The Professional Counselor™

Summer 2019

The Professional Counselor®

NATIONAL BOARD FOR CERTIFIED COUNSELORS®

Digest

Volume 9, Issue 2

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The Professional Counselor®

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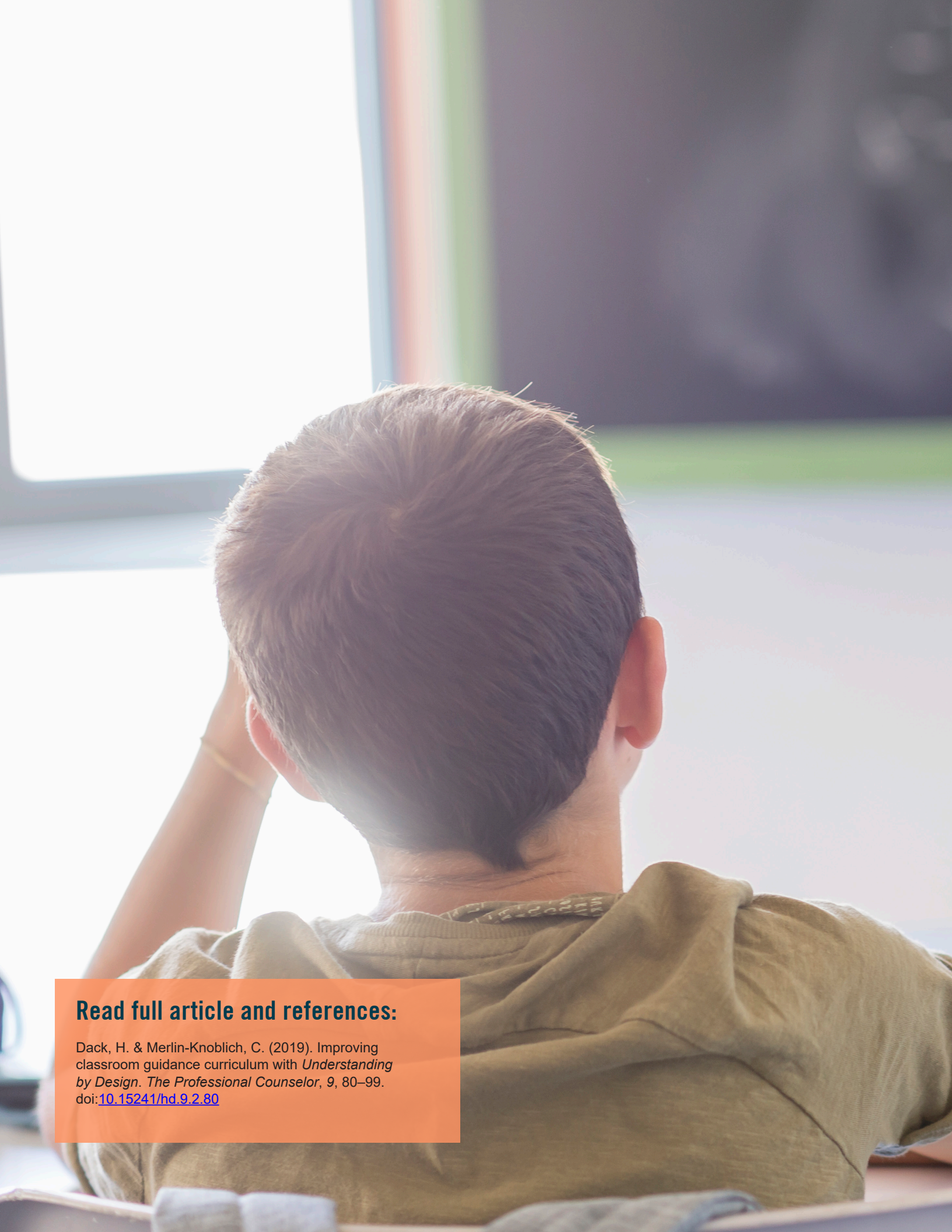


Read full article and references:

Dack, H. & Merlin-Knoblich, C. (2019). Improving classroom guidance curriculum with *Understanding by Design*. *The Professional Counselor*, *9*, 80–99. doi:10.15241/hd.9.2.80

Improving Classroom Guidance Curriculum With *Understanding by Design*

Hilary Dack, Clare Merlin-Knoblich

In comprehensive school counseling programs, school counselors use a range of approaches to support tudents' academic achievement, social and emotional growth, and career development. Classroom guidance is one delivery method of such approaches, advantageous in part because it allows school counselors to reach all students. In systematically delivering classroom guidance, school counselors use developmentally responsive lessons crafted to ensure students acquire desired knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These lessons comprise critical time school counselors spend in direct service to students, and multiple studies have highlighted the value of classroom guidance for student outcomes, including academic achievement and self-efficacy. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends that school counselors spend 15%–45% of their time delivering classroom guidance. The ASCA National Model also reflects the importance of classroom guidance in a comprehensive school counseling program, as designing a curriculum action plan is a key task in the model's management quadrant that warrants careful consideration and intentionality.

Despite these recommendations, school counselors appear hindered in designing effective lessons because of limited training in curriculum design. For instance, in a recent study that involved reviewing over 100 classroom guidance lesson plans on the ASCA Scene website, researchers concluded that school counselors need more extensive instruction on lesson design. This may be due in part to counselor educators not teaching methods of developing a classroom guidance curriculum consistently. Standards of the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) reflect this lack of emphasis. Of the 33 CACREP school counseling specialty-area standards, only one standard relates to curriculum development. Our conceptual paper seeks to address this need by introducing *Understanding by Design* (*UbD*), a research-based approach to curriculum development, to strengthen the classroom guidance planning process.

UbD presents a curriculum design framework for purposeful planning for teaching. The goal of this framework is teaching for understanding, which goes beyond simply recalling facts or information. It involves a student coming to own an idea for himself by deeply grasping how and why something works. The *UbD* framework also advocates the "backward design" of curriculum through a three-stage sequence of clarifying the goals of learning, determining needed evidence of learning, and planning corresponding learning experiences.

UbD offers a way of thinking about curriculum design, not a recipe or prescription. It presents guidelines for planning for teaching that apply to teaching any topic from any field to any learner. Because existing research has examined the effects of teaching for understanding in diverse content areas with diverse learners, its application to classroom guidance is a logical extension of an approach that is widely accepted as best practice in K–12 schools.

Our paper outlines *UbD*'s three design stages as applied to the development of a classroom guidance unit and offers an example of a school counselor's application of the *UbD* framework to the revision of a classroom guidance curriculum. We offer school counselors principles for developing a classroom guidance curriculum that yields more meaningful and powerful lessons, makes instruction more cohesive, and focuses on what is critical for student success.

Hilary Dack is an assistant professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Clare Merlin-Knoblich, NCC, is an assistant professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Correspondence can be addressed to Hilary Dack, Department of MDSK, Cato College of Education, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 9201 University City Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28223, hdack@uncc.edu.

Supporting Women Coping With Emotional Distress After Abortion

Jennifer Katz

Abortion involves the removal of an embryo or fetus from the uterus before the age of viability. An estimated 25% of women in the United States will seek abortion care before age 45. Although research does not support a causal link between legal first trimester abortion and mental health problems, emotional distress may arise from both the circumstances surrounding an unintended or unhealthy pregnancy and the decision to seek abortion care. From a cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) perspective, distress after abortion may be conceptualized as linked to thoughts and behaviors related to one's abortion experience. Identifying and talking about thoughts and behaviors related to negative emotional states can help patients who are feeling stuck to move forward.

This article provides guidance about ways counselors can help to address four different types of thought patterns experienced by abortion patients experiencing emotional distress. First, hindsight bias is the tendency to use current knowledge to re-interpret past situations. Abortion patients who exhibit hindsight bias may believe they knew then what they know now, and they may assume that they have failed in some way by making the decision that they did. Second, belief in a just world involves the simple idea that good things happen to good people, and thus bad things happen to bad people. A third and closely related belief is outcome-based reasoning, a tendency to assume that emotional distress is the natural result of a bad decision. As applied to abortion patients in distress, the end result (distress) may be thought of as reflecting the quality of the decision to terminate the pregnancy (bad). Fourth, all or none thinking may involve a tendency to hold either oneself or another person as singularly responsible for the pregnancy, for a complicated or unhealthy pregnancy, for making the decision to seek abortion care, or for causing the circumstances that led to the abortion decision.

In addition to exploring thought patterns associated with emotional distress, this article offers recommendations to promote a respectful, collaborative alliance between counselors and abortion patients. It is recommended that questions be asked in a genuinely open way with the goal of eliciting more information about the events that occurred and how those events are perceived at present. Counselors also are advised to use the terms that patients themselves use to describe themselves, others, and their experiences. Ideally, counselors avoid making assumptions about gender identity and sexual orientation, whether contraception was used, whether the pregnancy was planned or desired, and whether the sex was consensual. It also is recommended to listen carefully for how the patient describes social roles for self and others (e.g., whether abortion patients refer to themselves as "mothers"). In addition, counselors are advised to avoid language with either direct or implied political connotations. For example, the term "decision" can be used instead of "choice" (similar to "pro-choice" activism), and "after–abortion" can be used instead of "post-abortion" (similar to "pro-life" activism).

By applying concepts and methods from CBT, counselors may collaborate with abortion patients. Patients may become more aware of their thoughts and connections among their thoughts, behaviors, and feelings. Developing this type of awareness within the context of a respectful counseling relationship may foster adaptation and recovery.

Jennifer Katz is a professor of psychology at SUNY Geneseo. Correspondence can be addressed to Jennifer Katz, Bailey Hall, 1 College Circle, Geneseo, NY 14454, katz@genesco.edu.

Read full article and references:

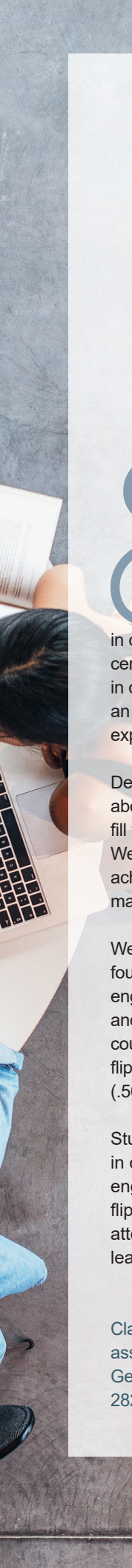
Katz, J. (2019). Supporting women coping with emotional distress after abortion. *The Professional Counselor*, *9*, 100–108. doi:10.15241/jk.9.2.100

Read full article and references:

Merlin-Knoblich, C., Harris, P. N., & Mason, E. C. M. (2019) Examining student classroom engagement in flipped and non-flipped counselor education courses. *The Professional Counselor*, *9*, 109–125. doi:10.15241/cmk.9.2.109

Examining Student Classroom Engagement in Flipped and Non-Flipped Counselor Education Courses

Clare Merlin-Knoblich, Pamela N. Harris, Erin Chase McCarty Mason



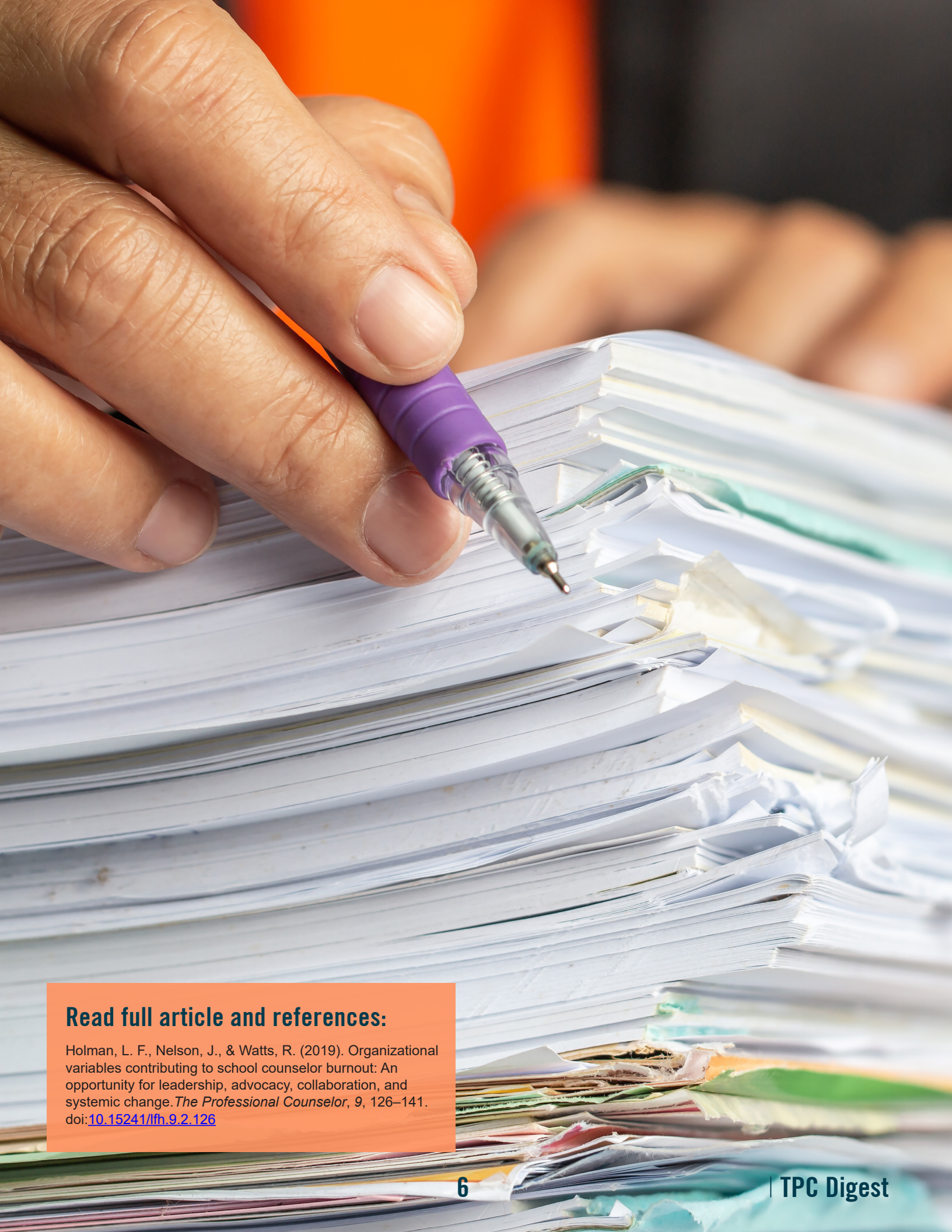
Flipped learning is an innovative teaching approach in which students view pre-recorded video lectures outside of class, then engage in activities applying course concepts during class. By removing lecture from face-to-face class time, instructors free up time in class for students to explore and apply course content. Flipped learning is a particularly useful approach in counselor education, given the need for both content and practice in the discipline. For example, in a flipped counseling theories course, students would view a 15-minute video lecture synthesizing key information about specific counseling theories for homework. Then, in class, an instructor could lead students through a series of activities about counseling theories, including watching videos of certain theories, listening to a guest speaker who uses those theories, practicing techniques from the theories, and engaging in discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the theories. In contrast, a non-flipped class session might consist of an instructor lecturing for most of the class session about the theories, then finding time for just one or two activities further exploring the theories.

Despite the usefulness of flipped learning in counselor education, a limited number of research articles have been published about the topic, and no previous studies have compared flipped and non-flipped counselor education courses. We sought to fill this gap in the present study by examining student classroom engagement in flipped and non-flipped counseling courses. We chose to compare student classroom engagement given its established relationship with positive student outcomes like achievement and graduation rates. Researchers also have acknowledged that student classroom engagement is impacted by many variables, including instructors' behaviors; thus, the construct appeared malleable in a flipped classroom.

We used a causal comparative method and compared student engagement via the Classroom Engagement Inventory (CEI) in four counseling theories course sections. The CEI measures student engagement at the classroom level in five scales: affective engagement, behavioral engagement–compliance, behavioral engagement–effortful class participation, cognitive engagement, and disengagement. When we compared students in the flipped counseling courses (n = 30) to students in the non-flipped courses (n = 37), we found that the flipped counseling students reported statistically higher classroom engagement than the non-flipped counseling students in all scales but one (behavioral engagement–effortful class participation). Effect sizes were medium (.50–.70) for the four other engagement measures, as well as for an overall measure of classroom engagement.

Study findings provide positive, though tentative, cause to conclude that flipped learning is a valuable teaching approach in counselor education. Given that participants in flipped counseling courses reported significantly higher classroom engagement than participants in non-flipped counseling courses in our study, counselor educators might want to consider flipped learning as a teaching approach that helps contribute to an engaged counseling classroom. Findings also draw attention to the need for greater attention to pedagogy in counselor education and strategies to best meet the evolving learning needs of counseling students.

Clare Merlin-Knoblich, NCC, is an assistant professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Pamela N. Harris is an assistant professor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Erin Chase McCarty Mason is an assistant professor at Georgia State University. Correspondence can be addressed to Clare Merlin-Knoblich, 9201 University City Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28223, claremerlin@uncc.edu.



Read full article and references:

Holman, L. F., Nelson, J., & Watts, R. (2019). Organizational variables contributing to school counselor burnout: An opportunity for leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change.*The Professional Counselor*, *9*, 126–141. doi:10.15241/lfh.9.2.126

Organizational Variables Contributing to School Counselor Burnout

An Opportunity for Leadership, Advocacy, Collaboration, and Systemic Change

Leigh Falls Holman, Judith Nelson, Richard Watts

According to the American School Counseling Association (ASCA), professional school counselors are expected to develop and evaluate a comprehensive developmental school counseling program that addresses the academic, social, emotional, and career needs of students they serve. As such, counselor educators prepare school counseling students for activities consistent with ASCA's National Model. However, many school administrators assigning their day-to-day activities do not understand the appropriate school counseling role. As a result, administrators may assign school counselors non-counseling duties like overseeing mandated testing, substitute teaching, developing a master schedule, and providing discipline for students with behavioral problems.

In fact, many school counselors not only experience conflicts between their perception of their role and that of the building administrator, but also conflicting demands from teachers, parents, and students who also do not understand what a school counselor's role is. Therefore, school counselors may believe they cannot conduct needs-based programming due to little control over how their time is spent and low levels of supervisory or colleague support for conducting appropriate duties.

Several studies indicate these non-counseling duties may contribute to school counselor's developing job stress and burnout. When school counselors have high levels of chronic job stress and burnout, those experiences can result in negative effects on the students and schools they serve. Therefore, identifying those variables most likely to contribute to school counselor burnout (SCBO) is crucial for counselor educators' and supervisors' development of prevention, monitoring, and early intervention protocols.

With this end in mind, our study is the next in a series of research projects we are pursuing to systematically evaluate variables potentially related to SCBO in order to develop a model of SCBO in the future. These variables include role ambiguity, role conflict, assignment of non-counseling duties, coworker and supervisor support, and level of control over time and task. We measured these variables with the Demand Control Support Questionnaire (DCSQ). We used a correlation matrix to examine the subscales of the DCSQ against the subscales of the Counselor Burnout Inventory (CBI) and found that when school counselors experience high external demands, such as assignment of non-counseling duties, perception of the school as a negative place to work, and low levels of support from colleagues and supervisors, they have higher levels of exhaustion and burnout. Although this is a solid step toward a better understanding of this phenomenon, these variables need further exploration using a hierarchical multiple regression to analyze the amount of variance they contribute to SCBO. The article includes a discussion of ethical concerns, future research, and practice implications for school counselor educators, supervisors, educational administrators, and school counselors.

Leigh Falls Holman is an assistant professor at the University of Memphis. Judith Nelson is an associate professor at Sam Houston State University. Richard Watts is a Distinguished Professor of Counseling at Sam Houston State University. Correspondence can be addressed to Leigh Falls Holman, CEPR, 100 Ball Hall Walker Ave., Memphis, TN 38152, lfalls@memphis.edu.

Defining Moment Experiences of Professional Counselors

A Phenomenological Investigations

Diane M. Coll, Chandra F. Johnson, Chinwé U. Williams, Michael J. Halloran

The American Counseling Association *Code of Ethics* emphasizes the value and importance of continuing education during the careers of counseling professionals. Although continuing education courses tend to focus on performance-based skills, optimal therapeutic outcomes also entail counselor attributes of openness to change, self-awareness, the practice of self-reflection, and attunement to the interpersonal connection between client and counselor. A significant avenue for developing these attributes is through *defining moment experiences*.

A defining moment experience is a pinnacle moment or critical incident that occurred within a therapeutic context and contributed significantly to the professional development and personal growth of counselors. A negative defining moment experience may entail exposure to a difficult client, which may have a negative influence on counselor perceptions of clinical competency. In contrast, a positive defining moment experience may involve a novice counselor's first experience of effectiveness or making a therapeutic breakthrough with a client. Whereas defining moment experiences often occur among novice and early career counselors, experienced counselors are more likely to be able to reflect and process the latent meanings of defining moment experiences for their own ongoing professional growth and development.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how experienced counselors make sense and meaning of their defining moment experiences with respect to their professional development and practice. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine experienced licensed professional counselors to investigate how defining moment experiences influenced their professional development. Five main themes relating to defining moment experiences were identified from the interviews: acceptance of reality; finding a balance; enhanced self-reflection and awareness; reciprocal transformation; and assimilation and integration.

Professional counselors understood their defining moment experience as one that was a 'wake-up call' to accept the reality that counselors are not ideal for all clients and all presenting problems. Defining moment experiences also highlighted the importance of finding a balance between one's own strengths and weaknesses, internal and external limitations, and finding a rhythm in unchartered or unfamiliar territories. Experienced counselors also understood their defining moment experiences to entail enhanced self-reflection and awareness. Indeed, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs aligns professional competence with counselor self-awareness of strengths and limitations via self-reflection. The findings also revealed defining moment experiences of professional counselors led to the development of a broader understanding of the reciprocal and transformative power within the therapeutic bond. Within the theme of assimilation and integration, professional counselors shared how meanings of their defining moments continue to be a solid foundation of inspiration for their purpose, passion, and advocacy work in the counseling profession.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest facilitating conversations and reflecting on defining moment experiences may provide a focal point for continuing training of professional counselors. Providers of counselor education programs and supervisors could develop awareness of the potential for defining moment experiences to raise questions about the realities of counseling, finding a balance in the counselor role, and the transformative power of the therapeutic relationship.

Diane M. Coll is a professional counselor at Argosy University. Chandra F. Johnson is an associate professor at Argosy University. Chinwé U. Williams is an associate professor at Argosy University. Michael J. Halloran is an honorary associate professor at La Trobe University. Correspondence can be addressed to Michael Halloran, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University, Kingsbury Dr., Bundoora, Australia, 3086, m.halloran@latrobe.edu.au.

Read full article and references:

Coll, D. M., Johnson, C. F., Williams, C. U., & Halloran, M. J. (2019). Defining moment experiences of professional counselors: A phenomenological investigation. *The Professional Counselor*, *9*, 142–155. doi:10.15241/dmc.9.2.142

Comparison of School Characteristics Among RAMP and Non-RAMP Schools

Patrick R. Mullen, Nancy Chae, Adrienne Backer

The Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program (RAMP) designation aims to acknowledge school counselors who deliver comprehensive data-driven programs by adhering to the tenets of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model, a comprehensive school counseling framework from ASCA. Research has shown that implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs promotes positive outcomes for schools and students, including improved academic achievement, enhanced student outcomes, safe social and emotional climates, and increased job satisfaction for school counseling professionals. RAMP also is an indicator of implementation of data-driven interventions and programs for students and school by school counselors.

However, there is little research to date that examines RAMP schools and the associated factors with this designation. The process to implement RAMP or components of the ASCA National Model with fidelity can require a commitment of about one to two years of planning and an additional year for data collection and analysis. There also is a cost attached to applying for RAMP designation. All the while, school counselors are expected to maintain sizeable caseloads of students, respond to and serve the pressing needs of students, and often complete non-counselor related responsibilities. Altogether, school counselors may experience time and financial burdens that may create barriers to implementing components of comprehensive school counseling programs and attaining RAMP.

In this investigation, we compared the characteristics of schools that earned the RAMP designation with a random sample of schools without this designation (i.e., non-RAMP schools) to examine if differences exist. Data was accessed using the Elementary/Secondary Information System through the U.S. Department of Education. The results indicated that non-RAMP schools in this study were more likely: (a) eligible for Title I; (b) located in city, rural, and township communities; and (c) had lower enrollments of students and fewer full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. Furthermore, non-RAMP schools had higher rates of students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Of the race and ethnicity categories, RAMP schools in this study had a greater percentage of Asian students compared to non-RAMP schools. Overall, the findings of this study demonstrated potential inequalities of school and student characteristics in RAMP versus non-RAMP schools.

To promote equitable access to comprehensive school counseling programs, support mechanisms for the RAMP-seeking process for these schools might be beneficial. Because the RAMP process can seem burdensome, school counselors can collaborate with administrators, teachers, and stakeholders to advocate for increased time and financial resources to implement components of the ASCA National Model. In addition, ASCA can advocate for and offer opportunities for supervision and mentorship at no or low cost as well as financial incentives for smaller, lower staffed schools with a higher rate of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to support RAMP implementation. Furthermore, continued research about the merit and effectiveness of the ASCA National Model will encourage stakeholders to advocate for its implementation.

Patrick R. Mullen, NCC, is an assistant professor at the College of William & Mary. Nancy Chae, NCC, is a doctoral candidate at the College of William & Mary. Adrienne Backer is a doctoral student at the College of William & Mary. Correspondence can be addressed to Patrick Mullen, P.O. Box 8795, Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795, prmullen@wm.edu.

Read full article and references:

Mullen, P. R., Chae, N., & Backer, A. (2019). Comparison of school characteristics among RAMP and non-RAMP schools. *The Professional Counselor*, *9*, 156–170. doi:10.15241/prm.9.2.156

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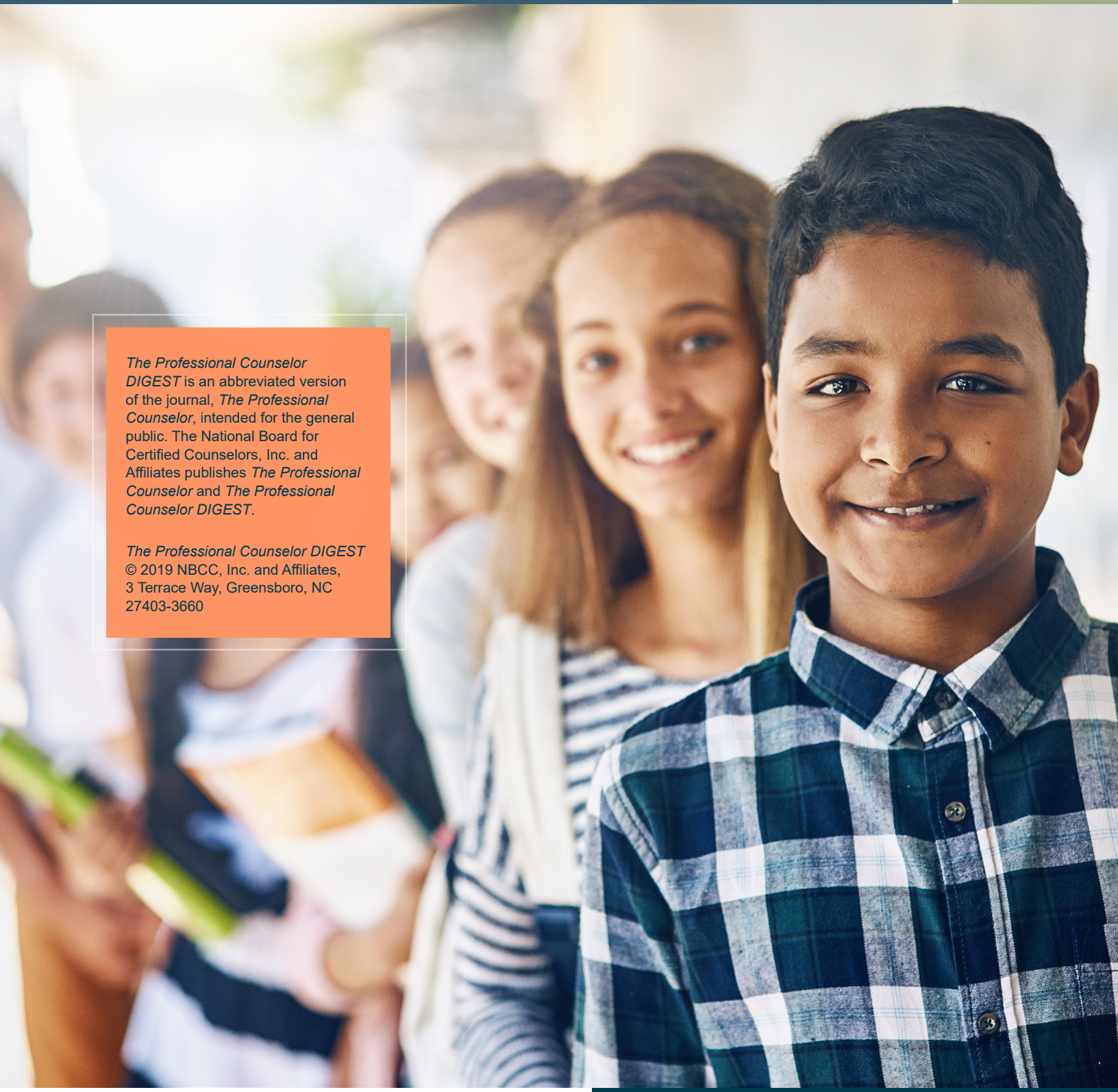

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