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COUNSELOR ROLE PERCEPTIONS: IDEAL AND REAL

by

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A professional paper submitted to the Graduate Faculty
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of

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ABSTRACT

The problem of this study was to determine if the Montana counselor's view of his role was consistent with the recommendations of professional organizations and counselor educators. The study also examined the variables of counselor education, experience, extra duties and school population to determine if they had any effect on counselor role perception. The counselor pupil ratio of counselors sampled was also examined to determine if Montana schools were conforming with American Personnel and Guidance Association recommendations. The study also attempted to provide the reader with a descriptive picture of the Montana counselor.

An instrument was constructed by the investigator to determine answers to the above questions. The instrument consisted of two parts--a background questionnaire for determination of variables and a series of ten statements presented with six response categoreis varying from agree strongly to disagree strongly. The response categories were assigned numerical values, and scores were determined for each respondent which were used in the answering of the questions posed by the study.

The data was organized utilizing graphic techniques and analyzed descriptively. Findings indicated that the Montana counselor has a role concept that coincides to a great extent with recommendations of professional organizations and counselor educators. The variable of counselor education, experience, additional duties, and school population have no effect on counselor role perception as measured by the instrument utilized. Montana high schools are not conforming to this ideal counselor pupil ratio established by the APGA.

Conclusions drawn as a result of this investigation were as follows: (1) That counselor education programs are doing an adequate job in terms of teaching the future counselor what to do in the field. (2) The knowledge of what counselors should do is present but as indicated by the review of literature, obstacles not unearthed by this study are preventing practicing counselors from implementing this

role definition. (3) A large number of Montana counselors are not full time qualified counselors. (4) A large number of Montana counselors are not qualified to counsel in terms of knowledge of their field and experience in that field. (5) The professionalization of counseling in Montana is a long way from realization.

Recommendations made by the investigator for further research were: (1) Identify problem areas that the counselor faces which prevent him from following an established role definition. (2) Investigate the manner in which the Montana counselor spends his time. (3) Research the amount of personal-emotional counseling done versus the amount of guidance activities done. (4) Research the area of Certification in Montana.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The launching of Sputnik in 1957 by the USSR began one of the most tumultuous periods in the history of American education. A tremendous number of programs were developed and large amounts of federal money were allotted to enable the United States to overtake the USSR in the technology race.

One of these programs was designed to train counselors, with the thought that these counselors would be able to identify children with a high aptitude for science and mathematics--fields in which the United States lacked trained and competent people. This program led to one of the most momentous growth periods in the history of the counseling profession. The counseling profession was suddenly overwhelmed by the tremendous influx of newly trained people and like any profession which suffers sudden growing pains it developed an identity crisis. The growth was so rapid and involved so many diverse theoretical viewpoints that what a counselor was supposed to be and what his job was became a point of heated controversy. To combat this the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA) commissioned studies to define the role of the counselor and give the practicing counselor guidelines by which he

could establish an effective counseling program. These studies will be reviewed in Chapter II.

These studies developed nationally accepted norms for the role of the ideal counselor. By comparing these ideal norms with Montana counselors' role perceptions the researcher has become informed of problems which practicing Montana counselors encounter. A general picture of the counseling practices that are followed in Montana High Schools is available from the results of this study. The information gathered points to new directions in counselor education as well as highlighting inadequacies inherent in the present system.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study is twofold: (1) to determine by research the role of the counselor as defined by counselor educators and professional organizations, and (2) to ascertain the degree of agreement concerning the counselor's role between these educators and a random sample of practicing Montana High School counselors.

NEED OR PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Since the formulation of the role of the ideal counselor by professional organizations in the mid-sixties a great deal of research has been conducted to determine

if the practicing counselor is achieving these standards. Many researchers have concluded that these standards are not being met. Since one of the main aims of the counseling profession is to aid in the development of human potential to its highest degree, it is important to continually reassess the situation and to discover difficulties that practicing counselors are having, and possible methods of correcting these problems. By utilizing this research, counselor educators can detect areas of counselor education which need more emphasis in order to better prepare counseling students for the task of defining their role as a counselor and, then working within the limits of this role definition.

GENERAL QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

The general questions to be answered in this study are:

1. Is the role of the counselor as perceived by Montana counselors consistent with the recommendations of counselor educators and professional organizations?

2. Do differences in school population influence the manner in which the practicing counselor sees his role?

3. Does experience make a difference in the manner in which a counselor views his role?

4. Do additional roles such as coaching, teaching, or administration effect the manner in which a counselor views his role?

5. Are Montana high schools following the national recommendations of the APGA concerning a ratio of three hundred students to one full time qualified counselor?

6. Does the amount of counselor education a practicing counselor has effect his perception of his role?

GENERAL PROCEDURE

The investigator conducted a review of the literature to determine the role of the ideal counselor. An instrument was constructed consisting of two parts. The initial portion was a background questionnaire designed to aid in the answering of the questions concerned with the effects of amount of counselor education, school population, counseling experience, and additional duties on counselor role perception. The second part of the instrument utilized a Likert-type ordinal scale with the role of the ideal counselor being identified at the extreme end of this scale.

The instrument was mailed to a random stratified sample of Montana High School counselors. The sampling procedure is explained in Chapter III. Scores on the Likert

portion of the instrument were determined for each respondent and then broken down into various categories in respect to the variables being examined. Charts are presented on each category to illustrate the results in graphic form. The information presented gives a comprehensive picture of the Montana High School counselor. It shows areas where counselors are disagreeing with counselor educators and professional organizations. These findings point to areas of needed research as well as offering some suggestions to counselor educators for improvement of counselor preparation programs.

LIMITATIONS AND/OR DELIMITATIONS

The population involved in this study is one that could conceivably be sampled in its entirety because of its relatively small size of two hundred and thirty-two. Due to financial limitations the investigator was forced to take a stratified random sample and limit this sample to one hundred Montana high school counselors.

The focus of the study is Montana high school counselors. The investigator recognizes that there are a large number of counselors operating in junior high and elementary schools throughout the state. The investigator felt that a study which would include counselors from these

three different educational levels would introduce more variables than could be dealt with in a study of this size.

The research in the area of counselor role perceptions has been approached from many different viewpoints including students, parents, principals, and the counselors themselves. The investigator made no attempt to supply an exhaustive review of the literature in this area, since it is so extensive. Representative studies from each of the various ways of viewing the counselor's role are presented. In this manner it is hoped that a firm basis for understanding the immensity of the problem of counselor role definition will be established.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The term ideal counselor role refers to the viewpoints held by the APGA and counselor educators. It delineates what counselor functions should and should not be. It gives time recommendations for the various counselor functions. Details of this concept are examined further in Chapter II.

The term Montana counselor's role perceptions refers to the results of this study. It is how the Montana counselor views his role in terms of APGA recommendations.

SUMMARY

As has been pointed out, there is a great deal of ambiguity surrounding the concept of counselor role. This study has attempted to determine if Montana counselors have a definite concept of what their role is.

A review of the literature was conducted to determine the role of the ideal counselor. A questionnaire was sent to Montana counselors to determine if their role concept coincides with this ideal role. Comparisons were made utilizing variables of education, school populations, experience, and additional duties.

The findings of this study show new directions for research as well as point out new directions for counselor education departments.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the concept of counselor role as seen by professional counselor organizations, counselor educators, administrators, students and the practicing counselor. A general overview of the ideal counselor role is presented as determined by professional guidance organizations. In this same vein the counselor role as seen by prominent counselor educators is presented.

A host of studies have been conducted to determine if persons utilizing counseling perceive the counselor in this ideal manner. Selected studies of this type are reviewed.

The final aspect of the literature review discusses findings of studies conducted with practicing counselors to determine if their actual activities coincide with the ideal counselor role as determined by these professional organizations.

THE IDEAL COUNSELOR

During the past decade there has been a concerted effort on the part of the American Personnel and Guidance Association and its many sub-divisions, such as the

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) to define the role of the counselor. These efforts have resulted in numerous studies with numerous recommendations delineating the counselor's role. It was the researcher's intention to present those recommendations which are relative to this study and which have the support of the majority of counselor educators.

American Personnel and Guidance Association Recommendations

In 1962 the American Personnel and Guidance Association asked Gilbert Wrenn to look into the future and define what he saw as the counselor's role in a changing world. Wrenn (1962:137) recommended "That the professional job description of a school counselor specify that he perform four major functions: (a) counsel with students: (b) consult with teachers, administrators and parents as they in turn deal with students: (c) study the changing facts about student population and interpret what is found to school committees and administrators; (d) coordinate counseling resources in school and between school and community. From two-thirds to three-fourths of the counselor's time in either elementary or high school, should be committed to the first two of these functions. Activities that do not

fall into one of these four areas neither should be expected nor encouraged as part of the counselor's regular working schedule."

American School Counselor Association Recommendations

The American School Counselor Association (1962) in a policy statement outlined the professional responsibilities of a school counselor. They delineate ten areas of responsibility for the school counselor. These can be classified into three major categories: development and continuation of a guidance program, pupil responsibilities, and public relations work.

In planning the program the counselor's role is that of a coordinator. He oversees the entire program and coordinates the efforts of the entire community to insure the optimum developmental opportunities for the individual student. The counselor is also responsible to conduct research to determine the effectiveness of his program.

The association feels that the counselor should be primarily concerned with the individual student. The counselor should work with the student in the areas of personal-emotional problems, educational-vocational planning, placement, and referral to other related pupil personnel services. The counselor is also responsible to insure

that the best possible cumulative records are kept for each student.

In the public relations area the counselor is responsible for working within the community to insure that the objectives of the guidance programs are understood by members of the community. Another major responsibility in this area is working with the parents of individual students to help them understand their children in relation to the services provided by the guidance program. Counselor relations with the rest of the school staff are defined in a manner which establishes the counselor as a consultant. His work with the staff is directed towards meeting the needs of the individual pupil.

Fitzgerald (1967) in an article on the implementation of the ASCA Statement of Policy stated that an overwhelming majority of counselors surveyed prior to the publication of the statement supported it. He views this policy as a first step on the road to the professionalization of the field of school counseling and states, "The role as defined lies within the grasp of every school counselor throughout our country" (Fitzgerald, 241).

Counselor Educator's Recommendations

Boy (1962) maintains that the average school counselor is becoming overwhelmed by the number of activities they are asked to perform. He offers an alternative solution in the splitting of the counselor's role into three separate areas: guidance, counseling, and testing under the general heading of a pupil personnel service. Each department would set up its own program and student referrals could be made between the three areas.

Boy describes the counselor's role as engaging in individual and group professional psychological counseling with the student: engaging in group work with parents, teachers, and administrators to acquaint them with the field of counseling: conducting research to determine the effectiveness of his program: and conducting an orientation program within the school to encourage students to seek counseling voluntarily.

The guidance department would be concerned with vocational and educational planning and the testing department with the administration, scoring, and interpretation of standardized tests.

Boy maintains that job specialization is the only manner in which a significant guidance program which

effectively reaches all the students can be implemented.

Herman J. Peters, (1962) a prominent member of the ASCA, views role definition as imperative if the counselor is to function in today's schools. He delineates ten areas of responsibility for counselors. These are: (1) to insure that one is properly trained in the profession; (2) to be well informed in the area of child development; (3) to assist boys and girls in the exploration of self; (4) to assist the individual in decision making; (5) to become future oriented in terms of interpreting trends in education and vocations; (6) to interpret the guidance and counseling program to the community; (7) to spend at least one half of each work day in the counseling interview situation; (8) to become expert in the natue of the learning process; (9) to aid in the design of the instructional program; and (10) to conduct research to determine the effectiveness of his program.

PERCEPTIONS OF RELATED INDIVIDUALS

As can be seen from the material cited to this point there exists a consensus of opinion as to what a counselor's role should be. Definitions of the counselor's role are rampant and a great deal of time and effort has gone into these role definitions. In turning to the role

perception of the counselor as held by other people closely allied with the daily work of the counselor, the reason for the proliferation of counselor role definitions will become readily apparent.

Administrative Perceptions

Many researchers have found that adminstrators tend to look at counselors as additions to their administrative staff, and they utilize them as clerks, assistant principals, and discipline officers. Hart and Prince (1970) found that the role of a counselor as he learned it is in conflict with their principal's perception of what it should be. Principals surveyed in this study felt that the counselor should do clerical work, and should not do personal-emotional counseling. They felt that the counselor was obligated to reveal confidentialities to them as well as to the parents of the youths they were counseling.

Student Perceptions

As has been pointed out in previous studies reviewed, the primary concern of the counselor is with the individual student. A great deal of research has been done on the counselor role as seen by the students that he serves. The consensus of these studies is that the

counselor role is not seen by the students as it is defined by counselor educators and professional organizations.

Van Riper (1971) in his study of Michigan Junior High Schools found that students identified the counselor as a person who helps with educational planning and school problems. The students preferred to go to a friend with a personal problem before they would go to the counselor. The students saw very little role differentiation between the counselor and teachers and principals.

Shertzer and Stone (1963) found much the same results in that the students look to the counselor for help in educational and vocational areas while preferring to discuss personal problems with parents and peers.

Van Riper (1971:56) maintains that, "The counselor is what he does. His identity and manner in which he is perceived will very probably depend on the extent to which he emphasized certain distinctively serviceable functions." Shertzer and Stone (1963) reinforce this contention when they describe the lack of counselor communication to the students of attitudes of warmness and openness which are so essential to good counseling rapport.

PRACTICING COUNSELOR ACTIVITIES

To this point the primary concern of this review has been the perception of the counselor's role as seen by others. The review now turns to examination of the counselor's role as seen and practiced by the working counselor. If there is one item that the studies conducted in this area have in common it is that very few counselors are conforming to the standards set by professional organizations and counselor educators.

Nationwide Studies

Trotzer and Kassea (1971) in a study conducted in Wisconsin Junior and Senior High Schools found that the counselors were spending twenty-five percent of their time in non-related guidance activities such as clerical work. They also found that counselors were spending forty-four percent of their time directly working with students, and only thirty-three percent of their time in direct counseling situations. They concluded that counselors are not doing the things that are stressed in counselor education programs.

Pruett and Brown (1966) found much the same type of situation. They compared their findings to the

recommendations made by Wrenn, (1962) previously cited in this review. They found that only fifty-five percent of the counselor's time was spent in working with students, parents and staff as compared to the two-thirds to three-fourths recommended by Wrenn. They found that twenty-five percent of the counselor's time is being spent on non-guidance activities. They also found that "Wrenn recommendations pertaining to the study of changing facts about the student populations and interpretation of these findings to the school and the function of coordinating counseling resources of the school and community are both being largely neglected by school guidance personnel"(Pruett and Brown, 1966:93).

Ashcraft (1966) conducted a five state study to determine areas in which couselors were and were not meeting the standards established by the ASCA Statement of Policy reviewed earlier in this chapter. He found nine major areas of difficulty that these counselors were experiencing. These included: responsibility for large amounts of clerical duties; lack of clerical assistance; lack of a philosophy of guidance common to the entire school system; and lack of written policies concerning the specific duties

of the counselor. Ashcraft concluded that counselors were indeed having a difficult time adopting the ASCA Statement of Policy.

Humes and Lavitt (1971) in a study of counselor attitudes towards administrators found that the counselors felt that much of the ambiguity over counselor role was due to the fact that their programs were controlled by their school principals. They felt that if they were given administrative control of the guidance system that much of the conflict over the role would be reduced.

Carson (1971) in a survey of counselors concluded that too many counselors look at themselves as teachers operating out of a counselor's office. His instrument contained eight statements relating to the role of a counselor. The counselors were asked to agree or disagree with each statement. A majority of the counselors supported such statements as: Among teachers, administrators and counselors, personal individual interview counseling is not a function uniquely the counselors; and a counselor as a member of the school faculty shares an equal responsibility as a disciplinarian when he observes incidental misconduct. Carson interprets results such as these as indicating that far too many counselors view their role as a teaching

oriented function, rather than a highly personalized involvement on a one-to-one basis with students.

Montana Studies

Morang (1967) conducted a time analysis study of guidance functions in ten Western Montana High Schools. He found that counselors spent about fifty percent of their time in counseling students; about ten percent of their time in conferences with teachers and parents; and about forty percent of their time in clerical work such as recording information, administering and scoring tests, typing, filing and preparing transcripts. Morang concluded that counselors need clerical assistance so as to have more time to better serve their students.

Johnson (1968) in a time analysis study of five large Montana High Schools found that most counselors contacted had adequate time to conduct student counseling and that they felt that clerical work was not a problem.

Nelson (1970) in a study of six small Southwestern Montana High Schools found the counselors to be ill-prepared educationally and burdened with many other duties. The counselors conducted little or no personal counseling and seemed to have no idea of the purpose of the guidance program. Most of the counselors felt their counseling

duties were secondary to their other functions which ranged from superintendent to librarian.

SUMMARY

The review of literature has attempted to convey some of the ambiguity surrounding the question of counselor role. The concept has been examined from many different points of view and as can be seen each viewpoint perceives the counselor as having a different function.

A great deal of effort has been exerted by professional organizations to give the counselor a working guideline for his role. From the studies cited this role definition does not seem close to adoption. Administration and student perception of counselor role does not align with this professional definition.

Time analysis studies of counselor functions have shown that counselors fall drastically below the recommended time amounts for individual student counseling and consultation with parents and staff members. Far too much time is spent in non-related guidance activities such as clerical work.

Bentley (1968:5) sums up the dilemma of counselor role, "To help is the purpose of counseling; but the way of helping is a thorny question."

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

The problem of this study is twofold: (1) to determine by research the role of the counselor as defined by counselor educators and professional organizations, and (2) to ascertain the degree of agreement concerning the counselor's role between these educators and a random sample of practicing Montana High School Counselors. Quantitative scores were obtained for each respondent. These quantative scores were used to compare the counselors sampled on several variables including; school size, amount of experience, additional duties, and counselor education.

In this chapter the researcher examines in detail the procedural aspects of the investigation. The population from which the sample was taken is defined. The sampling procedure, which involved a stratified random sample is then delineated. The two part instrument, which was constructed by the investigator, is described. The method used in organizing and analyzing the data collected by this instrument is also described in detail.

POPULATION DESCRIPTION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The population of this study was all Montana counselors employed in the public secondary schools. Secondary schools in Montana vary in size from one hundred students to one thousand five hundred students. Due to this large variation in school size the population of counselors employed in these schools was very diverse in some aspects. Larger schools may have a staff of as many as eight full time counselors while some of the smaller schools may have counselors only on a part time basis. In the rural areas of Montana, counselors may serve as many as four schools. In some of the smaller schools an individual may perform dual roles such as counselor-teacher, counselor-administrator, counselor-coach, or counselor-librarian. Due to the fact that the individuals in the population involved in this study were so greatly affected by the size of the school in which they work, the investigator decided to utilize a stratified random sampling procedure to insure that a representative sample of the population was taken. This sampling procedure is described below.

For the purpose of athletic competition the Montana High School Association has categorized schools

according to size. These categories break high schools down to four classes to insure parity in athletic competition. Since these classes were established according to size the investigator felt that schools within each class would be similar in the problems that they would encounter in establishing a counseling program. Because of the diversity inherent in the total population, the investigator felt that in order to gain a representative sample of this population it was necessary to take a sample for each established class or subpopulation.

These subpopulations consist of fourteen class AA schools with seventy-two counselors, fourteen class A schools with twenty-four counselors, fifty-five class B schools with sixty counselors, and eighty-four class C schools with eighty-one counselors. In class AA and class C a random sample of forty percent was taken from each subpopulation of counselors. In class B a random sample of forty-six percent was taken. Due to the small number of counselors in class A, fifty-eight percent of them were contacted for the study. This provided a total sample of one hundred counselors. The counselors were araanged alphabetically within each subpopulation and a

table of random numbers was used to select the individuals to which instruments were mailed.

METHOD OF COLLECTING DATA

The data in this study was collected by means of a questionnaire which was divided into two separate parts. The initial portion was a background questionnaire which was utilized to determine variables such as school population, counselor education, experience and additional duties. The second portion of the instrument was used to determine differences in counselor role perception between the ideal counselor as determined by professional organizations and the Montana counselors view of these standards. This portion of the instrument used a Likert-type ordinal scale with six categories of response. The categories and the numbers which correspond to them are; strongly disagree-1, disagree-2, slightly disagree-3, slightly agree-4, agree-5, and agree strongly-6. The counselors were presented with ten statements taken from APGA recommendations and asked to respond in the manner which corresponded to their feelings about the statement. The response which corresponds to the ideal role was assigned a value of six. The additional responses were assigned values from five to one, with one corresponding to total

disagreement with APGA recommendations. In this manner quantative scores were arrived at for each counselor which gave the investigator a method by which he made comparisons on the variables mentioned above.

A coefficient of stability was determined to test the reliability of the Likert portion of the instrument. A test group of graduate students in counseling was tested and retested over a two week period to determine the coefficient. Since the initial portion of the instrument utilizes only factual data, a coefficient of stability will not be determined for it.

The counselor educators at Montana State University determined the content validity of the instrument.

No special training is needed to administer or score the instrument. All instruments were hand scored and the computations were done on an electric calculator to insure accuracy.

METHOD OF ORGANIZING DATA

Responses to the initial portion of the instrument are presented in tabular form. Appropriate arbitrary intervals are designated for the variables of counselor education, experience, school population, and additional

duties. The data obtained for these categories were araanged in four frequency distribution tables.

Quantative scores obtained in the Likert portion of the instrument are initially organized in a frequency distribution without regard to variables. The Likert scores are then paired with each variable in a frequency distribution. In effect four frequency distributions are presented utilizing the following pairing; Likert scores-school size, Likert scores-counselor education, Likert scores-amount of experience, and Likert scores--additional duties.

The above method of organizing the data gathered by the instrument gives a clear, concise picture of the variables being examined in this study and their relation to counselor role perception. These frequency distributions will be utilized in the analysis of data discussed below.

STATISTICAL HYPOTHESIS

Since the intent of this study was to provide the reader with a descriptive look at how the Montana counselor views his role no statistical hypothesis was presented.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data collected do not lend themselved to statistical analysis. For this reason the data were analyzed descriptively utilizing graphic techniques. The analysis of data was basically concerned with answering the questions presented in Chapter I. Question one concerned itself with the comparison of the Montana Counselors' role perceptions and the recommendations of the APGA. In determining an answer for this question each student on the Likert portion of the instrument was analyzed utilizing a bar graph. The bar graphs consist of six bars with each bar corresponding with one of the response categories, which were explained in the section on organization of data. In this manner the degree of agreement with professional recommendations for each statement presented was readily apparent.

To determine if the size of the school in which the counselor works has any effect on his role perception a frequency distribution was presented and described.

Te determine if the variables of school population, experience, and counselor education had any effect on role perception, frequency distributions were constructed matching each of these variables with the Likert scores.

In each case the Likert scores and the variables were broken into arbitrary quantative intervals. Each respondent's score was then inserted into the distribution in its proper place. Whether or not these variables have any effect on role perception was readily seen.

In order to answer the question concerning counselor pupil ratio a frequency distribution showing the student counselor ratio of those persons sampled was constructed. A yes or no answer was readily available from this distribution.

The variable of additional duties was analyzed by comparing the Likert scores of those persons who have additional duties with those who do not. The frequency distribution mentioned earlier in this chapter was used here.

SUMMARY

The problem of this study was to determine how the Montana counselor perceives his role and then to compare this perception with professional standards. The population was all Montana secondary school counselors. The sampling procedure was a proportional stratified

random sample. The data were collected utilizing an instrument constructed by the investigator. The data were organized in tabular form and were analyzed graphically and descriptively.

The results of this study give a general overview of the Montana counselor--how he perceives his role, his education and experience. It provides new directions for research and gives counselor educators a new perspective on their counselor education programs.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to determine if the Montana Counselor has a role concept congruent with the ideal role proposed by counselor educators and professional organizations. This chapter examines in detail the findings of this study. Each of the six questions posed in Chapter I are analyzed descriptively utilizing graphs and frequency distributions. Answers are arrived at for these questions from this descriptive analysis. Due to the nature of the instrument mailed to the random sample of counselors, data were collected which does not relate directly to the questions presented in Chapter I. These data have been included in this chapter to give the reader a general idea of the background and working conditions of the Montana counselor.

FINDINGS

As described in Chapter III a stratified random sample of counselors was polled for this study. Because of the large variation in school population high schools were divided into four categories based on Montana High School Association recommendations. A representative

sample was taken from each category. A total of one hun- instruments were mailed to those counselors selected. Seventy-three of the instruments were returned. An over- all picture of the sampling procedure is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

The Random Stratified Sampling Procedure Utilized in the Conduct of This Study

School Class	Total No. Counselors	Total No. Sampled	Total Return	Percent Return
AA	72	29	20	70
A	24	14	11	80
B	55	25	18	72
C	81	32	24	75
Totals	232	100	73	73

The investigator felt that a return of seventy- three percent was adequate to insure a representative sample.

As mentioned in Chapter III a coefficient of stability for the Likert portion of the instrument was computed. A selected group of ten graduate students in counseling were administered the instrument twice and a

simple correlation was computed on the scores obtained. There was a two week period between the administrations. The coefficient of stability was +.94.

The findings section now turns to a presentation of the raw data to give the reader a descriptive look at the Montana counselor. This has been done through the utilization of frequency distributions designed around the initial portion of the questionnaire. Such items as counselor education, pupil load and years of experience are examined.

Background Questionnaire Data

The questionnaire covered many areas in order to achieve as descriptive a picture as possible of the Montana counselor. Initially this section examines the degrees held by the counselors surveyed. This was done through the use of a frequency distribution which lists the degrees held and the number of persons in that degree category. This information is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Degrees Attained by Practicing Montana Counselors

Degree	N
Master of Education in Guidance and Counseling	23
Master of Arts in Guidance and Counseling	8
Master of Science in Guidance and Counseling	8
Bachelors Degrees in Various Fields	20
Masters Degrees in Various Fields	12
Fifth Year Education in Various Fields	2
Total	73

From this table it can be seen that thirty-nine counselors possess some type of masters degree in guidance and counseling while thirty-four counselors possess degrees in other areas.

The variable of experience is presented in Table 3 in a manner similar to what was done with counselor education.

Table 3

Years of Counseling Experience for the Counselors Sampled in This Study

Years of Experience	N
One to Three	26
Four to Six	19
Seven to Nine	9
Ten to Twelve	10
Thirteen to Fifteen	5
Sixteen plus	4
Total	73

As can be seen from the table fifty-seven percent of the counselors sampled have less than six years experience as a counselor while thirty-five percent have less than three years of experience.

One of the questions asked was, "Do you fill any other functions in your high school besides that of a counselor?" The additional functions included such things as teacher, coach, principal, superintendent and librarian. Of the seventy-three respondents to the instrument forty-five stated that they do have additional duties and

twenty-eight said they do not. In this same vein the counselors were asked to estimate the amount of time spent counseling if they did have additional duties. Answers ranged from ten percent to eighty percent of the school day. The majority of the counselors that had additional duties spent about fifty percent of their day in guidance and counseling activities. Of the counselors surveyed forty stated that they were full time counselors while thirty-three were part time counselors. Only one of the counselors surveyed worked in more than one high school. Fifty-two of the counselors surveyed were responsible for extra-curricular activities while twenty-one were not. Fifty-seven were certified and sixteen were not. Forty had had a practicum experience and thirty-three had not.

Table 4 shows the pupil load of the counselors who responded to the instrument. At first glance it appears that a large majority of counselors have pupil loads of less than three hundred and fifty students. In examining these data one should be aware of the fact that many of the counselors having a pupil load of less than three hundred and fifty students were part time counselors and in fact spend on the average about fifty percent of their day counseling. Taking this into account would

Table 4

Pupil Load of Counselors Surveyed

Number of Pupils	N
550-650	2
450-549	7
350-449	20
250-349	17
150-249	16
50-149	11
Total	73

double the amount of students that they are responsible for. The end result is that the vast majority of counselors surveyed in this study have responsibility for more than three hundred students.

This concludes the section on the data obtained from the questionnaire. The implications that this has in terms of recommendations by professional organizations and counselor educators is discussed in Chapter V. The findings section now turns to an analysis of the questions posed in Chapter I.

Role Perception of the Montana Counselor

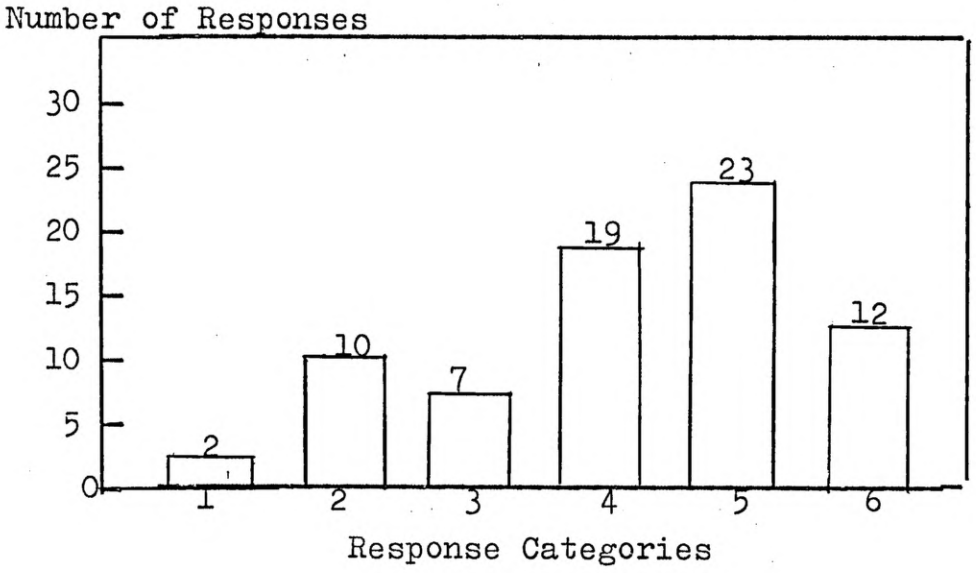
The initial question deals with whether or not the Montana counselor's role perceptions agree with recommendations of counselor educators and professional organizations. The answer to this question was arrived at by presenting each statement followed by a bar graph of the responses to that statement. In this manner each statement is analyzed in terms of how the Montana Counselor sees it versus the recommendations of professional organizations and counselor educators.

The bars on the graphs represent the response categories for the statements which the counselors were asked to respond to on the Likert portion of the instrument. These response categories were described in Chapter III. The height of the bars is determined by the number of counselors responding to the particular category which the bar represents. The data are presented in the following manner. Each of the ten statements from the instrument is presented along with the ideal response to that statement. Bar graphs giving the counselors' responses follow each statement. A short description of the data presented follows each bar graph.

Statement 1: A primary responsibility of the school counselor is personal--emotional counseling with students. The ideal response to this statement is agree strongly-6.

Figure 1

Responses to Statement One

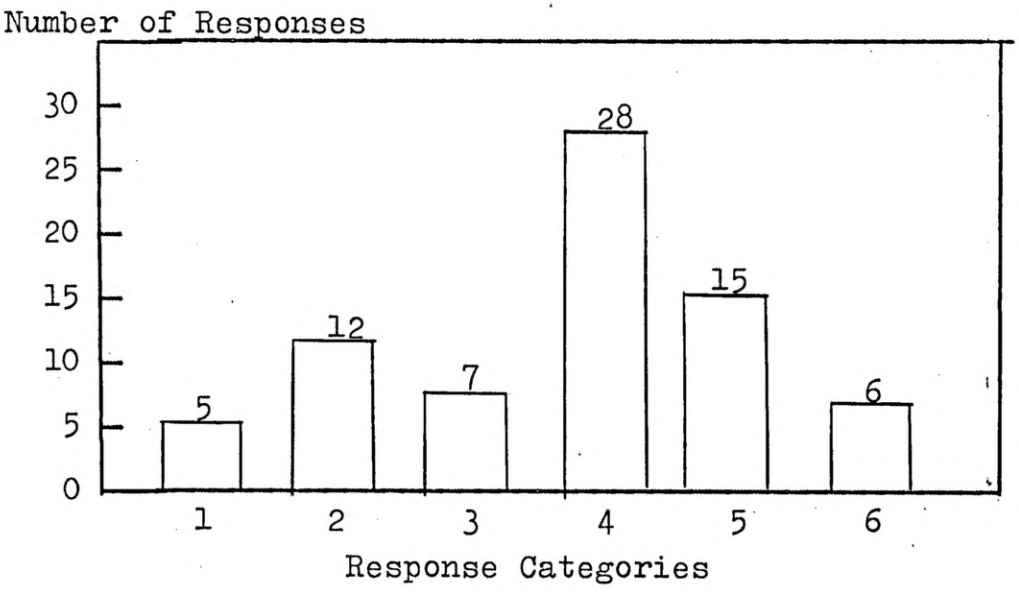


In response to statement one nineteen counselors disagreed in varying degrees. Fifty-four counselors agreed with this statement in varying degrees.

Statement 2: Counselors should be responsible for the development of a school's curriculum. In this case the ideal response is disagree strongly-1.

Figure 2

Responses to Statement Two

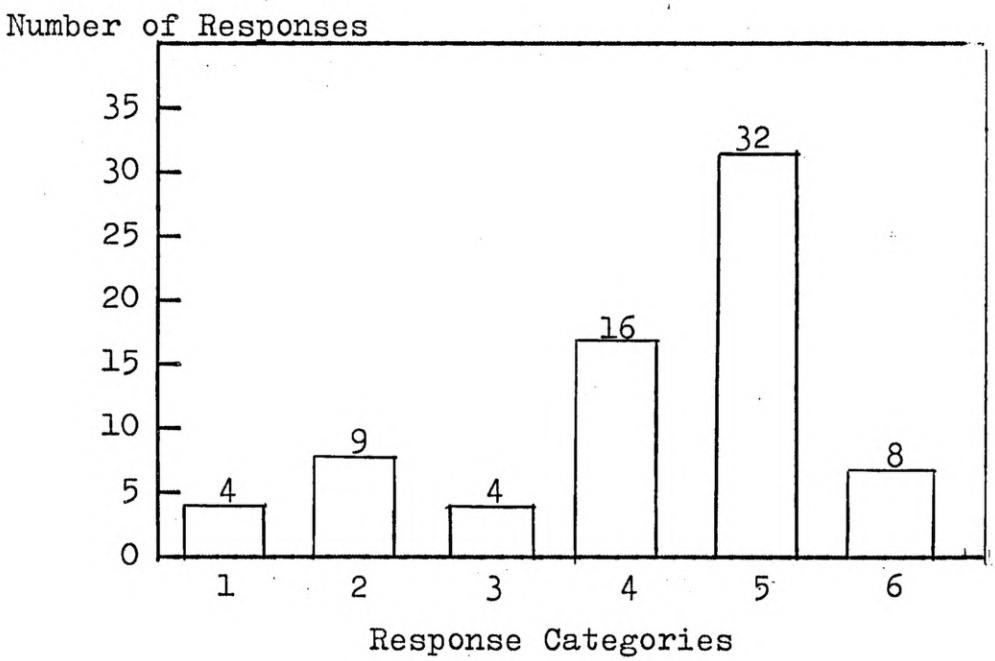


In response to this statement forty-nine of the counselors agreed in varying degrees. Twenty-four of the counselors disagreed in varying degrees.

Statement 3: The school counselor should be responsible for the scheduling of students in classes. The ideal response to statement three was strongly disagree-1.

Figure 3

Responses to Statement Three

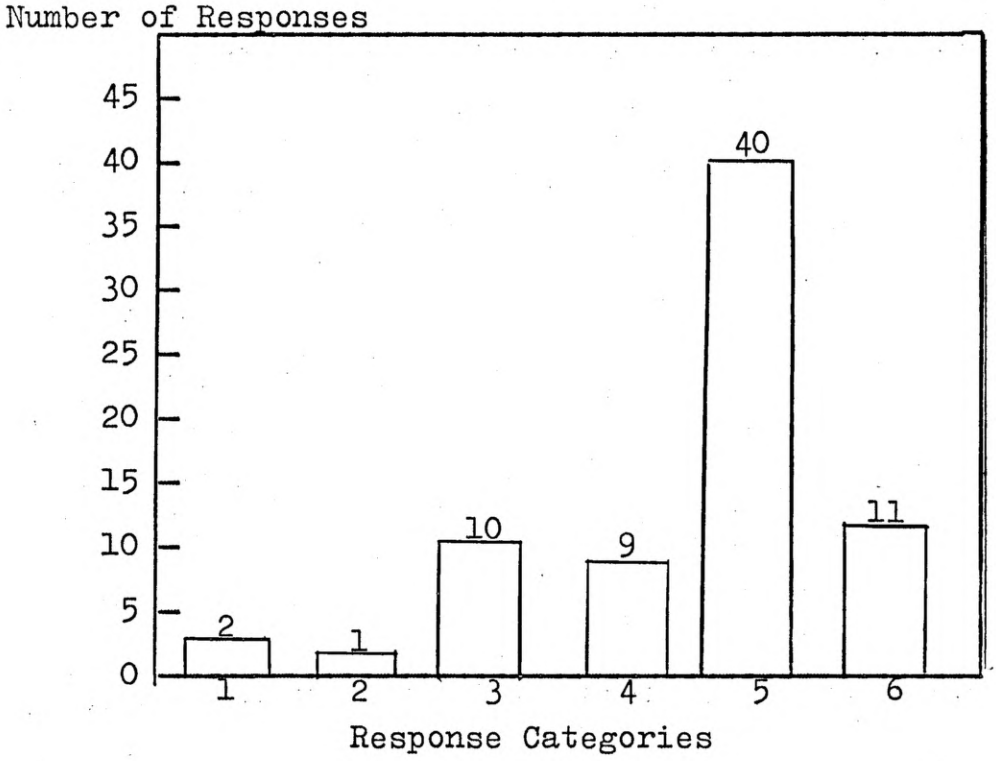


Fifty-six of the counselors responded agreeably to this statement while seventeen did not.

Statement 4: A primary responsibility of the school counselor is educational and vocational counseling. The ideal response to this statement was strongly agree-6.

Figure 4

Responses to Statement Four

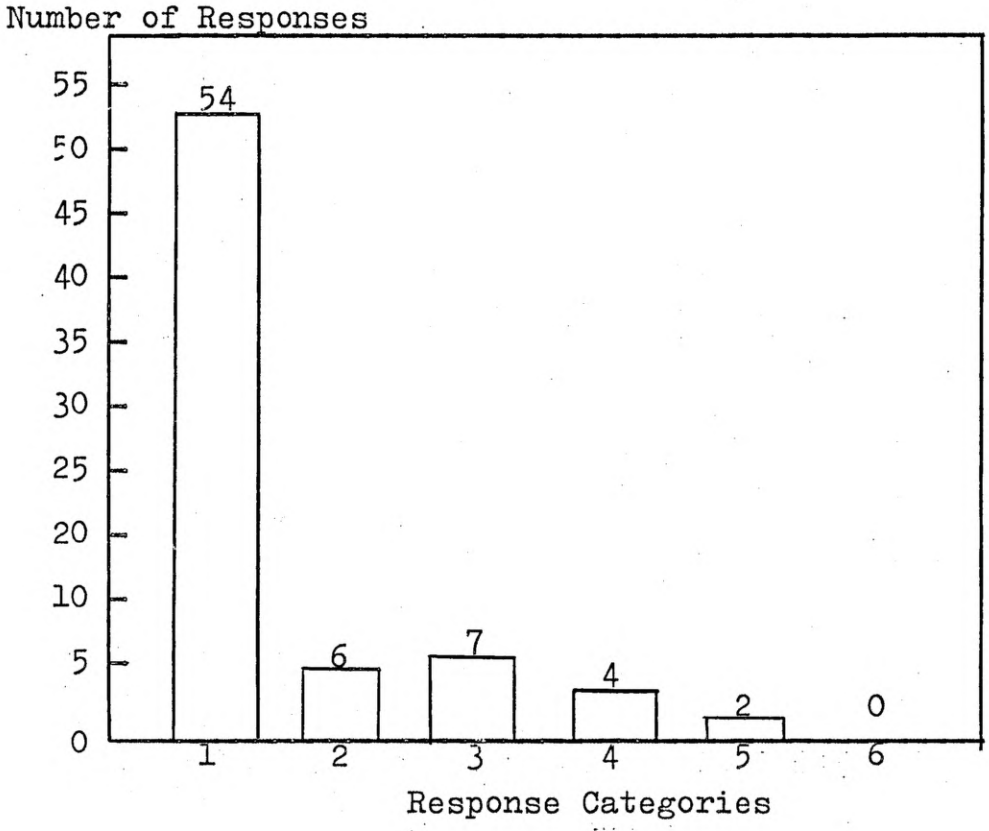


Sixty of the counselors agreed with this statement in varying degrees, and thirteen disagreed.

Statement 5: A counselor should be used as a discipline officer for the school. The ideal response to this statement is strongly disagree-1.

Figure 5

Response to Statement Five

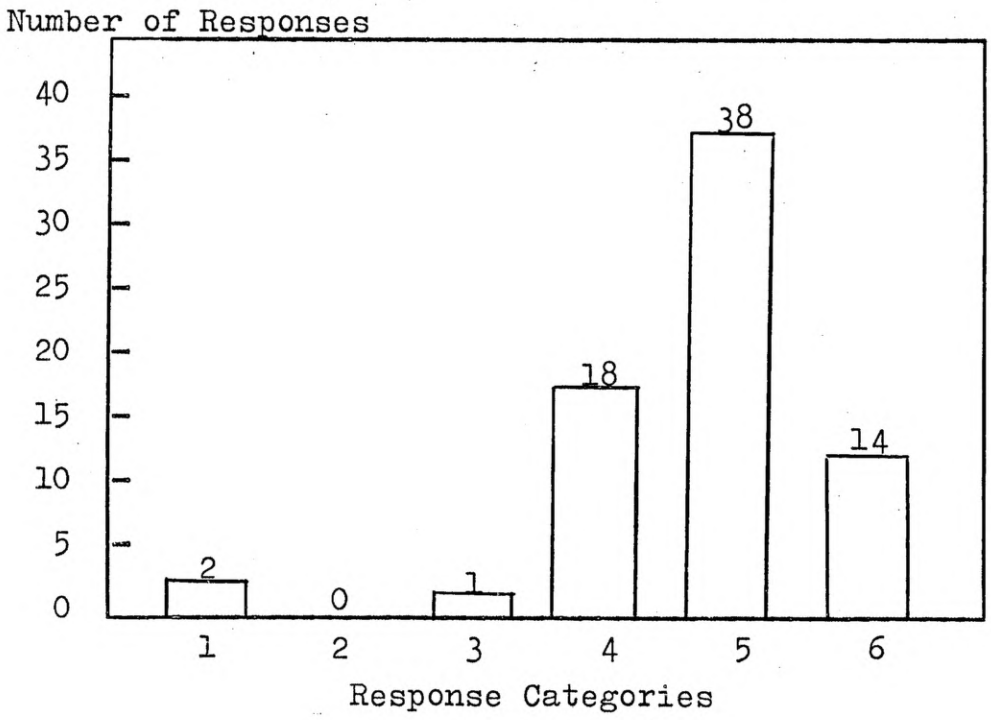


Sixty-seven of the counselors surveyed disagreed with this statement in varying degrees, while six agreed with the statement.

Statement 6: The school counselor should engage in research to determine the effectiveness of his program. The ideal response to this statement was strongly agree-6.

Figure 6

Responses to Statement Six

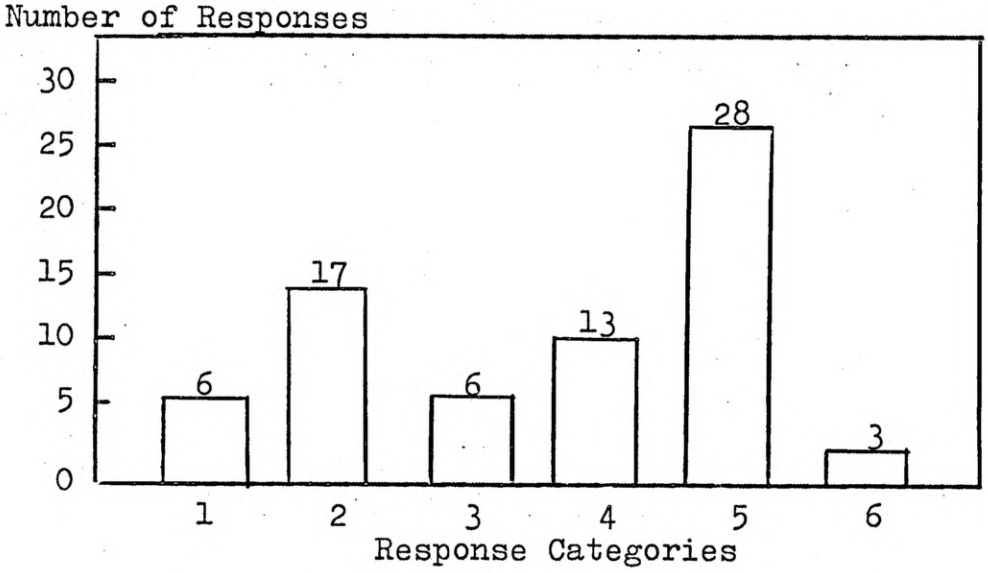


Seventy of the counselors responded agreeably to this statement while three disagreed with the statement.

Statement 7: A ratio of three hundred students to one full time qualified counselor would be adequate to fill the needs of the students. The ideal response to statement seven was strongly agree-6.

Figure 7

Responses to Statement Seven

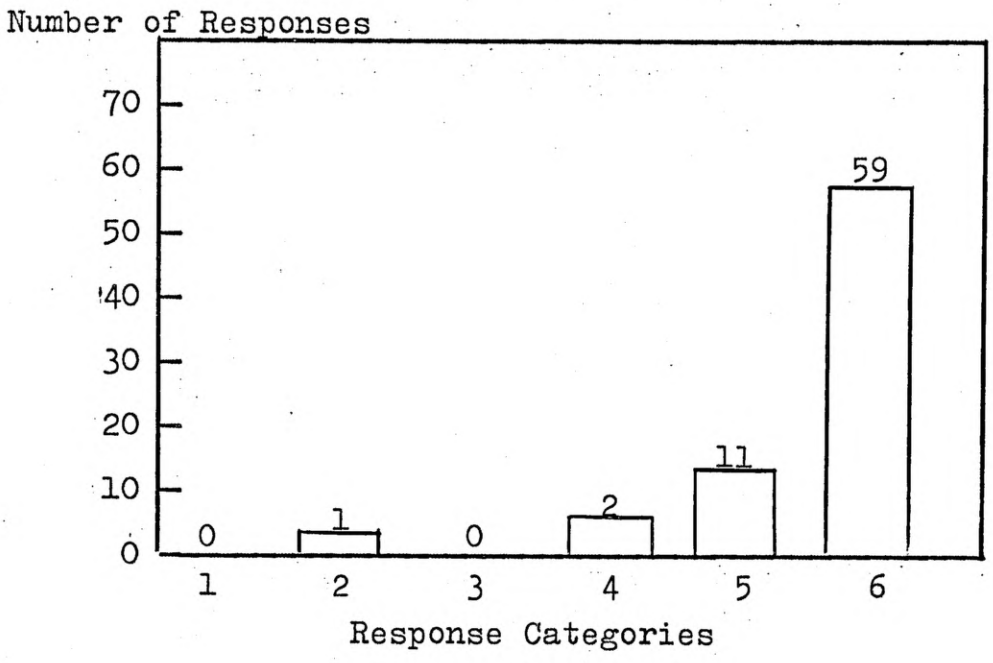


Forty-four of the counselors surveyed agreed with this statement in varying degrees, while twenty-nine disagreed.

Statement 8: Confidentiality is an essential portion of the student counselor relationship. The ideal response to this statement is agree strongly-6.

Figure 8

Responses to Statement Eight

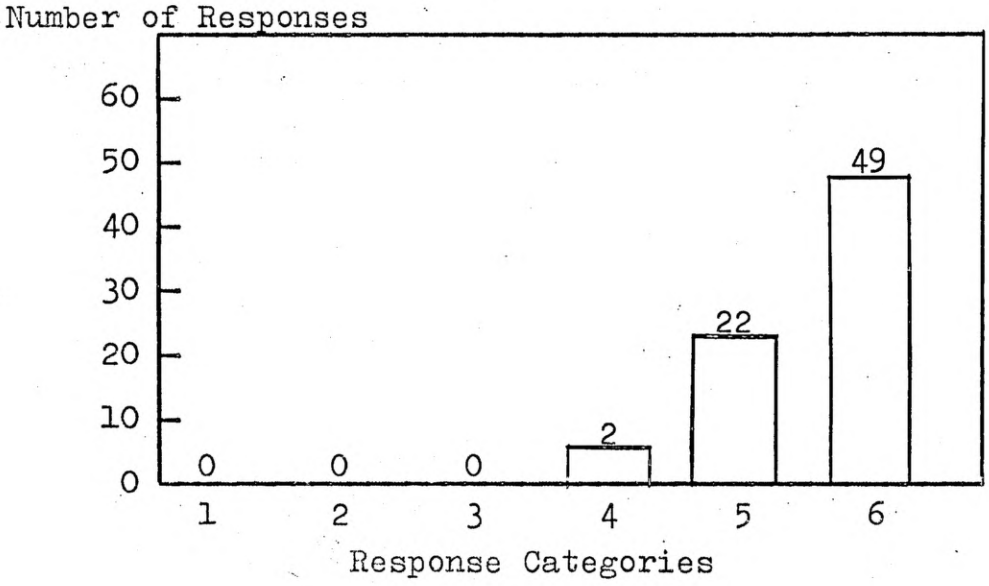


Seventy-two of the respondents agreed with this statement in varying degrees, while one did not agree.

Statement 9: The counselor must work effectively with parents, teachers, and administrators in order to serve the needs of the students. The ideal response to this statement is strongly agree-6.

Figure 9

Responses to Statement Nine

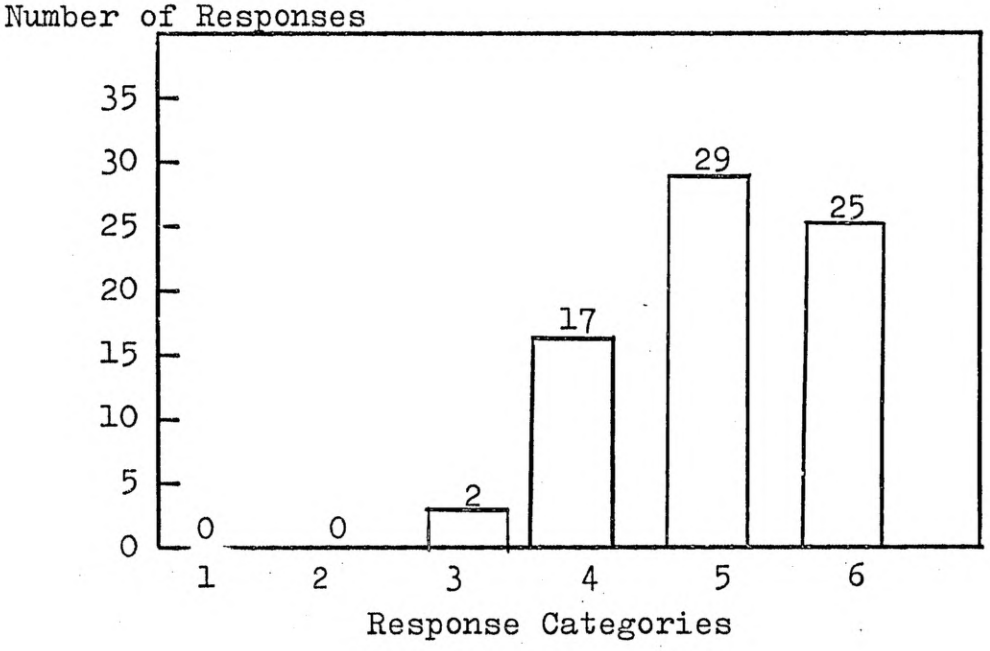


All of the counselors surveyed agreed with this statement in varying degrees.

Statement 10: The counselor should act as a coordinator between school and community to insure maximum utilization of counseling resources. The ideal response to statement ten was strongly agree-6.

Figure 10

Responses to Statement Ten



Seventy-one of the counselors surveyed agreed with this statement in varying degrees, while only two did not agree.

To review the data presented thus far, it can be said that Montana counselors agree with ideal standards to a great extent on six of the ten statements presented. On

one statement they do agree, but not as strongly. On another statement the concensus of opinion does not clearly indicate agreement or disageement. They definitely disagree with ideal standards on two statements.

School Population

Question number two asked if school population has any effect on the manner in which a counselor views his role. In answering this question a frequency distribution was utilized. Quantative scores were obtained for each counselor on the Likert portion of the instrument. These scores were then categorized according to school size using the classes established by the Montana High School Association. The resulting distribution is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Relationship of Likert Scores to School Population

Likert Scores	Class AA Schools	Class A Schools	Class B Schools	Class C Schools
53-55	0	2	0	0
50-52	0	0	1	3
47-49	6	5	2	8
44-46	8	0	7	7
41-43	4	2	5	5
38-40	2	1	3	1
Totals	20	11	18	24

As can be seen from this distribution the size of school that a counselor works in has little effect on the manner in which he perceived his role as measured by the instrument used in this study.

Experience

Question number three asked if the number of years of experience as a counselor has any effect on role perception. In answering this question a frequency distribution was constructed matching Likert scores with years of experience. This distribution is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Likert Scores in Terms of Years of Experience as a Counselor

Likert Scores	Years of Experience					
	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	16+
53-55	1	0	1	0	0	0
50-52	0	3	2	1	0	0
47-49	8	6	1	3	1	1
44-46	9	5	3	1	2	2
41-43	6	3	2	3	2	0
38-40	3	2	0	2	0	0
Totals	27	19	9	10	5	3

As can be seen from this frequency distribution the majority of the Likert scores in each category are clustered in the forty-four to forty-nine range. This would

indicate that experience has little or no effect on role perception as measured by the instrument utilized in this study.

Additional Duties

The fourth question dealt with the effect of additional duties on role perception. In answering this question a frequency distribution matching yes and no responses to the question concerning additional duties with the Likert scores of the respondents. This distribution is presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Likert Scores in Terms of Yes and No Responses to the Question of Additional Duties

Likert Scores	Responses	
	Yes	No
53-55	0	2
50-52	4	1
47-49	11	9
44-46	13	5
38-40	5	2
Totals	44	29

As can be seen the bulk of responses fell in the range between forty-one and forty-nine for each response category indicating that the variable of additional duties has little if any effect on the manner in which the counselor views his role.

Counselor Student Ratio

The American Personnel and Guidance Association recommended that one full time qualified counselor would be adequate to fill the needs of three hundred students. The fifth question posed in Chapter I asked if Montana schools were meeting this requirement. The reader is referred to Table 4 for a frequency distribution of the pupil load of the counselors surveyed. A first glance the assumption could be made that Montana schools are coming close to this ideal norm. However it must be kept in mind that of the seventy-three respondents to the questionnaire thirty-two were part time counselors spending from ten to eighty percent of their time counseling. The majority of these part time counselors spend about one half of the school day in guidance and counseling activities. This would in effect double their pupil load and considerably change the picture presented in table four. This would put sixty percent of

those counselors with a pupil load of less than two hundred and fifty students above the APGA recommendations.

It is also interesting to note the word qualified in the APGA recommendation, remembering that forty-six per cent of the counselors surveyed do not possess a masters degree in the field of guidance and counseling.

Counselor Education

The final question asked if the role perception of the Montana counselor was effected by the education which he had received. In answering this question another frequency distribution was constructed matching the degree categories of the respondents with the Likert scores obtained on the second portion of the questionnaire. This distribution is presented in table 8.

Table 8

Likert Scores in Terms of Counselor Education

Likert Scores	Degrees			
	Masters Counseling	All Bachelors	Other Masters	5th Year
53-55	2	1	0	0
50-52	3	1	1	0
47-49	10	7	3	1
44-46	14	4	3	0
41-43	6	5	5	0
38-40	3	3	0	1
Totals	38	21	12	2

In examining these scores it can be seen that the majority of the scores fall in the forty-one to forty-nine range for all categories. This would indicate that this variable has little or no effect on counselor role perception as measured by the instrument utilized in this study. It is interesting to note the highest scores achieved were by those respondents with degrees in counseling.

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the findings of this study. The data were analyzed through the use of descriptive techniques. The six questions posed in chapter I were answered in terms of the data gathered from the instrument utilized. The data gathered yielded the following answers to those questions:

(1) Is the role of the counselor as perceived by Montana counselors consistent with the recommendations of counselor educators and professional organizations? The counselors surveyed agreed strongly with six of the statements presented on the instrument. They agreed slightly to one statement. Their perception was evenly divided on one other and they disageed strongly with two statements.

(2) Do differences in school population influence the manner in which the practicing counselor sees his role? There was no difference on the Likert scores in relation to school population.

(3) Does experience make a difference in the manner in which a counselor views his role? There was no difference on the Likert scores in relation to experience.

(4) Do additional roles such as coaching, teaching or administration effect the manner in which a

counselor views his role? There was no difference on the Likert scores in relation to additional duties.

(5) Are Montana High Schools following the national recommendations of the APGA concerning a ratio of three hundred students to one full time qualified counselor? Montana high schools are by and large not following this recommendation.

(6) Does the amount of counselor education a practicing counselor has effect his perception of his role? There was no difference on the Likert scores in relation to counselor education.

Other data were presented which did not relate to the above questions. This was designed to give the reader a descriptive overview of the Montana counselor.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine if the Montana counselor viewed his role in the same way as counselor educators and professional organizations viewed it. A random sample of Montana counselors was selected and mailed questionnaires constructed by the investigator. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The initial part was a background questionnaire from which the data gained was used to give a descriptive picture of the Montana counselor. The second portion of the questionnaire contained ten statements taken from APGA and counselor educator recommendations on the role of the counselor. Counselors surveyed were asked to respond to these statements on a six point Likert type scale which varied from agree strongly to disagree strongly. The scores obtained from this portion of the instrument were used to determine if the Montana counselor's role perception agreed with the professional recommendations and also to see if the variables of counselor education, experience, additional duties and school population had any effect on counselor role perception. Five of them dealt with variables already mentioned

and the sixth dealt with counselor-pupil ratio.

The study found that Montana Counselors agreed strongly with professional recommendations on six of the ten statements presented. Two of the statements were disagreed with and on the other two a consensus of agreement or disagreement was not apparent.

The study also found that the variables mentioned above have no discernable effect on counselor role perception as measured by the instrument utilized in this study.

Concerning the question of student counselor ratio the study found that Montana schools are not meeting the professional standards, both in terms of the ratio of students to counselors and having full time qualified counselors.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study are not consistent in some respects with the findings of the literature reviewed during the course of this study. It would seem from the results that the Montana counselor closely agrees with professional recommendations in terms of what his role should be. From this one could conclude that the counselor education programs are doing an adequate job in terms of teaching the future counselor what to do in the field.

A very large question that this study left unanswered is, are the counselors actually doing what they feel is right? The review of literature points out that they are not. One could conclude that the knowledge of what they should do is present but that obstacles not unearthed by this study are preventing practicing counselors from implementing this role definition.

The descriptive picture of the Montana counselor brought to light some very interesting findings. Of the seventy-three respondents forty-five stated that they have duties other than guidance and counseling activities. If this large a percentage of counselors are burdened with extra duties in addition to guidance and counseling one must wonder how much counseling they accomplish and how effective it is. Also fifty-two of the counselors polled were responsible for various types of extra-curricular activities. Based on these two results the conclusion that the full time practicing counselor is not an integral part of many Montana schools would seem to be a valid assumption.

The data presented on counselor education including whether or not the counselors had a practicum experience also yield some rather astonishing results. Forty-six percent of the counselors surveyed do not have a Master

degree in counseling. Forty-three percent of the counselors surveyed did not have a practicum experience. From these results the investigator concluded that a large portion of the sample was not qualified to counsel. The investigator is not insinuating that a masters degree or practicum experience automatically makes a person a good counselor, however, counseling is a skill that requires a certain amount of knowledge and practical experience. It would seem to the investigator that the well being of Montana high school students is to a large degree in the hands of people who have neither the experience or knowledge necessary to be a qualified counselor.

The basic issue involved in role definition is the professionalization of counseling. With results such as these obtained in this study the conclusion that the Montana counselor has a great deal of work to do before counseling is recognized as a profession seems to be valid.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has given rise to some very intriguing questions which point to new directions in research of this type. The investigator felt that the following recommendations for further research would lead to a better understanding of the problem of role definition:

(1) Since there is agreement between Montana counselors and professional organizations on role perception it would seem that the Montana Counselor knows his role. Possible new research could identify problem areas that the counselor faces which prevent him from following an established role definition.

(2) Another area which could be explored is the actual usage of time by the counselor in his various activities.

(3) With the large number of people not having masters degrees or practicum experience it seems that the subject of certification would be a fertile area for future research.

SUMMARY

A review of the procedural aspects of this study was presented in the initial portion of this chapter. The findings of this study were then examined and some conclusions were reached based on these findings. Recommendations for further research were presented.

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LIST OF SELECTED REFERENCES

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APPENDIX

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana 59715

May 14, 1972

Fellow Counselor:

As part of my counselor preparation experience here at Montana State University I am conducting a survey of Montana counselors to determine how you view your role as a school counselor. Since school counseling is a service to the general public the concern of this study is in making that service the best possible. It is hoped that the results of this study will give Montana counselors a better look at themselves as well as give counselor educators some ideas on the effectiveness of their counselor preparation programs.

The instrument I am asking you to fill out is divided into two sections. The initial portion is a background questionnaire which I will use to give me a general overall picture of the Montana Counselor. The second portion is an opinion part designed to evoke your ideas on just what the role of the counselor should be. How you really feel about these items presented is what I am looking for here.

The results of this study will be presented as my professional paper. I do plan to make mini-copies of the data gathered and if you wish to receive a copy please check the appropriate box at the bottom of this page.

I would like to stress that your responses to this instrument will be kept strictly confidential. Each instrument is coded. This is done for my benefit to aid in keeping a tally of the returns.

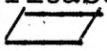
The instrument will take about fifteen minutes to complete. You will find enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope. I would greatly appreciate it if you could get this in the return mail by May 30th.

Your comments and criticisms are greatly appreciated. A page is provided for them at the end of the instrument. I

would sincerely like to thank you for your time and effort and can assure you that it was time well spent.

Sincerely,

Ted H. Murray

Please check this box if you desire a copy of the results. 

In this portion of the instrument please answer all questions as completely as you can.

1. What is the student population of your high school?____

2. How many counselors are employed in your high school? Please include yourself.
   Full Time_____
   Part Time_____

3. In your school system are you responsible for: (check the appropriate categories)
   (a) The entire student body (K-12)_____
   (b) The high school only_____
   (c) A specific high school class_____
   (d) A specific number of students_____
   (e) Other, please specify _____
   _____

4. Please indicate the total number of students that you are directly responsible for._____

5. Do you have responsibilities for counseling in more than one high school.
   Yes_____
   No_____

6. How many years of experience do you have as a counselor?
   _____

7. Do you fill any other functions in your high school besides that of counselor?
   Yes_____
   No_____

8. If the answer to the above question is yes, please specify the additional functions.
   Coach_____ Principal_____ Librarian_____
   Teacher_____ Superintendent_____ Other_____

9. If you have additional functions please estimate the percentage of time you spend in guidance and counseling activities. _____%

10. Are you an advisor for any extra-curricular activities?
    Yes_____
    No_____

11. If the answer to the above question is yes please specify the activities. _____

_____

12. Are you certified as a counselor by the State Board of Education?
Yes_____
No_____

13. Please check the degrees that you hold and note the area of concentration in which the degree was obtained.

___B. S. in_____	___M. Ed. in_____
___B. A. in_____	___Ph. D. in_____
___M. A. in_____	___Ed. D. in_____
___M. S. in_____	___Other _____

14. Did your counselor training program include a practicum experience?
Yes_____
No_____

In the following portion of the instrument statements are presented followed by a series of numbers from one to six. The numbers correspond to the following categories of agreement and disagreement:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Agree Slightly	Agree	Agree Strongly
1	2	3	4	5	6

Please circle that number which corresponds to your feelings about the statement presented.

1. A primary responsibility of the school counselor is personal-emotional counseling with students.

1 2 3 4 5 6

2. Counselors should be responsible for the development of a school's curriculum.

1 2 3 4 5 6

3. The school counselor should be responsible for the scheduling of students in classes.

1 2 3 4 5 6

4. A primary responsibility of the school counselor is educational and vocational counseling.

   1 2 3 4 5 6

5. A counselor should be utilized as a discipline officer for the school.

   1 2 3 4 5 6

6. The school counselor should engage in research to determine the effectiveness of his program.

   1 2 3 4 5 6

7. A ratio of three hundred students to one full-time qualified counselor would be adequate to fill the needs of the students.

   1 2 3 4 5 6

8. Confidentiality is an essential portion of a student-counselor relationship.

   1 2 3 4 5 6

9. The counselor must work effectively with parents, teachers, and administrators in order to serve the needs of the students.

   1 2 3 4 5 6

10. The counselor should act as a coordinator between school and community to insure maximum utilization of counseling resources.