

Understanding Of a Professional Counselor Identity and How Faith Informs That Identity

Achante M. Russell

Alliance University

GCN 618

Dr. J Orozco

Week 11

Understanding Of a Professional Counselor Identity and How Faith Informs That Identity

Professional identity is a collection of attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences that people use to define themselves in professional roles. Counselor professional identity involves imparting the values, attitudes, and behaviors of the counseling profession to counseling trainees. Professional counselor identity development focuses on recognizing one as professional, encompassing professional skills and attitudes, and focusing on the context of the professional community. Establishing a professional counselor identity is a central tenet of training programs among trainee counselors. The formation of a counselor's identity incorporates processes that incorporate values, and attitudes, and seeks a way of incorporating such values and actions in a counselor's identity system. All trainees enter the field with diverse life experiences, values, beliefs, and views about society. Professional counseling identity can also be informed by religious ideology, political persuasions, philosophical values, family relationships, and romantic relationships. Counselors should identify a general opinion and approach to the job because this will be beneficial in defining the individual identity of the counselor (Peters & Vereen, 2020). There are professional counseling organizations like the American Association of State Counseling Boards (AASCB) focused on promoting counselor identity (Cureton et al., 2019)

Professionally, I identify as a substance abuse and mental health counselor with specialization interest in trauma. I believe in counseling my clients using evidence-based practice like talk therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). I believe in assisting clients who require second chances to make right their past mistakes and have a fulfilling life. Everyone deserves to be given second chance to redirect their lives and make positive changes that will steer them towards good health and prosperity. I accept and integrate feedback into my

counseling practice. I have empathy for my clients and am always willing to engage them in a more informed model of communication. I have an orientation to multiculturalism and social justice advocacy (Peters & Vereen, 2020). Mathew 25:40 speaks of one of the greatest principles of the Christian faith. In this passage Jesus claims that whatsoever one does to the least of his brothers, that he does unto Christ. I believe that there are many individuals in society who are suffering from mental health issues yet they cannot access help because they are not connected enough or they lack the financial wherewithal to visit professionals. I believe that professional counselor identity is geared towards honesty and commitment to social justice (Na & Fietzer, 2020).

My professional counselor identity depicts confidence in how I deal with my clients. Confidence is important in solving conflict and finding solutions for the problems that stress humans in the world today. The Bible is a great story of the controversy between good and evil. The Prophet John in Revelation Chapter 12 reveals the occurrence of a great war in heaven. Problems in counseling are an expression of the conflict that affects humans. People are divided between good and evil. Great suffering befalls people like Job and they keep wondering whether God exists. My counseling identity is informed by my Christian faith because, in my profession, I seek to offer a Christian explanation of the great controversy between good and evil. I seek to convince my clients that their conflicts and predicament are profound and that they can use Christian principles to understand the origin of their problems and find solutions (Evans et al., 2022).

In the book of Romans 8:18, Paul reveals that our present suffering is not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. Paul depicts great joy and happiness when the corruptible mind is changed to the incorruptible mind. Paul sees the present sufferings of the

cursed word in the context of the eternal joy that awaits believers when Christ returns to take them to heaven. My counselor's professional identity is greatly attached to the great promises that are promised in the Bible. I believe that convincing my clients of the greatness that awaits us at the end of this suffering helps them in having a positive mindset about life and improving their health situation.

I work with grace and humility which are key pillars of my Christian faith. Jesus Christ who provides the background for my humility and grace can be viewed as the greatest expression of virtue ever to be seen on earth. Man sinned and fell away from the law of God. Despite the death sentence that was passed on man for transgressing God's law, the plan of salvation was brought by God through His son Jesus Christ (Evans et al., 2022). Despite His connection to great power and authority, Christ humbled himself to ordinary humans and accepted a lowly life just for the salvation of man. I take this grace and humility heavily because it fascinates my imagination. It informs me to treat all my clients with humility and grace. It teaches me to be confident in the word of God even as I attempt to explain the deep theological and clinical concepts that are supposed to offer healing. I have the ability to deal with conflict and prefers using diverse means to assess conflict and provide a solution for each client's needs.

My professional counselor identity is informed by my preference for flexibility and openness of thought. I use talk therapy and CBT in flexible manner that gives room for deep interactions with clients about their preferred methods of counseling. I do not have a rigid way of approaching counseling issues but prefer to use different methods to arrive at a desired result. Flexibility ensures that the counselor operates with a free attitude to new information and consideration of evidence-based techniques (Prasath et al., 2021). For instance, the processes of counseling require clinical methods to diagnose a patient and formulate an effective treatment

plan for them. This process can entirely be conducted through clinical means. However, I believe that there should be substantial flexibility to incorporate theological approaches to solving mental health issues. Therefore, I am flexible and open enough to accept a client's acceptance of theological reflections to inform their problem and find a lasting solution for them.

Christ was a flexible Lord even while he walked the earth yet in his flexibility, he never disconnected from the foundations of God's purposes. Christ was never ruffled with interruptions and never focused on the needs of one person at the expense of others. Christ forgave the sins of those who needed their sins to be forgiven, he healed those who required healing such as Bartimaeus, and he commanded that required baptism seek baptism like Nicodemus. I believe these principles are important in counseling. My counselor identity is built around these principles of flexibility. I believe that patients require different strategies of treatment to handle their problems comprehensively (Prasath et al., 2021). I believe that the opinions of clients are key to finding a solution for their various mental health issues. I believe that counseling is a highly communicative subject that requires the counselor to listen to the client and assist them in making informed decisions such as Christ being kind enough to listen to his followers.

In conclusion, I believe that professional counselor identity enables counselors to thoroughly understand the role and scope of their counseling practice and communicate said identity to others. All mental health professions educate their students on the values, perspectives, and processes that characterize professional practice. Understanding roles and scopes of counseling practice illuminate the power conflicts, role ambiguity, and stereotypes that can challenge counseling when delivering on their mandate. I identify as a substance abuse and mental health counselor with specialization interest in trauma. I consider myself flexible, confident, humble, and honest in my interactions with my clients in the professional counseling

setup. I believe in counseling my clients using evidence-based practice like talk therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). My faith is central in my professional counseling practice because it informs my deep care for those who are hearting alongside providing a basis through which human can find hope in times of trouble.

References

- Cureton, J. L., Davis, H., & Giegerich, V. (2019). Counselor professional identity development: Narratives from a professional event. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision, 12*(1), 5.
- Evans, C., Brown, D., & Davis, J. (2022). Professional counseling from a Christian worldview. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health, 24*(3), 309-326.
- Na, G., & Fietzer, A. W. (2020). A national survey of social justice engagement among professional counselors. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 98*(3), 319-330.
- Peters, H. C., & Vereen, L. G. (2020). Counseling leadership and professional counselor identity: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Counselor Leadership and Advocacy, 7*(2), 99- 117.
- Prasath, P. R., Lindinger-Sternart, S., & Duffey, T. L. (2021). Counselors as organizational leaders: Exploring parallels of servant leadership and professional counseling. *Journal of Counselor Leadership and Advocacy, 8*(2), 146-156.