

# *The Professional Counselor*™

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# **Lifetime Achievement in Counseling Series**

**An Interview With Amy King**

Joshua D. Smith, Neal D. Gray



This is the second article in the ongoing Lifetime Achievement in Counseling Series. The purpose of this series is to highlight seminal figures in the field of counseling and their contributions to the profession. We hope that readers will utilize this series to better understand the continued development of the counseling profession, and be motivated to respond to current and future challenges presented by the interviewees.

The second interviewee in this series is Amy King, clinical site supervisor for the University of Mississippi and doctoral student in counselor education at the University of Mississippi. Ms. King has worked diligently within the public school system for 25 years, first as a teacher and then as a school counselor. After changing roles and beginning her work as a school counselor in 1999, Ms. King also was recognized as the Oxford Middle School Counselor of the Year in that same year. Additionally, Ms. King earned her master's degree in educational psychology in 1996 from Mississippi State University and later received a specialist degree in counselor education in 2008. In her current role as clinical supervisor, which she has held since 1999, Ms. King focuses her exceptional work on training master's-level school counselors.

Ms. King has significantly impacted the training and education of school counselors and aspiring school counselors. She has presented on a wide variety of topics relating to school counseling, both at the local and national stage. Most recently, she co-presented at the 2017 American School Counselor Association (ASCA) conference in Denver, Colorado, and the Mississippi Counselor Association (MCA) conference in Biloxi, Mississippi. Ms. King is an active member in both (ASCA, MCA) professional organizations.

In this interview, Ms. King responds to several questions addressing her career; challenges and barriers experienced by school counselors; advocacy and social justice within the profession; experiences with professional organizations; and the future development of school counseling. Ms. King discusses her experiences as a practicing school counselor and her role as an advocate in the community. She mentions the need for educating school administrators about state legislation regarding school counseling to enhance the profession. Ms. King concludes by discussing her thoughts for future school counselors, and the overall advancement and development of school counseling.

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### **Read full article and references:**

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doi:[10.15241/jds.7.4.298](https://doi.org/10.15241/jds.7.4.298)







# Examining the Facilitating Role of Mindfulness on Professional Identity Development Among Counselors-in-Training

## A Qualitative Approach

Shengli Dong, Amanda Campbell, Stacy Vance

The development of a healthy professional identity among counselors-in-training (CITs) has long been recognized as a critical component of counselor education, as it establishes students' sense of belonging to the professional community and provides a frame of reference for understanding the counseling field. A recent transformational model proposed that professional identity in counselor trainees occurs over time through four tasks. Specifically, throughout professional identity development (PID), one moves from (1) an idealistic to a realistic perspective of the field, (2) burnout to rejuvenation, (3) external validation to internal validation, and (4) separated to integrated professional identity. In reflection of these transformational tasks, it is clear that PID encompasses cognitive, behavioral, and affective components.

Although the counselor education literature has established approaches for facilitating cognitive and behavioral components of PID (e.g., experiential learning, supervision), there is a dearth of research-based approaches that emphasize methods for fostering the affective aspect. Mindfulness, defined as the ability to pay attention on purpose nonjudgmentally, is well-established as being beneficial for affective growth. However, no study to date has examined how mindfulness may foster PID in counselor trainees. Thus, the current study adopts a qualitative approach, examining six counselor trainees' perspectives on how mindfulness has contributed to their PID.

The results validated the aforementioned transformational model. Given that the participants consisted of CITs during their internship, the majority of individuals indicated perspectives early on the continuum for these transformational tasks. However, participants generally noted a change to more sophisticated perspectives of PID across their master's-level education. As hypothesized, participants indicated that mindfulness appeared to play an important role in facilitating PID. Specifically, mindfulness facets of acceptance and a here-and-now orientation were beneficial in fostering growth. For example, participants noted that these mindfulness components led to acceptance of responsibilities and expectations of counseling, greater rejuvenation in one's work, confidence in one's clinical abilities, and comfort in one's role as a counselor. In addition to citing mindfulness as important in one's growth, participants indicated experiential learning, supervision, and participation in professional organizations as contributing to PID growth.

In summary, this research indicates that mindfulness may be beneficial to PID in CITs, in addition to experiential learning and supervision. Based on this study, it is recommended that counselor educators integrate mindfulness training into counseling curricula to better facilitate PID in counselor trainees. Further research, specifically experimental and longitudinal designs, is needed to validate a causal relationship between mindfulness and PID in the future.


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Dong, S., Campbell, A., & Vance, S. (2017). Examining the facilitating role of mindfulness on professional identity development among counselors-in-training: A qualitative approach. *The Professional Counselor*, 7, 305–317. doi:[10.15241/sd.7.4.305](https://doi.org/10.15241/sd.7.4.305)

# Exploring Experiential Learning Through an Abstinence Assignment Within an Addictions Counseling Course

Chad M. Yates, Alexia DeLeon, Marisa C. Rapp

ounselors-in-training may struggle in working with addictions populations. These challenges include students' unfamiliarity with the process of addiction or addicted populations, few opportunities to infuse addiction-related materials into the general curriculum, and no uniform national curriculum standards for addiction-related education. This is concerning as addiction remains a consistent concern for the general population. Approximately 21.5 million Americans meet criteria for a substance use disorder, reinforcing the need for competent professional counselors to work with this population. It is imperative that counselor education programs continue to address training to ensure counselors-in-training are prepared to meet the needs of persons with addiction.

A common tool utilized in addictions training to foster empathy for persons with addictions is the abstinence assignment. The abstinence assignment asks students to abstain from a substance or behavior for a set period and journal about the experience. This learning approach has been explored within a pharmaceutical education program, and it allowed students to successfully meet all four of the course's learning objectives, which included: describing feelings and experiences related to the process of withdrawal from habituating or addicting substances or activities; exploring the importance of abstinence in the maintenance of recovery and discussing the implications of relapse to the recovery process; discussing the importance of support systems in recovery; and describing the process of addiction and recovery. The aim of the current study was to understand the pedagogy behind the abstinence assignment and to explore the experience of students completing it. It was hoped that the project would reveal if the abstinence assignment could foster empathetic experiences for persons with addictions and if the assignment could enhance understanding of withdrawal, craving, and relapse.

The authors utilized qualitative analysis to explore the experience of 17 counseling students completing the abstinence assignment. The emergent themes of (1) concrete experiences, (2) dealing with craving, (3) student's self-reflection of learning, and (4) empathetic understanding and challenging attitudes are presented and discussed, along with implications for counselor educators and suggestions for future research.

It is the authors' belief that the abstinence assignment helps students prepare for working effectively with persons with addictions in a way that surpasses traditional didactic content. Speculatively, this may be why the abstinence assignment has been seen as a hallmark of addictions training. Another investigation of abstinence assignments found that 69% of participants felt the abstinence assignment had a positive effect, and 44% of participants agreed that they better understood the process of addiction recovery as a result of the assignment. This study aimed to build upon these findings to explore if the abstinence assignment was found valuable by students and if it provided a valuable learning experience about the phenomenological experiences of persons with addictions, an understanding of the symptoms of addictions, and an understanding of preliminary treatment approaches to use with clients. The researchers found key themes within the study that supported the assignment meeting the above learning goals. Based on these findings, the authors encourage the infusion of this assignment within counselor education.

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**Read full article and references:**

Yates, C. M., DeLeon, A., & Rapp, M. C. (2017). Exploring experiential learning through an abstinence assignment within an addictions counseling course. *The Professional Counselor*, 7, 318–329. doi:[10.15241/cmty.7.4.318](https://doi.org/10.15241/cmty.7.4.318)







# PTSD, Optimism, Religious Commitment, and Growth as Post-Trauma Trajectories

## A Structural Equation Modeling of Former Refugees

Hannah E. Acquaye

Most research on trauma in general and refugee trauma specifically, has focused on pathologies and the diverse challenges encountered. Newer researchers, while recognizing the challenges this population faces, are focusing on what makes them thrive, survive, and grow psychologically beyond their previous level of functioning. The concept used in this study to describe this growth beyond trauma is Tedeschi and Calhoun's *post-traumatic growth* (PTG) construct. Participants in this study returned to the place of their trauma; therefore, an assessment of their level of optimism was warranted to attempt to predict PTG and hope for the future.

The background above led to the proposal of four hypotheses: a prediction of the percentage of participants meeting the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); high optimism predicting PTG; high optimism predicting religious commitment; and high religious commitment predicting PTG. Participants were given instruments to assess each of the constructs—optimism, war events, PTSD, religious commitment, and growth.

Using structural equation modeling, some of the hypotheses were rejected, although the study failed to reject others. Almost 80% of the participants met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD. Although there were no significant differences in PTSD scores based on gender, there were significant differences in PTG scores, with females scoring higher than their male counterparts.

Post-traumatic stress, optimism, and religious commitment each predicted growth. The results were unsurprising because PTSD and PTG have been reported to coexist in traumatized populations. Both optimism and religious commitment were found within the PTG construct; that prediction also was not surprising. The surprising results, however, were that the higher a person's reported religious commitment, the lower their PTG. There was evidence that a moderate amount of religious commitment can predict higher growth. These results corroborated a previous qualitative study in which some participants who had religion-based trauma reported higher growth with lowered religious commitment. Thus, religious commitment and growth had an inverse relation.

Overall, the study provided initial support for the cross-cultural use of some Western-based instruments. Professional counselors are encouraged to use the PTSD instrument to assess the level of trauma for both Western and non-Western traumatized populations instead of trying to reinvent the wheel. The construct can be classified cross-culturally, with the instrument having the ability to screen for PTSD in traumatized populations.

*Data collected in this study was part of a dissertation study. The dissertation was awarded the 2016 Dissertation Excellence Award by the National Board for Certified Counselors.*

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### Read full article and references:

Acquaye, H. E. (2017). PTSD, optimism, religious commitment, and growth as post-trauma trajectories: A structural equation modeling of former refugees. *The Professional Counselor*, 7, 330–348. doi:[10.15241/hea.7.4.330](https://doi.org/10.15241/hea.7.4.330)



# The Role of High School and College Counselors in Supporting the Psychosocial and Emotional Needs of Latinx First-Generation College Students

Angelica M. Tello, Marlise R. Lonn

Many universities struggle with retention and graduation rates of first-generation college students (FGCS). These students are the first in their families to attend college; their parents do not have any postsecondary education. FGCS are 71% more likely to leave college in their first year than non-FGCS. Latinx students are a growing population within FGCS, and they face additional barriers to college completion, such as institutional environments that do not culturally support Latinx values.

High school and college counselors are in unique positions to engage with Latinx FGCS to support their transition from high school to college. The focus of this article is to provide high school and college counselors with (a) an overview of FGCS characteristics, (b) information specific to Latinx culture, (c) an understanding of the college experiences of Latinx FGCS, and (d) a discussion of counseling implications. The term Latinx, a gender neutral term for Latina/o, is used throughout this article.

Although there are within-group differences, Latinx college students may share common cultural values and educational experiences. Understanding Latinx culture can help high school and college counselors in providing culturally competent services to Latinx FGCS. In order to understand some of the significant Latinx cultural values, information is provided on *familismo*, *personalismo*, *simpático*, and *fatalism*. The current literature on Latinx college students has brought attention to the lack of cultural fit this population experiences in higher education and the negative impact it has on their college persistence. For example, many Latinx college students experience significant negative interactions on campus, such as racism and microaggressions, which negatively impact their college retention.

Recent research on Latinx FGCS has focused on the strengths of these students. High school and college counselors can learn from the cultural assets, strengths, and resiliency of Latinx FGCS. Additionally, counselors can provide FGCS with college information and support. Therefore, an implication for school counselors includes identifying college-bound Latinx FGCS and tailoring college information to these students. Counselors can design interventions at both the individual and school-wide levels to use the strengths inherent in Latinx cultural norms. Engaging in informal interactions and hosting events in the community rather than within school buildings may enhance participant comfort and attendance.

It is important for college counselors to have a presence on campus beyond the counseling center. College counselors having an increased presence on their campus can help Latinx FGCS understand the support counseling can offer in assisting with college persistence. For instance, high school and college counselors can help Latinx FGCS develop positive coping strategies for dealing with the lack of diversity on their campuses and the internal struggles that arise with their sense of belonging. High school and college counselors can work together to share knowledge and bridge the gap between high school and college expectations, institutional culture, and provision of counseling services in ways that benefit Latinx FGCS.

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Tello, A. M., & Lonn, M. R. (2017). The role of high school and college counselors in supporting the psychosocial and emotional needs of Latinx first-generation college students. *The Professional Counselor*, 7, 349–359. doi:[10.15241/amt.7.4.349](https://doi.org/10.15241/amt.7.4.349)



# Unaccompanied Refugee Minors From Central America

## Understanding Their Journey and Implications for Counselors

Angelica M. Tello, Nancy E. Castellon, Alejandra Aguilar, Cheryl B. Sawyer

The United States has recently seen a significant increase in unaccompanied refugee minors from the Northern Triangle of Central America. These are children and youth from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador who are traveling alone and crossing the Mexican border into the United States without legal authorization. Impoverished living conditions and extreme gang violence are the major factors leading unaccompanied minors to leave Central America. Societal inequalities and natural disasters have led to high poverty rates in the Northern Triangle. Furthermore, gangs have been able to flourish in this region due to political instability. As a result, the Northern Triangle has high rates of gang violence and homicide.

Further research is needed on the mental health needs of unaccompanied refugee minors from the Northern Triangle of Central America. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gain awareness of the journey experienced by unaccompanied minors from the Northern Triangle to the United States and provide implications for counselors. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the narratives of 16 participants (13 male, three female) who entered the United States as unaccompanied minors from the Northern Triangle. Each participant organized a digital storybook that discussed their journey to the United States.

From the participants' narratives, three primary themes emerged: reasons for leaving Central America, journey to the United States, and life in the United States. Participants fled Central America to financially help family, to escape violence and death, and to deal with powerlessness. They also shared the physical and emotional pain that was part of the journey to the United States. Participants provided detailed accounts of how they were physically assaulted and faced various injuries due to long days of walking. Participants also shared the emotional pain they experienced on their journey, such as reoccurring images from witnessing physical and sexual assaults. These types of physical and emotional pain place unaccompanied refugee minors at greater risk of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

In the literature on unaccompanied refugees, there is limited understanding of their experience once they arrive in the United States. Participants in this study provided some insight into these experiences. Faith was a source of strength as participants transitioned to life in the United States. However, many participants shared worries about their future; worries about their family members who were left behind, of their safety in the United States, and the uncertainty of their legal status. These constant worries about their future, coupled with the exposure to trauma in their past, might increase the depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms experienced by unaccompanied refugee minors. Therefore, it is crucial that counselors working with unaccompanied refugees be informed of trauma counseling theories and interventions, such as trauma-informed care. Additionally, counselors must practice multiculturally competent counseling services with this population and create a safe space for clients to process their trauma in a non-threatening manner. This study provides insight into cultural values that counselors can incorporate in session to help unaccompanied minors find some personal balance in the United States.

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# Enhancing the Sport Counseling Specialty

## A Call for a Unified Identity

Stephen P. Hebard, Katie A. Lamberson



The purpose of this paper is to discuss the current state of mental health services provided to athletes and to identify and address the potential barriers for counselors who wish to work in sport. The authors provide a brief history of mental health services in sport, focusing on the counseling field's vision for an integrated sport counseling specialty. In addition, this paper identifies gaps in counselor competence and identity that may be necessary to establish sport counseling as a recognized profession amongst other professions working in sport. Finally, the authors discuss suggestions for researchers, practitioners, and advocates to ensure a future for the sport counseling specialty.

Professionals currently working in the athletic arena typically prioritize interventions related to sport performance optimization over conceptualization and treatment of behavioral and mental health concerns that exist within the athlete population. Though subject to considerable stigma and often mistaken as a population of individuals more healthy than non-athletes, there is mounting evidence that suggests that athletes experience behavioral health issues (e.g., substance abuse, participation in risky behaviors, eating disorders, etc.) at a more disparate rate than their non-athlete peers. When paired with evidence that athletes are less likely to seek help than non-athletes, there is a clear need for enhanced intervention and participation from counselors in the context of sport.

In 2013, the National Athletic Training Association (NATA) called for the development of a collaborative plan to recognize and refer student athletes experiencing psychological concerns to the appropriate mental health professionals. In doing so, NATA catalyzed a long overdue shift in the philosophy and attention of stakeholders invested in the overall well-being of athletes. As a result, the National Collegiate Athletic Association's Mental Health Task Force and Sport Science Institute have prioritized programming that targets a variety of health initiatives, behavioral and mental health included. Counselors have yet to become involved in these and related initiatives. Furthermore, services currently provided to athletes are performed by practitioners with certification from the Applied Association for Sport Psychology or a proficiency designated by the American Psychological Association's Division 47. An argument for the unique contributions of the counselor and a willingness to collaborate among established professionals is warranted.





Counselors have made significant efforts to establish a sport counseling specialty; however, significant gaps in the establishment of the field must be addressed to enhance marketability, viability, and credibility. Sport counselors should consider critical analysis of the knowledge, skills, and attributes required to be effective. Counselors must come to expert consensus on sport counseling competencies that will guide the future of the profession. Counselors also may need to revisit formerly published teaching guidelines, acknowledge ethical considerations for counseling athletes, and prioritize grant writing and scholarly activity related to athlete health and well-being. Additionally, sport counselors should commit to using the Sport Counseling Interest Network, established through the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, to begin conversations about steps toward progress in sport counseling. These investments are critical to the success of a sport counseling specialty.

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