SCHOOL COUNSELLORS' PERCEIVED ROLES, NEEDS AND FEELINGS OF EFFICACY

KEITH FLAMAN

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to interpret local counsellors' perceptions regarding their various roles, their effectiveness in those roles and their feelings of efficacy toward their occupation. The study refers to the changing demands of society upon school counsellors as a rationale for examining the roles they perform. As society has changed, demands have changed, indicating a need for counsellors to alter their methods, educational preparation and even their counselling philosophies. Input from those who are most directly involved in dealing with the many changing demands (namely, school counsellors) was sought in order to analyze how these changes are affecting counsellors and how they could be more effectively dealt with. Eighteen counsellors in the Lethbridge area responded to a survey designed to allow them to express their perceptions of roles, effectiveness and efficacy. Their responses seem to have some implications for their time management, for their professional preparation and for their job satisfaction. For example, some of the patterns suggested by the findings are: (1) counsellors feel a need for more time to accomplish their many tasks; (2) they need to do more evaluation and assessment; (3) counsellors spend more time in individual counselling than in group counselling, but there is an increasing demand to concentrate on group counselling; (4) they recognize a need for more and varied training; (5) there may be differences among the three grade levels regarding counsellors' priorities and kinds of roles performed and (6) acknowledgement from students and teachers for counsellors' work is important to counsellors. As well as offering some suggestions for the improvement of the overall lot of counsellors, several questions are raised regarding such topics as counsellor education, grade-based specialization, and gender of counsellors.

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INTRODUCTION

The growth from childhood to adulthood has always been fraught with difficulties. Today's changing and complex world places increasingly greater demands on the students in our schools. For example, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, antisocial behavior, and dropping out of school are issues that have assumed a major profile and importance for our society. Consequently, the demand for school (particularly counsellor) assistance for students has increased in frequency and complexity. Sweeny, Navin, and Meyer (1984) believe the role and function of school counsellors should be shaped in large part by these concerns.

There is a need in our school system for counsellors who are competent and well-trained, and who feel a sense of efficacy. It follows, then, that there is a need to determine what it is that counsellors do, how they feel about what they do, and how to improve what they do. If these determinations can be made, then training, hiring and support of counsellors can be done more effectively, and consequently the needs of students can be better met. One way to gain perspective on these issues is through input from practising school counsellors (Sisson & Bullis, 1992).

My personal experience and my observations indicate that the majority of counsellors in our school system, like me, have little or no specialized training in counselling. Quite likely these counsellors were chosen and designated because they had exhibited, in their role as teacher, an ability to relate well to students, parents, and colleagues. This career route has placed many of our counsellors in the difficult and frustrating position of trying to learn crucial and intricate counselling skills "on

the job". While many of our counsellors have succeeded admirably in learning and adapting, there is an obvious need for a more effective method of developing a counselling corps in a school system.

Now is an opportune time to make the aforementioned determinations of counsellors' perceived roles, feelings and training needs. First of all, the need for quality school counselling is ever increasing; and secondly, the University of Lethbridge has a chance to offer graduate training in the form of a Master's Degree in Education with a focus on counselling. The program, in its formative stage, could and should benefit from the input (regarding the aspects of counselling mentioned above) of local school counsellors. After all, school counsellors are uniquely qualified to identify priorities for their particular work setting, and should be actively involved in the planning of graduate programs (Sweeny et al., 1984).

Purpose of Study

The general purpose of this study was to examine the role and perceived effectiveness of local school counsellors with respect to the kinds of functions they perform, what factors affect their feelings of success and/or failure (efficacy), and their perceived needs with respect to counselling.

Specific objects were to:

1. determine what activities are performed in the counselling role;
2. analyze what proportion of time is spent in each of the main areas of counselling;
3. determine what factors affect counsellors' feelings of efficacy;
4. determine what counsellors perceive as their strengths, their weaknesses, their level of expertise;

5. determine whether there are differences in the roles and perceived effectiveness of counsellors at different levels (elementary, junior high, senior high);

6. gather counsellors' suggestions as to how their expertise and effectiveness could be strengthened;

7. make recommendations with respect to the professional level of school counsellors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on the role and perceived effectiveness of school counsellors with respect to the functions they perform, their sense of efficacy, and their perceived needs is presented in two sections: an historical overview of counsellor roles, characteristics of counsellors, and educational preparation of counsellors; and recent research on school counselling.

Historical Overview of Counsellor Roles

The guidance-counselor movement began as a program of special services designed to meet the vocational needs of youth growing up in a newly-industrialized and urban society. As this program of services developed, it became clear that it could not function optimally in the school apart from the educational view-point that students had unique characteristics. The guidance worker became familiar with the growing body of knowledge regarding individual differences. The counsellor, thus, inherited the role of understanding child growth and development and interpreting knowledge about individual students to teachers and administrators. In trying to champion the cause of the individual student and implementing this philosophical point of view, the counsellor has increasingly involved himself/herself in such activities as grouping, curriculum, registration, and discipline. This short history traces a gradual path that school counsellors have followed to their current dilemma. They seem to have too many functions to perform (Blocher, Tennyson & Johnson, 1963).

This dilemma is mentioned frequently in the literature on counsellor roles. For example, Boy (1962) writes: "Counsellors cannot be everything to everybody and expect to bring some professionalism to their work. A strong job-function line must

be drawn, across which no one encroaches simply because [he] has an idea of what a counsellor should be doing or has rationalized a task toward the counsellor" (p. 224). Similarly, Wrenn (1962) advocates a separation of the terms "guidance" from "counselling". Counselling is interacting with students on matters of self-understanding, decision making and planning. Guidance, in his view, comprises such tasks as psychological measurement, personal records, educational and occupational information and discipline. Wrenn contends that a counsellor is pulled away from "real" counselling by doing guidance program functions.

On the same theme more than thirty years ago, Boy (1962) was of the opinion that school counsellors do not have the time to involve themselves in interpersonal counselling relationships with troubled students because they are too busy with functions such as programming, handling discipline problems, checking absences and handling a variety of other administrative duties. In his view: "Counselling is essentially a therapeutic relationship between client and counsellor" (Boy, 1962, p. 220).

However roles are delineated and regardless of the number and kinds of functions school counsellors perform, "counselling is seen as a process of helping" (Bently, 1968, p. 21). This simple phrase is not a definition of counselling, but a statement of purpose.

In today's school setting, students need help. Changes in our society continue to create new problems for our youth. For instance, the pattern of family living has altered dramatically, women are entering formerly non-traditional job markets,

technology renders occupations obsolete and new occupations appear, and the comfortable stability of lifestyle that previous generations knew have all but disappeared. If counsellors are to be involved in the effective "helping" of young people, they "must achieve a deeper understanding of contemporary social trends and dilemmas" (McCully, 1965, p. 405). The school counsellor must keep abreast of changes around him/her and adapt to them.

> If counsellors are to understand and help youth in a changing world, the values, purposes and functions from which the counsellor derives his/her identity must not be hopelessly chained to the past. The image that counsellors must create is not that of the efficient counsellor whose administrative aloofness is impenetrable. It is not that of the remediating counsellor who imposes [himself] on youth with the aim of saving them. Instead, the image must be that of helping counsellor whose understanding and psychological skill stimulates the growth and development of each student's unique possibilities.
>
> (Blocker et al. 1963, p. 345).

Role Definition (Confusion and Controversy)

There has been, and continues to be, confusion in defining the appropriate roles for school counsellors. This confusion or uncertainty continues to exist among those outside the profession and within the ranks of counsellors themselves, but is epitomized by the literature of the 1960s.

There has been even considerable debate of the question, "Should the counsellor's role be defined?" One school of thought espouses that committing to a specifically-defined code of roles for all counsellors "tends to freeze the profession into a particular mold, and to create a climate that hinders flexibility and change" (Bixler, 1963, p. 168). Nevertheless, the opposing argument, supported by the majority of writers, favored a definition that would clarify and delineate the counsellor's role and thereby set the counsellor apart from others in terms of how he/she should go about

helping others and what kind of help he/she would give. Peters (1962), for example, stated: "If we do not define our duties, we will be saddled with tasks and responsibilities that not only take time away from our primary concerns, but actually interfere with the guidance function" (p. 135). A third position in this debate was one of compromise. This position favors some flexibility in defining the counsellor role allowing for adjustment according to needs (Bentley, 1968). The literature indicates that this trend has taken precedence in most school jurisdictions, although many writers maintain the need for a definition of basic counsellor roles.

If it is accepted that some form of counsellor role be defined, then who should define it? This question was another subject of controversy. Hill (1964) took the position that the clarification of role must be a shared process in which all participants contribute to the final outcome. The need for stakeholders to participate in role definition of school counsellors seems obvious and logical. There is, however, a negative side to this participatory model: participants can have conflicting opinions. Shertzer and Stone (1963) wrote: "It is contended that much of the current difficulty and confusion surrounding the school counsellor's role stems from the contradictory and conflicting expectancies of his various publics" (p. 130). These writers maintained that it is the responsibility of counsellors to redirect people's attitudes toward their role and to cultivate public understanding and support. Ivey and Robin (1966) concur with this approach: "While the counsellor may define [his] role accurately according to his professional standards, it is equally important that he communicate this role definition to those with whom he works" (p. 233).

While there is still some controversy on the subject of counsellors' roles, the majority of writers seem to indicate a need to conceptualize roles, state them and promote them. Numerous statements of roles have been written in countless school jurisdictions throughout North America. An example of a comprehensive and generic statement of counsellor roles still in use today, is that of the American School Counselor Association (1974), which states that a counsellor is (in summarized form):

1. a planner - who plans programs and curricula in relation to the needs of students.
2. a counsellor - who does individual counselling of students.
3. a leader - who guides the information-sharing of meaningful information about students.
4. a communicator of educational information.
5. a coordinator of services.
6. a consultant to parents, teachers, and administrators.
7. a researcher and evaluator.
8. a public relations person.

The list of counsellor roles described above is, indeed, extensive. To perform these roles effectively and consistently is a monumental task, but one that, nevertheless, is confronted continually by school counsellors.

Educational Preparation of Counsellors

Current literature suggests that counsellor education programs can contribute significantly to the emergence of "helping" effective counsellors. There is, however, a need for numerous changes in our current ideas and practices regarding the education and supervision of counsellors.

Van Hoose (1970) wrote that there is a dramatic difference between counsellor preparation and professional practice. Most counsellor preparation programs attempt to help prospective counsellors acquire the skills, the attitudes and the commitment necessary to be helping persons. Too often, however, when the counsellor takes a job in a school, he/she is unable to establish and maintain this helping position. Some reasons for this might be: (a) lack of a systematic approach, (b) regression to attitudes and concerns held prior to entering the profession, (c) conflict between needs of students and institutional demands, and (d) the tendency to set unattainable goals. These situations give rise to some implications for counsellor educators: (a) those responsible for counsellor preparation should concern themselves with what happens to trainees once they are on the job; (b) an eclectic approach rather then relying upon one school or approach may be more appropriate for preparing counsellors to meet present day challenges; and (c) more emphasis should be placed upon the effective dimensions of counsellor preparation and attention should be given to helping counsellors function more effectively as helping persons.

Tennyson, Miller, Skovhold, and Williams (1989) studied how counsellors view their roles. They concluded that there was a need for: (a) greater awareness among school counsellors, counsellor educators and supervisors as to the theoretical orientation of the profession; (b) increased attention to counsellor education in preparing counsellors to exercise greater control over their role in practice; (c) stronger preparation in developmental psychology and ways in which this knowledge can be applied through group processes; (d) more extensive in-service education to help practicing counsellors become aware of role discrepancies and to change various

functions of their role; and, (e) educational updating of principals to change their traditional views of counsellor roles.

Characteristics of Counsellors

The counsellor is obviously an important factor in the counselling process. Due to the importance of the position relative to the whole process, it is critical to have the "right" people performing the counsellor role. The literature suggests numerous personal characteristics of a good counsellor, but the characteristics listed are very general and, therefore, not particularly useful. The problem seems to be in agreeing on specific characteristics and then in devising methods to measure or assess the characteristics in prospective counsellors and to develop those characteristics. As well, one must consider that persons with widely-varying backgrounds, personality systems and attitudinal patterns can be successful as counsellors. An example of the generalized characteristics of a counsellor can be drawn from the American Personnel and Guidance Association Statement of Policy. Under the heading "The Counsellor as a Person", personal characteristics that would identify the "good" counsellor are listed:

1. Belief in Each Individual. The counsellor believes in the worth inherent in each individual, in his capacity for growth and change, and in his ability to cope with life situations . . .

2. Commitment to Individual Human Values. The counsellor has a primary concern for the individual as a person whose feelings, values, goals, and success are important . . .

3. Alertness to the World. The counsellor is interested in the world . . .

4. Openmindedness . . . The counsellor has respect for a wide range of interests, attitudes and beliefs . . .

5. Understanding of Self. The counsellor has an understanding of himself and the ways in which his personal values, feelings and needs can affect his work . . .

6. Professional Commitment. The counsellor feels a commitment to counselling as a profession and as a means of assisting individuals in the development of their potentialities.

(Loughary, 1965, pp. 78-79).

In a study comparing counsellors, Kazienko and Neidt (1962) reported that members of the "good counsellor" group saw themselves as serious, earnest, patient, soft-spoken, aware of personal self-centredness, more domestic than social, while the "poor counsellor" group did not see themselves as serious, patient, and tended toward loudness of voice, and so forth. Other differences were found in motivation, values held, and feelings about others. In another study, Truax (1966) reported that successful counsellors exhibited the following traits: sensitivity, understanding, warmth, caring, acceptance, genuineness, non-defensiveness, maturity and congruence.

All of the characteristics listed are certainly admirable but it is difficult to contemplate how they can be used in the selection and evaluation of counsellors. Are these characteristics, qualities or traits the necessary and sufficient ones to ensure counselling success or are there other less socially acceptable characteristics that, when possessed by the counsellor, may serve the client well? Sprinthall, Whitely, and Mosher (1966) claim that while human qualities may be relevant to counselling, particular counsellor behaviors are more relevant criteria of counsellor effectiveness. They investigated whether or not "cognitive flexibility" is a critical concept in regard to counsellor competence. The central idea is that the counsellor's repertoire of behaviors is varied according to the dictates of the client's situation. More recent

research rarely addressed directly the notion of personal qualities, but focuses attention on counsellor roles and preparation.

Current Research on Counsellor Roles

Recent literature seems to take a more direct approach in recommending specific directions that school counsellors must take to improve their abilities to help. Allan, Doi, and Reid (1979) suggest that counsellors need to: (1) focus on their public relations image; (2) be educative and receptive; (3) demonstrate competency in counselling; (4) try new counselling approaches that would avoid tying up a lot of counsellor time in one-to-one remedial counselling; (5) try new models of working in schools; and (6) become more politically active. As well, the writers suggest that counsellor educators and trainee counsellors need: (1) to be competent in working with both individuals and small groups; (2) skills in handling discipline problems and in a variety of classroom management techniques; (3) consultation skills relating to the concerns and problems of teachers, principals and parents; (4) to be trained in developmental, preventive and remedial counselling skills; (5) to be familiar with community resources and agencies; (6) crisis intervention skills; (7) to know how to provide appropriate in-service training; and (8) to be familiar with a variety of assessment and evaluation techniques.

Reid (1980) noted that school counselling seems to be floundering somewhat as if waiting for direction. Thus he made several recommendations in that regard. He wrote that counsellors must be educators whose main objective is to help students develop the ability to think clearly, to communicate effectively, to make sound judgements, and to discriminate amongst values. He also stressed that provincial

education departments must take steps to ensure that counsellors are properly trained. Counsellors, in his opinion, must be prepared to get involved in the total education system to help establish student-centred priorities.

Greer and Richardson (1992) saw a need for novel ways of thinking on the part of school counsellors and administrators to be more effective in helping students. A model program using flexible scheduling was developed for one high school with four counsellors serving approximately 1500 students. The counsellors were required to account for the same number of work hours per week as was a regular classroom teacher, but the hours were staggered to allow for the flexibility necessary for other than the typical 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. school day. After six months, the counsellors were interviewed regarding their impressions of the flexible scheduling. The authors suggest that teamwork and support among counsellors, administrators and the community are vital. Also, counsellors and administrators are encouraged to "break out of the rut" (p. 96) of practical thinking by making a special effort to be creative in timetabling, programs and practices.

An opinion paper offers suggestions that require the involvement of all personnel at the school level to increase the effectiveness of the counselling program. Carstensen and Melnychuk (1980) recommend: (1) counsellors need support in terms of skills, materials, and directions; (2) counsellors need encouragement in the form of official recognition as to the value of counselling; (3) teachers need to know what a guidance and counselling program can do to make their work more effective; (4) students and parents need to be informed of the value of counselling.

Mathes (1992) surveyed 63 novice counsellors who were identified as such by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction. Fifty-one (80%) of the identified counsellors responded to a three-part questionnaire. Part one of the questionnaire requested basic demographic information, and the second section solicited information about school characteristics. The third section consisted of six vignettes describing situations that novice counsellors might encounter. The respondents were asked if they had experienced a situation similar to the one described and to indicate who provided the greatest assistance in the handling of the situation.

The author found that counsellors in schools find themselves in ill-defined roles, without support, and vulnerable to budget restrictions. Moreover, new counsellors are expected to assume the same responsibilities as experienced counsellors. With little support given to counsellors as they adapt to a new role, it is not surprising that novice school counsellors often experience ambivalence and uncertainty.

Counsellor functions in excellent schools were studied by Miller (1988). Thirty-four functions were rated on a five-point scale by counsellors in 666 of the excellent public schools identified by the United States Department of Education. Four hundred and nineteen (63%) surveys were completed properly and returned. From the original 34 items, eight counsellor functions were identified.

These eight counsellor functions were ranked by elementary, middle and senior high schools in order of counsellor-perceived importance. For elementary school counsellors, the rankings were as follows: (1) counselling and consultation, (2) coordinating, (3) professional development, (4) career assistance, (5) organization, (6) educational planning, (7) assessment, and (8) discipline. The middle school

counsellors had the following rankings: (1) counselling and consultation, (2) coordination, (3) career assistance, (4) professional development, (5) organization, (6) educational planning, (7) assessment, and (8) discipline. At the high school level, the counsellors' rankings were: (1) counselling and consultations, (2) career assistance, (3) coordination, (4) professional development, (5) educational planning, (6) organization, (7) assessment, and (8) discipline. The elementary school counsellors surveyed rate the counselling and consultation, and professional development factors higher than did the other two groups. None of the factors could be considered exclusive to the middle school counsellors.

In another study of demonstrating how counsellors viewed their roles, Tennyson et al. (1989) point to some differences between counsellors at the junior and senior high school levels. This survey, of 155 secondary school counsellors in Minnesota was completed using a survey instrument of 58 counsellor functions. This list of functions was developed by a committee composed of the research team and practicing counsellors. Counsellors were asked to rate how often they performed certain roles and how important they viewed those roles. Four major roles with sub topics were rated in this way. The major roles were: counselling, consultation, developmental/career guidance, and evaluation and assessment. Several differences between the two groups were noted. Junior high school counsellors seem to spend less time than high school counsellors providing students with educational and vocational guidance. Further, they provided groups with career information, taught students interview and job-hunting skills, and assisted students to use career assessment data less often. In the importance ratings the pattern is strengthened where the junior high

counsellors assigned less importance to all but two functions related to educational and vocational guidance. Importantly, junior high counsellors stated a greater involvement in consulting with parents and with teachers and they considered it more important to work with a family to meet a student's developmental needs. The study also indicated that the greatest discrepancy between perceived practice and the professional guidelines lies in the implementation of developmental guidance through small groups and the curriculum.

In a study of perceived roles and preparation experiences of school counsellors, Caroll (1993) compared ideal roles to actual roles as well as ideal and actual counsellor preparation activities by having respondents rate the importance of each item on a four-point scale. This study involved 95 (a return of 88%) school counsellors in the state of Connecticut. The primary section of the instrument was one that consisted of 44 questions that included five counsellor roles and the necessary preparation areas for counsellors. The results indicate that counsellors felt most congruence in the more traditional roles of consultant, coordinator and counsellor. Exceptions were in group work with parents and children conducting faculty in-service training and special needs referrals. Counsellors would like to provide more group work and receive more education and specific materials in this area. The non-traditional roles of teacher and manager yielded the most dramatic actual versus ideal roles and preparation discrepancies, especially in the role of teacher. Counsellors ideally assigned high importance to delivering classroom guidance lessons but in actual practice were unable to take the necessary time. The counsellor management role and preparation area showed strong evidence for a disinterest in school

counselling research. The results of the study indicate three other needs as well: (1) Essential roles to be defined, (2) Counsellors must reach broader audiences through group and classroom work, and (3) Counsellor educators must spend more direct time in the field to assess practitioners' needs.

Roberts and Borders (1994)explored the supervision of school counsellors regarding three aspects of school counselling: administrative, program and counselling. They surveyed a random sample of the North Carolina School Counsellors' Association. A total of 168 useable surveys yielded a response rate of 37.3%. A three-part survey questionnaire was constructed which consisted of demographic information, a section in which respondents described the supervision they were receiving, and a section in which respondents answered similar questions concerning the supervision that they preferred. Their results indicated that existing practices do not always match school counsellors' preferences. For instance, counsellors reported spending the largest amount of their time in counselling and in consultation, but received the least amount of supervision for these activities. It was also noted that counsellors wanted to work with a person who had a counselling background, while it is the usual practice in schools to have administrators with little or no counselling background supervise counsellors.

Campbell and Robinson (1990) noted that school counsellors do not often initiate research and program evaluation activities. Their findings point out that until counsellor educators systematically emphasize the importance of research, program development, and evaluation during the training program, they will continue to bemoan the fact that many practicing counsellors fail to perform this important

function.The results of a survey (Sisson & Bullis, 1992) of school counsellors' perceptions of graduate training programs showed that job roles can be expected to differ when counselling students at the elementary, junior high school, and high school levels. Five content domains (Knowledge and Information, Counselling Skills, Counsellor Role and Function, Consultation Skills, and Personal and Professional Issues) containing specific counselling activities were rated by respondents. The 895 surveys analyzed revealed the top priorities school counsellors view as core components for graduate-level training programs. The top priorities were: counselling theories, skills dealing with personal problems, developing programs, consultation with teachers about individual students, and self-understanding. The lowest ranked item in two domains was research and evaluation.

In the Counselling Skills domain, respondents ranked personal problems as the number one priority. In the Counsellor Role and Function domain, indications are that training programs must provide students with examples of ways to develop counselling and guidance programs. In the Consultation Skills domain, consultation with teachers about individual students was the first-ranked skill. Self-understanding emerged as the number one priority in the domain of Personal and Professional Issues.

Several differences in ranking among the three grade-level groups were noted. In the Knowledge and Information domain, junior and senior high school counsellors placed more emphasis on suicide prevention than did elementary counsellors. In the Counselling Skills domain, elementary counsellors gave significantly more emphasis on leading groups than did the other counsellors. Under the Counsellor Role and

Function domain, it was evident that classroom guidance is regarded as more essential by the elementary counsellors. Secondary counsellors valued the ability to evaluate test information more than did either of the other two groups. In the Consultation Skills domain, consulting with teachers regarding classroom management was ranked highest by elementary counsellors, whereas consulting with community professionals was ranked higher by secondary school counsellors. The results of the study indicate the need for continual input from practicing school counsellors regarding changing needs in the educational preparation.

One study identified the ideal school counsellor role as perceived by counsellors and principals (Bonebrake & Borgers, 1984). This study, done in Kansas, surveyed 169 principals and 172 counsellors. Using a five-point Likert scale, participants were asked to indicate the degree of emphasis that ideally should be given to each task. The list of tasks was based on the ASCA (1974) position statement concerning the role of counsellors.

The results of the study have some implications for counsellors everywhere. The results show significant convergence of the two groups' opinions as to counsellor roles. This finding is important because counsellors need to work cooperatively with principals if they are to survive and be effective. If roles and tasks are defined, counsellors are bound to strive to assess their own performance of the roles and to seek improvements in areas of ineffectiveness. The study lists one state's expected roles for counsellors and examines counsellors' perceptions of them, but it does not deal with feelings of efficacy, nor with counsellors' needs.

In California, Furlong, Atkinson, and Janoff (1979) sought to determine if a consensus exists among school counsellors regarding the time they actually spend in a number of professional defined roles as well as the time they would like to devote to each role. Eighty-two counsellors from three California school districts were asked to complete a ranking of 14 roles in order of actual versus desired time spent. This list of 14 roles (program planning, counselling, ombudsman, disciplinarian, public relations, local research, curriculum planning, and screening) was developed from the official role definition for school counsellors established by the ASCA. Results from the study show that the school counsellors, in general, perceive themselves as currently devoting as much time to various counselling roles as they would like to under ideal conditions. The overwhelming majority of counsellors surveyed identified individual and small group counselling as the activity that absorbs more of their time than any of the other choices on the list.

A local study (Guidance Study, 1989) done by a committee of counsellors from the City of Lethbridge resulted in the recommendation that the provision of individual counselling should be a major focal point of services. Consumer groups of the counselling services, however, indicated that they would like individual counselling to be more available, and the committee recommended that group counselling be more utilized to reduce the high demand for services. It is interesting to note that a more recent study done in Manitoba (Madak & Gieni, 1991) suggests that there is a movement away from individual counselling and toward more cost effective methods such as consulting group counselling. An American study (Morse & Russell, 1988) also concluded: "Clearly, counsellor educators must move to expand and enhance the

group counselling component of their training programs" (p. 60). Consulting and parent help were ranked second and third, respectively, after individual and small group counselling. The study found, as did the Kansas study (Bonebrake & Borgers, 1984), that school counsellors do very little research and evaluation of their program.

These results address one of the purposes of my study and part of another. They show what counsellors perceive as their important roles. The results also indicate that counsellors, to be accountable, need to evaluate their programs and their roles in the programs. This seems to indicate a need in the area of counsellor education. "Perhaps one reason practitioners are reluctant to engage in program evaluation and other accountability procedures is that they have not received formal training in 'action research'" (Furlong et al., 1979, p. 9).

A Canadian study (Carreiro & Schulz, 1988) sought to determine what tasks are performed by counsellors working in elementary schools. The researchers asked counsellors to assess these activities in terms of how highly they valued them and how much time they spent in the activity. A unique aspect of this study is that it received counsellor input in the construction of the list of tasks. After the list of tasks was established, the survey was distributed to elementary school counsellors in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Sixty-five (67%) of the questionnaires were returned. Counsellors ranked a number of the same items high for both "time spent" and "value". These activities included consulting with teachers, meeting with individual students, meeting with the school principals, and meeting with parents. In general, the respondents valued most of the activities more than they participated in them.

The results indicated that counsellors value and invest time in their work with other professionals and parents. A study done in British Columbia (Samis, Allan & Echols, (1993) shows a similar finding. The results of the study suggest that counsellors have fairly traditional views of their roles, and that includes consultation with other professions and parents consultation. Given the apparent emphasis on working with these adults, it is important that education available to counsellors be consistent with this reality. Another indication of the study is that counsellors devoted little time to do research and evaluate their work. This indication was reinforced by Loesch (1988) who concluded that "research seems not to be valued, emphasized or endorsed for school counselling professionals" (p. 170). As well, a study done in Virginia (Lee & Workman, 1992) shows that school counsellors as a rule have little interest in research activities. These findings also have relevance for counsellor education. "Counsellor educators need to provide research evaluation courses that include the study of single-subject research, case study methodologies, observational techniques, peer-review and interview analysis" (Carreiro & Sculz, 1988, p. 67).

Summary Statement

The review of current literature reveals that there are in existence in most parts of Canada and the U.S., comprehensive lists of the roles of counsellors and that counsellors value and spend more time on some activities than on others. It is also clear that counsellors have a need for ongoing and improved education. The literature also reveals that the 1974 list of counsellor roles as set out by the American School Counsellor Associations still forms the basis for a core of essential and expected counsellor functions in our schools.

Although several studies have been completed that have addressed parts of the purpose of my study, none has combined all three counsellors' perceived roles, feelings of effectiveness, and needs. Also, the need for a local assessment of counsellor roles, needs, and feelings of efficacy is still apparent. Locally (Guidance Study, 1989), a study done on consumer groups of guidance services in Lethbridge indicated what these groups (teachers, parents, and students) thought about counsellor roles regarding "what is" and "what should be". That study provides some direction in identifying some expected roles for counsellors, but does not address counsellors' input into their roles and needs. As stated above, our community is on the brink of having access to a new counsellor education program. We have regional needs and expectations in the school counselling realm and the input of our counsellors is a necessity to fill those needs and expectations. Although the literature is extensive in describing counsellor roles and although there is little doubt that local counsellors perform similar roles, the results of this study will give us an opportunity to look for any differences that may exist for Lethbridge area counsellors.

METHOD

A survey was chosen as the data collection instrument for this project in the interests of efficiency of time, comprehensiveness of information, and ease of the compilation of results.

Sample

Participants in this study were all of the counsellors (N=18) in the three school districts in the immediate area of Lethbridge: Lethbridge Public, Lethbridge Separate, the County of Lethbridge. There are five in elementary schools; seven in junior high schools, and six in high schools. All eighteen surveys were returned, although one respondent did not respond to Part B of the survey.

Questionnaire

The instrument was initially developed by adapting questions from surveys used to gather similar information elsewhere. To create a comprehensive list of counsellor roles, items were borrowed from several previous studies (Alberta Department of Education, 1982; Bonebrake & Borgers, 1984; Furlong et al., 1979; and Morse & Russell, 1988). See Appendix A for a copy of questionnaire.

Part A of the survey asked the respondents to supply demographic information regarding age, gender, education and training, and possible teaching duties. This portion was used to address the specific objectives (listed in "Purpose of Study") numbered 3 and 5.

Part B consists of 32 specific questions grouped under ten categories. These ten categories have been adapted from a California study (Furlong et al., 1979), and from guidelines set out by Alberta Education (1981). The specific questions were also

garnered from these two sources to provide a comprehensive list of counsellor tasks. The ten categories consist of: individual counselling, group counselling, special needs consulting, parent consulting, evaluation and assessment, professional development, administrative consultant, auxiliary aide, and career guidance. In this section, respondents were asked to indicate on a three-point scale (often, seldom, rarely) their estimated frequency of performing specific tasks. Using the same scale, they also indicated their desired frequency of performing those tasks. Thirdly, the respondents rated using a similar three-point scale their estimated effectiveness in dealing with those tasks. Results from this portion of the survey addressed study objectives 1, 2, 4, 5.

Part C of the survey asked the respondents to rank their comfort level in dealing with the ten main areas. Open-ended questions followed which asked the counsellors to explain their comfort and their lack of comfort in dealing with these issues. This portion deals with specific objectives 3 and 4.

This section also included two more open-ended questions regarding feelings of success and failure, and one question asking the respondents how their effectiveness as counsellors could be enhanced. Specific objectives addressed are 3, 4, and 6.

The initial draft of the survey was assessed by two former counsellors from the Lethbridge School District and by one who is currently on sick leave, to ensure clarity in form, vocabulary and intent.

Procedure

The questionnaires, accompanied by a cover letter (see Appendix A) and a self-addressed envelope, were mailed directly to school counsellors in Lethbridge and area schools (at their school addresses) after a telephone call to each of them asking for

their cooperation. (Due to the small number of prospective respondents, a phone call was possible and advisable).

Following the proposed date for receiving replies, any non-respondents were contacted by telephone to urge them to complete and mail the questionnaire.

Analysis

Overall mean scores were calculated for responses to all items in Part B of the questionnaire to create a comparison chart of responses to all 32 of the survey items. The average of the mean scores for each of the ten major role categories (Individual Counsellor, Group Counsellor, Special Needs Consultant, Teacher Consultant, Parent Consultant, Evaluations in Assessment, Professional Development, Administrative Consultant, Auxiliary Aide, Career and Educational Guidance) was calculated. Patterns and tendencies made evident are discussed in the "Findings" section.

Counsellors were asked to rank their comfort level when working in the ten main areas of counselling. They were asked to rank these areas from 1-10 with 1 being the 'most comfortable'. Respondents, in many cases, chose to rank the areas in varied ways (many repeated numbers, for example), thereby making the original intent of an absolute ranking impossible. Therefore responses were recoded as follows: the three 'most comfortable' areas according to respondents' rankings were grouped as 'very comfortable' and given a value of '1'; the next four were grouped and labelled as 'moderately comfortable' and given a value of '2'; and the last three were grouped as 'not comfortable' and given a value of '3'.

The same ten areas were then ranked by the respondents according to their perception of the importance the school administration (principals, superintendents,

central office, school board) placed upon them as part of the counsellor's role. Again, counsellors were asked to rank these from 1-10, with 1 being the most important. The same recoding resulted in the values of 1, 2, and 3 as for the comfort levels.

Mean scores were calculated for the recoded "comfort" rankings and the recoded "importance" rankings. Two forms of analysis were completed. First, a straight ranking of items according to mean scores was done for 'comfort' and for 'importance'. Secondly, using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, correlation coefficients were calculated to compare the ranking of each item on the list with respect to comfort and importance.

Responses to open-ended questions were treated to content analysis to determine overall patterns and tendencies. Initial coding of comments resulted in developing tentative categories of responses. Each category of comments was then further analyzed to determine the relevant characteristics and meanings of the comments. From this analysis several themes emerged and are discussed in more detail in the 'Findings' section of this paper.

Data provided by respondents in the demographics section (Part A) of the survey were used to create a set of subgroups. The subgroups were derived from the grade levels at which the counsellors worked. The subgroups consist of counsellors who work at the elementary school level, those who work at junior high and those who work at high school. Mean scores for responses to all the survey items (Part B) were calculated and were charted for purposes of comparison of subgroup patterns and tendencies. In addition, the average of mean scores for each subgroup in each of the ten major counsellor roles was calculated.

FINDINGS

When using a small sample such as this (N=18), there is a strong possibility that statistical results are not as valid as those produced in a larger study. However, an attempt has been made to highlight patterns and trends based on the data available to address the general purposes of this study. As well, the results indicate potential need to do more in-depth studies in any of the areas included in this study.

Profile of Respondents

A total of eleven men and seven women working at five elementary, seven junior high, and six high schools in southern Alberta in the Lethbridge area participated in the study. All possessed at least a B.Ed. degree and seven held Masters degrees. Seven reported that their workload consisted of half-time or less in counselling while eleven indicated their workload was more than half-time. Nine reported they had five years or less experience, while nine reported more than five years experience (see Table 1).

Table 1

Profile of Respondents

Grade Level	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Elementary	3	2	5
Junior High	4	3	7
High School	4	2	6
Total	11	7	18

Counsellor Roles: Activities, Time, and Effectiveness

This section reports findings related to two of this study's objectives which were: (a) to determine what activities are performed in the counsellor's role, and (b) to analyze what proportion of time is spent in each of the main areas of counselling. Respondents rated their estimated frequency in performing various counselling roles, their desired frequency, and their estimated effectiveness.

Table A in Appendix B presents the mean scores for each individual item on part B of the survey. Table 2 presents the overall mean scores for each of the ten categories of counsellor roles. Overall, in the roles of individual counselling and group counselling, the desired frequency is higher than the estimated frequency for every survey item. As well the average of mean scores for all survey items in the desired frequency category were higher than those in the estimated frequency category (2.37 versus 2.06 on a 3 point scale, where 1 = rarely and 2 = seldom and 3 = often). The means scores in the group counselling role were lower than for the individual counselling role in all three categories: estimated frequency average mean score for the individual counseling role is 2.06 and for group counselling, 1.60; in desired frequency the scores were 2.37 compared to 2.28; and in estimated effectiveness 2.30 compared to 1.83 (see Table 2).

Average mean scores in three of the four consultant roles were comparatively high (2.00). These roles are special needs consultant, teacher consultant and parent consultant. The roles of administrative consultant, auxiliary aide and evaluation and assessment revealed lower scores, with the 'desired frequency' category in the auxiliary aide role ranked the lowest of all average mean scores.

In the career and educational guidance role, the average mean scores in all three categories are not noteworthy but as shown in a later comparison of subgroups they are modified mainly due to the offsetting extremes in the scores of the sub groups of elementary and high school counsellors.

When the total mean score average is calculated for all survey items in each of the three categories, they reveal the overall estimated frequency is 1.29; desired frequency is 2.00; and estimated effectiveness is 2.12.

Table 2

Average Mean Scores for Major Counsellor Roles

Item	Estimated Frequency	Desired Frequency	Estimated Effectiveness
Individual Counsellor Role	2.06	2.37	2.30
Group Counsellor Role	1.60	2.28	1.83
Special Needs Consultant Role	2.03	1.97	2.48
Teacher Consultant Role	2.15	2.39	2.65
Parent Consultant Role	2.02	2.08	2.28
Evaluation and Assessment Role	1.45	1.68	1.76
Professional Development Role	1.97	2.35	2.21
Administrative Consultant Role	1.53	1.76	1.92
Auxiliary Aide Role	1.49	1.31	1.98
Career and Educational Guidance Role	1.99	1.83	1.82

NOTE: 1 = rarely, 2 = seldom, 3 = often

Counsellor Efficacy: Perceived Comfort and Importance of Roles

The findings of this section pertain to the third specific objective of this study, which was to "determine what factors affect counsellors' feelings of efficacy". Respondents ranked the ten major areas of counselling roles in two ways: according to their feeling of comfort when working in each area, and according to the importance they perceived their administrators attached to each area.

Generally counsellors identified three roles as those with which they were most comfortable (see Table 3). These roles are 'individual counselling', 'special needs consultant' and 'career guidance' (overall mean scores of 1.05, 1.83, and 1.83 respectively on a three point scale with 1 = most comfortable, 2 = moderately comfortable, and 3 = not comfortable). Similarly, two roles were identified as those most valued by school administration. These roles are 'individual counselling' and 'group counselling' with overall mean scores of 1.05 and 1.50 respectively. Further, two roles were viewed by counsellors as being both 'not comfortable' and 'not important'. 'Evaluation and assessment' and 'auxiliary aide' were roles that counsellors ranked (overall mean scores) as follows: comfort - 2.44 and 2.83; importance -2.55 and 2.72 (see Table 3).

One subgroup did not follow the overall group's rankings for the least comfortable and least important roles. As noted above, two roles were ranked by the whole groups as least comfortable and least important: evaluation and assessment (comfort - 2.44, importance -2.55) and auxiliary aide (comfort - 2.83, importance - 2.72). However, elementary school counsellors ranked the role of auxiliary aide as lowest, but ranked the evaluation and assessment role as being moderately comfortable and moderately important (see Table B in Appendix C).

Table 3

Ranking of Major Counsellor Roles According to Comfort and Perceived Importance

Comfort		Perceived Importance	
Item	**Mean**	**Item**	**Mean**
Individual Counselling	1.05	Individual Counselling	1.05
Special Needs Consultant	1.83	Group Counselling	1.50
Career/Education Guidance	1.83	Parent Consultant	1.66
Parent Consultant	1.88	Special Needs Consultant	1.83
Personal Professional Development	1.88	Teacher Consultant	2.05
Group Counselling	1.94	Career/Educational Guidance	2.05
Teacher Consultant	1.94	Professional Development	2.22
Administrative Consultant	2.27	Administrative Consultant	2.22
Evaluation and Assessment	2.44	Evaluation and Assessment	2.55
Auxiliary Aide	2.83	Auxiliary Aide	2.72

NOTE: 1 = most comfortable 1 = most important

2 = moderately comfortable 2 = moderately important

3 = not comfortable 3 = not important

As well, correlations between role comfort and role importance were examined using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The strongest relationship ($r=.91$) was in the area of individual counselling where 16 of the 18 counsellors gave a rating of 'very comfortable' and 'very important' to that role.

There was also a high correlation between the rankings of role comfort and role importance in four other areas: group counselling ($r=.62$, $p<.01$); evaluation and assessment ($r=.66$, $p<.01$); professional development ($r=.63$, $p<.01$); and career guidance ($r=.88$, $p<.01$). These higher correlation coefficients indicate that the counsellors tended to view their comfort in filling these roles similarly to how they viewed the importance their administrators attached to these roles.

Perceptions of Effectiveness, Professional Needs, and Acknowledgement

Counsellors were asked to respond to four open-ended questions in Part C of the survey (see Appendix A). The answers offered relate to three of the specific objectives of this study, which are: to determine what factors affect counsellors' feelings of efficacy; determine what counsellors perceive as their strengths, their weaknesses, and their level of expertise; and gather counsellors' suggestions as to how their expertise and effectiveness could be strengthened.

It was determined by examining the responses to the first part of Part C of the questionnaire (where respondents ranked counsellor roles according to comfort) that 16 of the 18 respondents felt most comfortable when working in the individual counselling role. It is essential to note this fact along with respondents' reasons (second part of Part C) for <u>why</u> they felt most comfortable in their highest-ranked area. Of the two respondents that did not rank "individual counselling" as the role in

which they felt most comfortable, one ranked "career/educational guidance" as number one, and one ranked "personal professional development" as number one. The former respondent listed two reasons for choosing "career/educational guidance" first. They were: "knowledge base" and "working with students". The latter gave just one reason for her/his choice: "I am a school administrator".

The other thirty-one responses that were offered to the first question: "Give two reasons why you feel most comfortable in your highest ranked area" and are grouped thematically:

- knowledge and training 8
- experience 7
- good relationship with students 5
- a feeling that it is worthwhile 4
- miscellaneous reasons stated once each such as ability to listen, it is dynamic, get the desired results, am a parent 7

Counsellors were then asked to offer two factors that contributed to feeling successful as a counsellor. Of the 32 responses, the following can be noted:

- reinforcement and acknowledgement of students 9
- reinforcement and acknowledgement of teachers 6
- past successes 5
- acknowledgement of peers 4
- the number of students who access me 2
- acknowledgement of administrators 2
- former students returning; effort I expend; my training; my personal life experience 1 each

When asked to list factors that have made them feel unsuccessful, the respondents offered the following:

- lack of time because of teaching load and too many tasks 11
- seeming indifference and/or ignorance of the counselling role on the part of the school staff, the community, school board members, and others 9
- lack of knowledge and training in such things as scholarships, family-type problems, and group counselling 4
- seeing little or no change in at-risk children 2
- knowing about the lack of home support for children 2
- not being able to follow up on long term counselling 1
- being compared to other schools 1

The following responses were given to the question, "What two activities, experiences, training, etc., would most enhance your effectiveness as a counsellor?

- more time and opportunity for professional development and training in such areas as group counselling, parent-teen conflict and family problems, play therapy 19
- peer supervision and consultation 6
- more knowledge about career counselling 1
- more activities to establish counsellors' credibility 1

The response to the open-ended questions in this section seem to indicate four prevalent themes: (1) counsellors feel most comfortable in the role of individual counselling because they are experienced and trained in that field, (2) counsellors are

made to feel successful when their work is acknowledged by students and teachers, (3) counsellors feel a shortage of time in which to accomplish their many tasks, and (4) counsellors have a desire for more and varied kinds of learning experiences.

Differences in Role Perceptions Among Three Subgroups: Elementary, Junior High School, and High School Counsellors

Counsellors' responses to questions about their estimated frequency, desired frequency, and estimated effectiveness in various counsellor roles, were divided into three subgroups to address the study's specific objective: "to determine whether there are differences in the roles and perceived effectiveness of counsellors at different levels (elementary, junior high, senior high)".

While the survey sample is small (N=18), there seem to be some clear patterns among the three sub-groups. Table B (Appendix C) presents the means for each survey item for each response, according to group. The most striking difference among the three groups deals with career and education goal-setting. High school counsellors' mean scores are higher in all three categories (estimated frequency, desired frequency and estimated effectiveness) for both individual and group counselling in career and educational goal-setting.

As well, in the roles of individual and group counselling elementary and junior high counsellors rank students' self-concepts, understanding and problem-solving, higher in all three categories than do high school counsellors.

In the consultant role, junior high school counsellors rank highest in all three categories (estimated frequency, desired frequency and estimated effectiveness) in the role of special needs consultant. In the three other consultant roles (parent, teacher,

administrative) elementary school counsellors' scores are highest in the effectiveness category, while scores in the other two categories show no clear pattern.

Similar to what is noted above in the individual and group counselling roles, high school counsellors' mean scores for the major category of career and educational guidance are highest in all items and categories (see Table B, Appendix C). It should also be noted that junior high school counsellors' desired frequency score in this area is relatively high. However, it bears repeating that numbers in each category are small and no conclusions can be reached from these data. Table 4, which shows the average mean scores for the three subgroups in the major roles, seems to make evident some overall similarities of perceptions among the subgroups as well. For example, several of the roles seem to be rated comparatively lower overall in all three categories (estimated frequency, desired frequency, and estimated effectiveness) by all the subgroups. These roles are evaluation and assessment, administrative consultant, and auxiliary aide. These findings are consistent with those reported in a previous section titled "Counsellor Roles" (p. 29).

Table 4

Average Mean Scores for Major Counsellor Roles for Three Subgroups (Elementary, Junior High, High School)

Item	Elementary			Junior High			High School		
	EF	DF	EE	EF	DF	EE	EF	DF	EE
Individual Counsellor Role	1.72	1.90	2.11	1.85	2.23	2.05	1.97	2.17	2.07
Group Counsellor Role	1.74	1.61	1.92	2.17	1.61	1.84	1.54	2.47	1.58
Special Needs Consultant Role	1.60	1.60	2.50	2.50	2.33	2.92	1.92	1.92	2.00
Teacher Consultant Role	2.10	2.30	3.00	2.25	2.34	2.58	2.09	2.50	2.42
Parent Consultant Role	2.13	2.13	2.60	1.67	1.78	2.11	2.11	2.33	2.17
Evaluation and Assessment Role	1.27	1.84	1.87	1.39	1.84	1.61	1.67	1.84	1.83
Professional Development Role	1.61	2.00	2.40	2.00	2.58	2.00	2.25	2.42	2.25
Administrative Consultant Role	1.33	1.53	2.13	1.83	1.78	2.11	1.39	1.94	1.55
Auxiliary Aide Role	1.13	1.13	1.67	1.72	1.45	1.78	1.55	1.33	1.89
Career and Educational Guidance Role	1.05	1.10	1.55	1.59	1.96	1.59	2.08	2.36	2.30

NOTE: EF = estimated frequency; DF = desired frequency; EE = estimated effectiveness

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Counsellor Roles: Activities, Time, and Effectiveness

It seems apparent that counsellors desire to spend more time than they are actually spending in most counselling roles. These results are similar to those shown in a Canadian study (Carreiro & Schulz, 1988) which concluded that counsellors valued most of the activities more than they participated in them. The three exceptions are the roles of administrative consultant, evaluation and assessment and auxiliary aide. In the other seven areas, the average mean scores, as well as the individual mean scores within each category are higher in the 'desired frequency' category than in the 'estimated frequency' category. The implications of this seem to be twofold. First, it would appear that counsellors need more time to accomplish what they see as important. Perhaps the time that some counsellors are forced to spend in the roles of administrative consultant and auxiliary aide would better be used in the other areas of counselling. Secondly, counsellors seem to value the role of evaluation and assessment very little; however, several studies [cf, Samis, Allan & Echols (1993); Loesch (1988); Carreiro & Schulz (1988); Furlong et al. (1979)] suggest that this role is necessary for matters of accountability and for improvement in effectiveness.

Another pattern that emerges is that counsellors spend more time, want to spend more time and believe they are more effective in the role of individual counselling than in group counselling. This pattern is consistent with the results of a local study (Guidance Study, 1989) which showed that the provision of individual counselling should be a major focal point of services. This local study and another study done in Manitoba (Madak & Gieni, 1991), however, indicate that group counselling should be

made more available because of the time and cost effectiveness of it as compared with individual counselling. All of this seems to imply that training and focus should probably begin to adjust to this trend.

Counsellor Efficacy: Perceived Comfort and Importance of Roles

When asked to rank the ten main roles of counselling according to their comfort level while working in them, and to rank them in order they viewed them valued by their administrators, counsellors responded in interesting ways. The strongest correlation occurred in the area of individual counselling which was rated 'very comfortable' and 'very important' by 16 of the 18 respondents. It is, perhaps, not surprising that this traditional role was top-ranked in both categories. Many studies, including those referred to in this literature review, indicate that the role of individual counselling is the one engaged in most frequently and is the essential core of the counselling process. Some of these studies, for example, include: Allan et al. (1979); Carroll (1993); Miller (1988); and Tennyson et al. (1989).

It is somewhat surprising, though, to note that the group counselling role was ranked number 2 in importance but number 6 in level of comfort. This would seem to indicate that although counsellors perceive their administrators value group counselling, the counsellors feel uncomfortable doing this. This indication is corroborated by the pattern that was discussed in the "Counsellor Roles" section above (p. 29), that indicates that counsellors feel that they are most effective doing individual counselling and want to spend more time doing it. This suggests that counsellors should become more effective in the area of group counselling and that counsellor education should focus more on this area.

Perceptions of Effectiveness, Professional Needs, and Acknowledgement

Responses to the first of the open-ended questions which asked counsellors to tell whey they felt most comfortable in the area they ranked number one, indicate that most counsellors' education and experience is in the area of individual counselling. The study by Carroll (1993) corroborates this conclusion. It seems that counsellor preparation fits the need. But the question we must ask is: "Is this the best way to serve our students, or do we do this because we are trained that way?" Perhaps, as suggested by Greer and Richardson (1992), our counsellor education and our approach to counselling need to be examined and changed. It is possible that some direction in this regard can be gained at a local level. For instance, counsellors in the Lethbridge area have indicated through this survey that they feel a need for training in several different areas. One area mentioned often in response to a question asking them what would enhance their effectiveness, is that of group counselling. Carroll (1993), Allan et al. (1979), and Sisson and Bullis (1992) are examples of researchers who would agree. Two other experiences called for by respondents are peer consultation and workshop situations regarding specific counselling concerns. These needs are recognized in the literature (Tennyson et al. 1989, for example) as well. Are these issues that need to be addressed by continuing education and professional development procedures? To what degree are counsellors responsible for meeting these needs for peer consultation and workshops through their professional associations?

Differences in Role Perceptions Among Three Subgroups: Elementary, Junior High School, and High School Counsellors

It is necessary to repeat the lack of statistical validity present in a study with a

small sample (N=18) such as this. However, the data available seem to indicate some differences in perceptions among the subgroups. For example, it appears that high school counsellors are much more involved in the role of career and educational guidance than are the other two subgroups. On the other hand, it appears that elementary and junior high school counsellors devote more time and are more effective in the area of personal counselling. Tennyson et al. (1989) and Miller (1988) among others confirm that these tendencies are common among counsellor groups. It would appear that there is a kind of grade-level stereotyping of roles. The questions that need to be addressed are: "Do high school students need less personal counselling?" and "Is career guidance unnecessary at the elementary and junior high levels?"

It also seems clear that the role of special needs consultant is the domain of the junior high school counsellor. It is possible that prospective counsellors who expect to work at the junior high level should have a higher level of expertise in this area?

Next Steps

This study makes a contribution to an understanding of school counselling in the Lethbridge area. While it provides useful information, it also raises important questions. Among these questions are:

- Have school counsellors developed grade-based stereotypical roles? If so, can counsellor training help to alleviate this phenomenon?
- Should counsellors be trained to work with specific age groups of students?
- Do students have different guidance needs at the elementary, junior high and high school levels and, if so, do these differences correspond to the differences counsellors at these levels perceive in their roles?

- Because it seems apparent that school counsellors desire more time for performing certain roles, can they be helped to make more efficient use of their time?

- Does the educational level or gender of counsellors affect their comfort and effectiveness?

- Is it possible and is it necessary for school counsellors to devote more time to evaluation and assessment?

- Is the low regard for evaluation and assessment related to the amount of training received by counsellors in these skills?

- Can it be determined if group counselling is as effective as individual counselling?

- How can counsellor training be improved?

Continued study, along the lines of these questions, is necessary. By continuing to explore these issues we will ultimately discover better ways to prepare and support our counsellors, thereby serving students more successfully. As our changing society increases its demands for help from schools generally and counsellors in particular, the need for well-trained and effectively functioning school counsellors is paramount.

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Appendix A

(Cover Letter)

Date:

Dear:

As part of the requirements of my M.Ed. degree, I am conducting a small study on what local school counsellors perceive as their duties, their feelings of efficacy, and their needs for enhancing their effectiveness. I believe you, as a school counsellor, would have insights into these aspects of counselling, and I am soliciting your assistance.

As you are aware, there are increasingly greater and different demands placed on us as counsellors, with little or no increase in support and training. You will also be aware of the fact that the University of Lethbridge will be offering, in the immediate future, a Master's degree with a focus on counselling.

These two facts have some important implications. We need to express how we see our roles, needs, and feelings, so we can get some help in the form of support and training. This may be an opportunity to help ourselves.

Enclosed is a very brief questionnaire, which should require no more than ten to fifteen minutes to complete. I would very much appreciate it if you would complete it and return it in the enclosed, self-addressed envelope no later than _____. The questionnaires are coded for data analysis purposes; however, responses will be treated as group data only, and individuals will not be identified.

I will certainly provide you with the results of the study if you wish. Should you have any questions about this research, please feel free to call me at 328-9606, or my supervisor, Dr. Myrna Greene (329-2251), or the Chair of the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, Dr. Robert Runte (329-2454). Thank you, in advance, for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Keith Flaman
Enclosure

Survey of School Counsellors' Activities, Feelings and Needs

Part A

Please provide the following information:

a) grade level of students with whom you work (check all that apply)
- (1-6) _____
- (7-9) _____
- (10-12) _____
- (Other) _____

b) percentage of your work day formally assigned to counselling (check one only)
- (80-100) _____
- (50-80) _____
- (less than 50) _____

c) years spent in a formal counselling role (check one only)
- (0-5) _____
- (6-10) _____
- (11-20) _____
- (more than 20) _____

d) your gender
- (Male) _____
- (Female) _____

e) your age
- (25-30) _____
- (31-40) _____
- (41-50) _____
- (51-60) _____
- (over 60) _____

f) your formal academic qualifications. Please check highest level only:

i) Bachelor's degree with fewer than three courses in Psychology or Counselling _____
ii) Bachelor's degree with three or more courses in Psychology or Counselling _____
iii) Graduate diploma in Psychology or Counselling _____
iv) Master's degree in Psychology or Counselling _____
v) Doctorate in Psychology or Counselling _____
vi) Master's degree or Doctorate in an area other than Psychology or Counselling _____
vii) Other (please specify) _____

Part B

Using the guideline below, please check the appropriate spaces on the following pages.

Estimated and Desired Frequency -

often	=	more than 40% of your time on a typical day
seldom	=	10-40% of your time on a typical day
rarely	=	less than 10% of your time on a typical day

Effectiveness -

very	=	you succeed in achieving your objective more than half the time
somewhat	=	you succeed in achieving your objective from one quarter to one half the time
not	=	you experience success in achieving your objective less than one quarter of the time

In your role as school counsellor, you -	Your estimated frequency			Your desired frequency			Your estimated effectiveness		
	often	seldom	rarely	often	seldom	rarely	very	some what	not
1. act as an *individual counsellor* with individual students to:									
(a) enhance students' self-concepts									
(b) help students understand themselves									
(c) improve students' problem-solving									
(d) mediate conflicts between students and parents									
(e) mediate conflicts between students and school personnel									
(f) provide students with the opportunity to discuss personal problems									
(g) monitor students' academic progress									
(h) improve students' academic skills									
(i) help students with career/ educational goal setting									
2. act as a *group counsellor* in a group setting to:									
(a) enhance students' self-concepts									
(b) help students understand themselves									
(c) improve students' problem-solving skills									
(d) provide information on drug and alcohol abuse									
(e) improve students' academic skills									
(f) help students with career/ educational goal setting									

	Your estimated frequency			Your desired frequency			Your estimated effectiveness		
	often	seldom	rarely	often	seldom	rarely	very	some what	not
3. act as a *special needs consultant* to:									
(a) coordinate special needs programs									
(b) refer special needs students to appropriate services									
4. act as a *teacher consultant* to:									
(a) provide consultation and in-service for teachers regarding student behaviours, attitudes and progress									
(b) provide teachers with pertinent information about particular students									
5. act as a *parent consultant* to:									
(a) inform parents of school programs and school and community resources									
(b) provide consultation and information on family relationships									
(c) offer assistance in resolving particular parent-student conflicts									
6. are actively involved in *evaluation and assessment* in the following areas:									
(a) follow-up of graduates									
(b) student population characteristics									
(c) the guidance-counselling system in your school									

	Your estimated frequency			Your desired frequency			Your estimated effectiveness		
	often	seldom	rarely	often	seldom	rarely	very	some what	not
7. participate in *professional development* activities to:									
(a) enhance your counselling competencies and skills									
(b) share your competencies and skills									
8. act as an *administrative consultant* to:									
(a) advise on school policy									
(b) assist with personnel development									
(c) assist with personnel evaluation									
9. act as an *auxiliary aide* to:									
(a) do substitute teaching									
(b) do noon-hour and other supervision									
(c) complete and update student records									
10. provide *career/educational guidance* by:									
(a) coordinating 'Career Days' in your school									
(b) offering students career/educational information									
(c) offering curriculum suggestions to teachers regarding careers									
(d) obtaining psychometric information and academic performance indicators to help students understand themselves relative to the career/educational world									
11. perform *other duties* such as:									
(a)									
(b)									
(c)									
(d)									

Part C

Please complete the following:

1. **Rank** the following main areas of counselling according to your comfort level when working in these areas. (1 is **most** comfortable; 10 is **least** comfortable)

   - individual counselling (personal, educational) ---------
   - group counselling (personal, educational) _____
   - special needs consultant _____
   - teacher consultant _____
   - parent consultant _____
   - program evaluation and assessment _____
   - personal professional development _____
   - administrative consultant _____
   - auxiliary aide _____
   - career/educational guidance _____

2. Give **two** reasons (briefly) explaining why you feel **most** comfortable in your highest ranked area.

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. **Rank** the following main areas of counselling according to your impression of the importance the school administration (principals, superintendents, central office, school board) places upon them as part of the counsellor's role. (1 is **most** important; 10 is **least** important)

    - individual counselling (personal, educational) _____
    - group counselling (personal, educational) _____
    - special needs consultant _____
    - teacher consultant _____
    - parent consultant _____
    - program evaluation and assessment _____
    - personal professional development _____
    - administrative consultant _____
    - auxiliary aide _____
    - career/educational guidance _____

4. What two factors have most contributed to your feeling **successful** as a counsellor?

_____

_____

_____

5. What two factors have contributed to your feeling **unsuccessful** as a counsellor?

6. What two activities, experiences, training, etc., would **most** enhance your effectiveness as a counsellor?

7. Please add any of your further thoughts on the subject of this survey.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Appendix B

Table A
Overall Mean Scores for Survey Items

Survey Item	Estimated Frequency	Desired Frequency	Estimated Effectiveness
Individual Counsellor Role			
A. Enhance students' self-concepts	2.35	2.71	2.47
B. Help students understand themselves	2.18	2.63	2.38
C. Improve students problems solving	2.12	2.63	2.31
D. Mediate conflicts between students and parents	2.00	2.13	2.44
E. Mediate conflicts between students and school personnel	1.94	2.13	2.50
F. Provide students with opportunity to discuss personal problems	2.59	2.81	2.56
G. Monitor students' academic progress	2.12	2.13	2.25
H. Improve students' academic skills	1.41	1.94	1.63
I. Help students with career/educational goal setting	1.82	2.19	2.19

Survey Item	Estimated Frequency	Desired Frequency	Estimated Effectiveness
Group Counsellor Role			
A. Enhance students' self-concepts	1.69	2.44	1.81
B. Help students understand themselves	1.59	2.31	1.88
C. Improve students problems solving skills	1.77	2.56	1.94
D. Provide information on drug and alcohol abuse	1.29	2.00	1.69
E. Improve students' academic skills	1.47	2.13	1.50
F. Help students with career/educational goal setting	1.77	2.25	2.13
Special Needs Consultant Role			
A. Co-ordinate special needs programs	1.94	1.88	2.24
B. Refer special needs students to appropriate services	2.12	2.06	2.71
Teacher Consultant Role			
A. Consultation with teachers regarding student behaviors, attitudes, etc.	1.82	2.12	2.48
B. Provide teachers with information about particular students	2.47	2.65	2.82

Survey Item	Estimated Frequency	Desired Frequency	Estimated Effectiveness
Parent Consultant Role			
A. Inform parents of school programs and school and community resources	2.18	2.30	2.53
B. Provide consultation and information on family relationships	1.82	1.82	2.06
C. Offer assistance in resolving particular parent-student conflict	2.06	2.63	2.31
Evaluation and Assessment Role			
A. Follow-up of graduates	1.35	1.62	1.82
B. Student population characteristics	1.18	1.94	2.06
Professional Development Role			
A. Enhance your counselling competencies and skills	1.71	2.47	2.24
B. Share your competencies and skills	2.00	2.23	2.18
Administrative Consultant Role			
A. Advise on school policy	1.71	2.00	2.06
B. Assist with personnel development	1.53	1.82	1.88
C. Assist with personnel evaluation	1.35	1.47	1.82

Survey Item	Estimated Frequency	Desired Frequency	Estimated Effectiveness
Auxiliary Aide Role			
A. Do substitute teaching	1.24	1.06	1.59
B. Do noon-hour and other supervision	1.59	1.29	1.88
C. Complete and update student records	1.65	1.59	2.47
Career and Educational Guidance Role			
A. Co-ordinate 'Career Days'	1.59	1.69	1.75
B. Offer students career/education information	1.94	2.12	2.12
C. Offer curriculum suggestions to teachers	1.47	1.75	1.75
D. Obtain psychometric information and performance indicators	1.47	1.77	1.65

Appendix C

Table B

Comparison of Frequency and Effectiveness Among Elementary (N=5), Junior High (N=6), and High School (N=6) Counsellors Mean Scores

	Estimated Frequency			Desired Frequency			Estimated Effectiveness		
Survey Item:	**E**	**J**	**H**	**E**	**J**	**H**	**E**	**J**	**H**
Individual Counsellor Role									
A. Enhance students' self-concepts	2.60	2.50	2.00	2.80	2.83	2.50	2.80	2.33	2.33
B. Help students' problem-solving	2.40	2.17	2.00	2.67	2.67	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.17
C. Improve students' problem-solving	2.60	2.17	1.67	3.00	2.83	2.17	2.50	2.50	2.00
D. Mediate conflicts between students and parents	1.80	2.00	2.17	1.75	2.00	2.50	2.50	2.33	2.50
E. Mediate conflicts between students and school personnel	1.60	1.83	2.33	1.50	2.33	2.33	2.75	2.50	2.33
F. Provide students with opportunity to discuss personal problems	2.60	2.33	2.83	2.75	2.83	2.83	2.75	2.50	2.50
G. Monitor students' academic progress	1.40	2.33	2.50	1.50	2.33	2.33	2.00	2.17	2.50
H. Improve students' academic skills	1.20	1.67	1.33	1.75	2.17	1.83	1.50	1.83	1.50
I. Help students with career/educational goal setting	1.00	1.50	2.83	1.25	2.33	2.67	1.75	1.83	2.83

	Estimated Frequency			Desired Frequency			Estimated Effectiveness		
Survey Item:	**E**	**J**	**H**	**E**	**J**	**H**	**E**	**J**	**H**
Group Counsellor Role									
A. Enhance students self-concepts	2.20	1.50	1.40	2.50	2.50	2.33	2.50	1.67	1.50
B. Help students' understand themselves	2.00	1.67	1.67	2.00	2.67	2.17	2.50	2.00	1.33
C. Improve students' problem-solving skills	2.40	1.67	1.33	2.75	2.67	2.33	2.50	2.00	1.50
D. Provide information on drug & alcohol abuse	1.00	1.50	1.33	1.25	2.17	2.33	2.00	1.67	1.50
E. Improve student's academic skills	1.60	1.50	1.33	1.75	2.33	2.20	1.75	1.67	1.17
F. Help students with career/educational goal-setting	1.20	1.83	2.17	1.25	2.50	2.67	1.75	2.00	2.50
Special Needs Consultant Role									
A. Co-ordinate special needs programs	1.40	2.50	1.83	1.60	2.33	1.67	2.20	2.83	1.67
B. Refer special needs students to appropriate services	1.80	2.50	2.00	1.60	2.33	2.17	2.80	3.00	2.33
Teacher Consultant Role									
A. Consultation with teachers regarding student behaviors, attitudes, etc.	1.80	2.00	1.67	2.00	2.00	2.33	3.00	2.33	2.17
B. Provide teachers with information about particular students	2.40	2.50	2.50	2.60	2.67	2.67	3.00	2.83	2.67

	Estimated Frequency			Desired Frequency			Estimated Effectiveness		
Survey Item:	**E**	**J**	**H**	**E**	**J**	**H**	**E**	**J**	**H**
Administrative Consultant Role									
A. Advise on school policy	1.40	2.00	1.67	1.80	1.83	2.33	2.20	2.17	1.83
B. Assist with personnel development	1.40	1.83	1.33	1.60	1.83	2.00	2.20	2.17	1.33
C. Assist with personnel evaluation	1.20	1.67	1.17	1.20	1.67	1.50	2.00	2.00	1.50
Auxiliary Aide Role									
A. Do substitute teaching	1.00	1.33	1.33	1.00	1.17	1.00	1.40	1.67	1.67
B. Do noon-hour and other supervision	1.20	2.00	1.50	1.20	1.50	1.17	1.80	1.83	2.00
C. Complete and update student records	1.20	1.83	1.83	1.20	1.67	1.83	1.80	1.83	2.00
Career and Educational Guidance Role									
A. Coordinate 'Career Days'	1.00	1.67	2.00	1.00	1.83	2.20	1.40	1.67	2.20
B. Offer students career/education information	1.20	1.50	1.67	1.20	1.67	2.40	1.60	1.67	2.00
C. Offer curriculum suggestions to teachers	1.20	1.50	1.67	1.20	1.67	2.40	1.60	1.67	2.00
D. Obtain psychometric information and performance indicators	1.00	1.50	1.83	1.00	2.17	2.00	1.60	1.33	2.00