically motivated to achieve best practices in counseling.
 - b. taking pride in one's profession.
 - c. holding a doctorate in counseling or a related area.
 - d. understanding the history and philosophy of the profession.
 - e. representing the profession to the public in a positive and vigorous manner.
13. A fundamental tenet of the wellness model is that
- a. traditionally, it has been espoused by members of all the helping professions (e.g., counselors, social workers, and psychologists) rather than by medical professionals
 - b. the primary goal is to alleviate suffering
 - c. people can transcend their environmental limitations
 - d. mental health exists along a continuum
 - e. scientific principles are applied to cure the client's identified mental illness
14. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)
- a. sets standards for preparing counselors, social workers, and school psychologists
 - b. requires that an individual hold a doctoral degree in order to be CACREP-certified
 - c. encourages faculty who train counselors to have diverse backgrounds as counselors, counseling psychologists, and clinical social workers
 - d. requires that training programs offer a 100-clock-hour practicum and a 300-clock hour internship
 - e. has been generally accepted as the model curriculum for training counselors
15. The primary difference between counselors and other mental health professionals is
- a. only counselors provide mental health counseling services
 - b. only counselors use the term "counseling" to describe the service that they provide to clients
 - c. counseling is the primary professional service that counselors provide
 - d. counselors do not diagnose mental illnesses
 - e. the primary service that counselors provide to clients is to connect them with resources in their communities that can help the clients achieve greater wellness

Chapter Two: Professional Identity of Counselors

- 1. d
- 2. d
- 3. a
- 4. d
- 5. e
- 6. d

7. a
8. e
9. c
10. b
11. a
12. c
13. d
14. e
15. c