



Montana school counselors : a voice from the field  
by Mary Lynn McCroskey

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education  
Montana State University  
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Abstract:

Counselors in public schools face an increasing variety of job definitions. Their activities are extensive and include interacting with students and various agencies within the community. Historically, counselors have assumed responsibilities and duties outside the scope of their training. While counselors in the field are struggling with the rapid changes, counselor educators are rethinking the changing needs in counselor education. To develop sound training programs for counselors and ongoing professional development activities, practicing school counselors and counselor educators need to professionally interact to define the role of both the counselor and the university educator. If those responsible for the profession do not take leadership in defining the direction of the field, it certainly will be imposed upon them by outside forces.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was two fold. In the first phase, survey data were analyzed to describe (a) what duties comprise a Montana school counselor's job and (b) how counselors prioritize these duties. In the second phase of the study, qualitative data were used to describe the recommendations from the Montana school counselors for the state's counselor education programs.

Almost 90% of the counselors responding to this study received their training through Montana counselor education programs. Almost every respondent reported receiving additional training in specific areas related to the needs of the students in their communities. The majority of the counselors worked full time and engaged in a wide variety of activities. While recent studies have found that school counselors are more effective in group work and in classroom guidance and consultation than in individual counseling, over 40% of their time was spent with individuals. Crisis response was more prevalent than pro-active planned counseling programs. The counselors and counselor educators need to continue to facilitate the growth of school counseling and to enhance the abilities of the school counselor to meet the rapidly changing needs in our society.

Adult education principles and practices were an important factor in this study. The counselors became self-directed learners and the counselors and counselor educators have begun a dialog to promote rational thought and action.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
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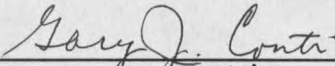
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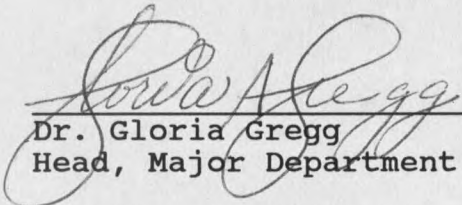
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This thesis has been read by each member of the graduate committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

  
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## ABSTRACT

Counselors in public schools face an increasing variety of job definitions. Their activities are extensive and include interacting with students and various agencies within the community. Historically, counselors have assumed responsibilities and duties outside the scope of their training. While counselors in the field are struggling with the rapid changes, counselor educators are rethinking the changing needs in counselor education. To develop sound training programs for counselors and ongoing professional development activities, practicing school counselors and counselor educators need to professionally interact to define the role of both the counselor and the university educator. If those responsible for the profession do not take leadership in defining the direction of the field, it certainly will be imposed upon them by outside forces.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was two fold. In the first phase, survey data were analyzed to describe (a) what duties comprise a Montana school counselor's job and (b) how counselors prioritize these duties. In the second phase of the study, qualitative data were used to describe the recommendations from the Montana school counselors for the state's counselor education programs.

Almost 90% of the counselors responding to this study received their training through Montana counselor education programs. Almost every respondent reported receiving additional training in specific areas related to the needs of the students in their communities. The majority of the counselors worked full time and engaged in a wide variety of activities. While recent studies have found that school counselors are more effective in group work and in classroom guidance and consultation than in individual counseling, over 40% of their time was spent with individuals. Crisis response was more prevalent than pro-active planned counseling programs. The counselors and counselor educators need to continue to facilitate the growth of school counseling and to enhance the abilities of the school counselor to meet the rapidly changing needs in our society.

Adult education principles and practices were an important factor in this study. The counselors became self-directed learners and the counselors and counselor educators have begun a dialog to promote rational thought and action.

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Background

School counselors face increasing demands on the job. In the past a counselor sat in an office and waited for a student (a) who wished to request post-secondary educational or vocational information or (b) who needed help dealing with a crisis. The role was considered one of providing ancillary services. Such ancillary services were then and still are defined as non-essential services in a budget deficit situation such as education now faces (Anderson & Reiter, 1995, p. 276). School funding and financial well-being are decided by a political process involving a variety of entities from the state legislature to the local school boards. The voting population must understand and value what it receives for their tax dollars educationally. If it does not, local mill levies are defeated, and educational programs are cut. During periods of reduction, non-essential services are the first to be eliminated.

State legislative funding has been reduced in recent years creating a budget deficit in education. At the same time, the roles of counselors today have been expanded in

many directions to include class scheduling, secretarial duties, discipline, testing, and administrative duties in order to justify their position to the public (Remy & Albright, 1988; Wilgus & Shelly, 1988). This expansion of the role description has resulted in the lack of a clear definition or direction for the school counselor. This has left school counselors attempting to define their roles while still meeting a myriad of needs that may or may not be considered as "guidance counselor" (Anderson & Reiter, 1995; Napierkowski & Parsons, 1995).

The role expansion for counselors has come at a time when students' individual as well as collective needs have taken a quantum leap. The spectrum of a school counselor's activities are now extensive (Anderson & Reiter, 1995). The activities include but are not limited to dealing with (a) the age of technology, (b) fragmented family systems, (c) inclusion practices for emotionally disturbed and developmentally delayed children, (d) drugs, (e) gangs, (f) suicides, (g) pregnancy, and (h) convicted felons. All too often these issues surface in volatile situations involving student crisis. The activities also include dealing extensively with community agencies and in post-secondary planning. All of these items and issues need to be dealt with in a nurturing, caring, and timely manner in accordance with the legal and ethical guidelines established by the American Counseling Association and the American

School Counselors' Association. Administrators, teachers, parents, and students look to the counselors to solve problems or "fix it." Yet, for many counselors, this spectrum of tasks is so overwhelming that professional burnout occurs rapidly.

Historically, counselors have assumed responsibilities and duties that are outside the scope of their training (Burtnett, 1993). Perhaps because of their instincts as helpers, counselors have willingly assisted inundated principals by accepting "add-on" duties which are administrative in nature (Burtnett, 1993, p. 51). The nature of the counselor and the counseling role has been that of supporter, facilitator, and nurturer rather than leader; therefore, counselors have relied on others for direction in defining both their roles and the nature of their programs (Burtnett, 1993).

While counselors in the field are struggling with the rapid societal changes and children's developmental needs, counselor educators throughout the Montana university system have been questioning how best to meet these changing needs within a counselor education program. In order to develop sound programs and practices within the university system, school counselors and university educators need to professionally interact to define the counselor and the university educator roles. David Schon (1983) referred to

this process as the development of "reflective practitioners."

### Counselor: Current Role and Status

There is ongoing controversy in regard to the definition of the role of a school counselor. Originally counseling was a part of the School Guidance Program. In 1963, the Iowa State Department of Education defined counseling and guidance as follows.

Guidance is that part of the total educational program designed to foster maximal development of individual potentialities through providing school wide assistance to youth in the choices, decisions, and adjustments each must make as he moves toward maturity. (Hoyt, 1993, p. 270)

Counseling represents that part of the guidance program where major decisions of the pupil should be made. . . . [It] involves a relationship between counselor and pupil which allows for expression of pupil values, knowledge, attitudes, and feelings. . . . The "curriculum" of counseling is the pupil. . . . In addition to being . . . a relationship, counseling is also properly viewed as a process. (p. 271)

In using these definitions as a basis for discussion, it is evident that counseling has been considered only an aspect of a guidance program and not the entire program. Guidance programs by definition need to be comprehensive and require the cooperation of many entities (Edwards & Foster, 1995; Epstein, 1995).

In the past, the role of the school counselor has been thought of as "a primary provider of direct services in a closed system providing individual counseling, the person

fulfilling that role has been viewed as an 'ex-teacher'" (Welch & McCarroll, 1993, p. 48). The counselor was seen as a quasi-administrator or teacher; the "line and staff" model is evident; and a limited degree of power, which may be either perceived or real, is a political necessity.

### Counselor Certification

To become a certified school counselor in Montana, an individual must complete a master's level program in counseling. The training program must incorporate the course work stipulated by the state agency for public instruction in each particular state for counselor certification. Periodic program reviews are conducted by accrediting entities, and a college must pass the review in order to confer the degree. It is understood the course work provided will meet the state agency's requirements for endorsement as a school counselor.

In Montana, colleges provide the course work for a degree, but the state Office of Public Instruction is the only body that grants an endorsement allowing one to be employed and to practice in a public school setting as a school counselor. The colleges and universities cannot add or delete required course work without the approval of the State Board of Regents, the current governing board of the Montana University System.

The Montana State Office of Public Instruction decides what requirements need to be met for an individual to be endorsed as a school counselor. A major change in the past year (1995) in Montana concerns the teaching requirement. In the past, candidates were required to have taught a minimum of three years. That requirement has been deleted. In light of the changing state requirements, the counselor educators are reassessing course offerings and program requirements leading to a degree as a school counselor. Endorsement requirements from the Montana Office of Public Instruction are broadly categorized as (a) K-12 (kindergarten through 12th grade) guidance counselor or (b) a specialist endorsement (e.g., school psychologist with counselor training).

#### Problem Statement

In the late 1800s guidance programs were linked with vocational education. Today counseling is an evolving specialty (Paisley & Borders, 1995). Research has become the driving force in restructuring counselor education. Research is needed to establish some working guidelines for the professionals involved in the guidance and counseling profession and the process of training the counselors of the future. The need for a new paradigm has become critically important, and a review of the literature has exposed new ideas, needs, and role definitions (Paisley & Borders,

1995). To meet this challenge, counselor educators at MSU--Northern developed a survey of Montana school counselors as a first step in an attempt to identify typical activities representative of Montana counselors. The objective was to have school counselors describe their work. Once the trends have been determined, the state requirements for endorsement can be incorporated into the university course requirements. This application of the research results is an important final step to utilize the collective reflections of the profession. In the world of education today, it is not enough to merely report research findings; they need to be brought to life through implementation (Linkenbach, 1995, p. 17).

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was twofold. In the first phase survey data were used to describe (a) what duties comprise a Montana school counselor's job at each of the three levels of elementary school, middle school, and high school and (b) how counselors prioritize these duties. In the second phase of the study, qualitative data were used to describe the recommendations from the Montana school counselors for the state's counselor education programs.

Through the collection and analysis of these data, counselor educators may restructure existing counselor training programs to include information considered

relevant. However, before program changes can be made, counselor educators must synthesize the survey information with state policies and regulations, American Counselor Association policies, American School Counseling Association policies, and their own knowledge and training to develop the most efficacious system of delivering the training necessary to produce school counselors with the skills to meet the needs of students and communities today.

### Research Questions

Data for the study were collected from two general sources: the Montana school counselors and the counselor educators within the state. The research questions for the survey data from the Montana school counselors were as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of the typical Montana school counselor?
2. What are the demographics of the various school districts employing counselors?
3. What are the various services provided by counselors including group work, classroom guidance programs, special needs students, assessment and appraisal, clerical duties, community service, and activities directed toward high risk students and youth violence?
4. What are the areas of greatest concern for counselors today?

5. What activities and programs are used by counselors to deal with these concerns?
6. What suggestions are there for counselor educators to better prepare counselors for the real world.

Data collection from the counselor educators involved action groups at the Montana fall counselor conference in Bozeman to discuss counselor education. These action groups addressed the research questions:

1. What are the research implications of the survey results from the Montana school counselors?
2. What recommendations do the counselor educators have for implementing the results of the survey of Montana school counselors?
3. What is an appropriate time line for implementing the results of the survey of Montana school counselors and the recommendation of the counselor educators?

#### Limitation

The School Counseling Survey (see Appendix A) research was originally funded by Montana State University-Northern through an Achievement Grant. The research team of Mary McCroskey, Shirley Watts, and Jerry Kiser formed the instrument and initiated data collection.

Because this was a project initiated for institutional use, the research was limited by the original means in which the instrument was conceptualized and constructed.

Therefore, after the initial data collection, the design for this study was expanded through the use of action groups to include the theory to practice model (Linkenbach, 1995) to more thoroughly describe the counseling situation in Montana.

### Operational Definitions

Action Groups: Discussion groups of counselors and counselor educators used to review the initial findings of the study.

American Disabilities Act Section 504: 504 is legislation to address the special needs a person may have through education or any other means to address any condition physical or mental that interferes with an individual's learning.

Assessment and Appraisal: Any method or instrument used to measure a student's achievements, to predict abilities, or to illuminate interests. Included in the area are personality assessments, behavior inventories, clinical interviews, vocational assessments, and academic achievement. Counselors require training in the use of all these instruments.

CARE: A K-12 Chemical Awareness/Responsive Education program in the school setting.

Child Study Team: A group whose purpose is to identify a child with special needs. The personnel required on a CST is a school administrator or designee, a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, a school psychologist, and the child's parent(s) or legal guardian. Others may be present such as more regular education teachers, a speech therapist, and occupational therapist, or any school or community specialist.

Classroom Guidance Programs: A planned activity or discussion to be implemented within a classroom setting. It is similar to group work, but the topic changes to meet the needs of the classroom. Topics may include such things as friends, self-esteem, peer relations, and crisis intervention.

Clerical Duties: Specific duties that could be managed by secretarial support staff and do not require the advanced degree that school counselors have earned. Examples of clerical duties for school counselors include scheduling classes, determining weekly sports eligibility status, scheduling parent teacher conferences, and checking credits to meet senior graduation requirements.

Community Service: Any community based activity that is not necessarily initiated by the school. Examples include organizing and supervising activities for agencies related to child protection team, church, law enforcement, human resource and development, and Big Brother/Big Sister.

Counselor Educator: Person who teaches course work in a college setting necessary to be granted the graduate degree required for becoming certified as a school counselor. They may or may not have been school counselors themselves.

DARE: Drug Awareness Responsive Education, a national police program for the elementary schools conducted by the local police.

Fragmented Families or Dysfunctional Families: A family system that is suffering from non-bonding of the family members and often that is affected by such problems as substance abuse, divorce, poverty, unemployment, and personality disorder. Such a family system is not able to provide an accepting atmosphere for children or adults and can inhibit normal mental, emotional, academic, and social growth development. The family units cannot nurture self-reliance or promote the maximum potential contained in each family member.

Gifted and Talented: One of many terms used to identify students with a higher than average academic ability. Technically this is an I.Q. which is two standard deviations above the mean or 130.

Group Work: A number of students meeting together with a counselor for the expressed purpose of discussion of a specific topic such as grief, divorce, or drug and alcohol.

High Risk Student: The term "high risk" or "at risk" has many definitions but in general is used to describe a student at risk of dropping out of school and of engaging in self-destructive behavior. The U.S. Center

for Disease Control and Prevention established a system to help monitor the behaviors that influence health and social problems. As stated in the Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (1995) published by the Montana Office of Public Instruction, the identified behaviors that put students at health risk are:

- (1) behaviors that result in unintentional and intentional injuries;
- (2) tobacco use;
- (3) alcohol and drug abuse;
- (4) sexual behaviors that result in HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancies;
- (5) physical inactivity;
- (6) dietary behaviors. (p. 2)

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): A detailed educational plan for an individual student. It is considered a legal document when it has been agreed to and signed by the members of the child study team, school personnel, and by the student's parent or legal guardian. The Individualized Education Plan consists of measurable goals stated in academic or behavioral objectives. The following is an example of an academic objective which might be included in an IEP: The student will be able to correctly complete 85% of the spelling list each week. The spelling list will consist of 20 words each week and will represent a 3rd grade level spelling ability. An example of a behavioral objective for an IEP is as follows: The student will decrease the response of hitting peers who are teasing him by 80% in the next nine weeks as measured through classroom observation tallies.

Office of Public Instruction (O.P.I.): The Montana state agency empowered to certify personnel to be employed by a school district.

Public Law 94.142: The Education for all Handicapped Children law passed in 1975. The act does the following: (a) emphasizes that free and appropriate public education has to be made available for all children; (b) once a child is identified as handicapped, an individual education plan must be developed and reviewed annually; (c) the education must take place in the "least restrictive environment"; and (d) parents have the right to not only participate in the placement process but also to challenge decisions made by the child study team.

Resiliency: The ability of children who live in high-risk contexts such as chronic poverty or parental abuse to develop positive developmental outcomes.

School Counselor: Person hired by a school district to fulfill the role described by the state office of public instruction, the school board, the superintendent and the principal. Generally deals with the scholastic advancement, the social, and the emotional health of the students.

Special Needs Students: Any student identified by a child study team following an evaluation conducted by certified diagnostic personnel within a school setting who requires an Individualized Education Plan to meet specific academic or social emotional needs or who is identified by a similar process as Gifted and Talented. Identifying criteria have been standardized by the state of Montana Office of Public Instruction, but local districts may further refine the criteria.

Youth Violence: Any action taken by a school age child resulting in personal or property damage. Such violence often carries legal ramifications involving misdemeanor or felony charges for assault, vandalism, malicious mischief, and other crimes.

## CHAPTER 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

School CounselingDemographics

At the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in New York, Valerie E. Lee of the University of Michigan School of Education argued, "Students learn less in small schools" (Lee & Smith, 1995). With that statement in mind, one could conclude that Montana does not have a prime learning atmosphere. At the other end of the spectrum, learning is hindered in schools that are too large. High school populations should fall into the range of 600-900 students according to Lee's research. Another source (Worzbyt & Zook, 1992) discovered that nearly three quarters of the nation's school districts are classified as small. Nearly 60% of the schools are rural, which means that at least three quarters of the students enrolled in U.S. schools live in towns with fewer than 2,500 people or in unincorporated areas.

Over half of Montana's high schools have less than 150 students, and many have less than 100 students. There are 13 schools with populations over 1,100 students, and Flathead

and Great Falls high schools have slightly over 2,000 students. While Lee's research was to identify the variety and type of learning available across the country due to populations of schools, it serves to illustrate a point of numbers. How well may a counselor get to know the student body in the larger schools? If counseling is a relationship built on knowledge and trust, how can this be fostered in larger settings? Conversely, is there such a thing as knowing too much about the students so that they may shy away from a counselor in a small setting in an attempt to keep the adult world at arm's length. Based upon Lee's research, Montana has only 6 schools out of 182 where optimum learning is taking place.

Most Montanans would disagree with Lee's conclusions, but the number of students and the ratio of counselors to students are a factor for counselor effectiveness. Bandura's (1977) concept of self-efficacy was used in a survey of school counselors with the demographics of school climate and counselor roles as the issue. In advantageous counseling situations, school principals provide support for a counseling program and for the counselor (Borders & Drury, 1992; Sutton & Fall, 1995). In addition, the goals of the counseling program are clearly stated and the counselor and the administration have a shared ownership of its implementation (Sutton & Fall, 1995). Counselors perform most efficiently with staff, administration, students, and

the public when everyone is aware of the goals and objectives of a counseling program.

In Montana this administrative support is absolutely necessary because one counselor may be providing services for more than one school or is separated from others doing the same job by great distances (Worzbyt & Zook, 1992). It is important for professional growth and productive use of time to be able to network with others. It becomes imperative for the ones involved to aid and support each other (Downing, Pierce, & Woodruff, 1993).

#### Training and Certification

A master's degree in guidance and counseling or from a related mental health field with counseling as the focus is required to become a school counselor. Many colleges and universities offer master's degrees in education or a master of science degree in health and human development with a counseling option. Within the master's program, the counseling degrees can carry an emphasis such as Mental Health Counseling, Marriage and Family Counseling or Therapy, or School Counseling. Training programs for counselors ranges from a 48 semester credit graduate program to a 60 semester hour graduate program depending on the college or university program guidelines. Classes are usually three semester credits per class, so a guidance and counseling degree may be granted with 16 to 20 classes.

After achieving their degrees, school counselors may take a national examination which can result in the title of professional school counselor. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is an accrediting body which requires a 60 semester credit program including course work, practicum, and a minimum of 1,000 hours supervised internship experiences. It also requires a minimum of two years of study. A practicum requires a student to practice counseling skills under extremely close supervision. It is often accomplished through practicing with peers, using video and audio taping. Internships are on-the-job training at a school site. Some programs with a 48 semester hour requirement require 300 to 600 hours of a supervised internship at a public school site. The supervision is provided by the school counselor and a university supervisor. This information is available in any four-year college or university bulletin offering a counseling degree.

The course work required also varies from one Montana university setting to another; the focus is on the basic course work typical for a school counselor degree. Common course work includes subject matter dealing with counseling theory and its implementation, human growth and development, counseling children, legal and ethical concerns, and K-12 counseling programs. Courses are required in statistics, research, assessment and appraisal, and individual and group

counseling. Developing an understanding of the variety of programs offered and the types of courses required is important. A beginning school counselor is just that, beginning. Many beginning professionals understand it is important to remain current with information in the literature and continue to learn by attending workshops, seminars, and networking throughout their career (Anderson & Reiter, 1995, p. 269).

### Specialized Training

Formats used for specialized training range from an hour long presentation to a week long seminar to a regular college course. Professionals avail themselves of the opportunity to reflect on their professional growth (Schon, 1987) and seek continuing education opportunities to further enhance and refine skills previously learned (Mezirow, 1990). Professionals in the field of counseling today, who are being faced with such a myriad of problems in the school setting, often choose to further their knowledge base with specialized training. The knowledge is then processed to strengthen and enable the counselor to help the student in the most efficient manner.

School counselors have the opportunity during professional meetings to gather information regarding a variety of techniques to work with students in the school setting today. One such special training area is brief

therapy, which is also called brief counseling (Bonnington, 1993; Bruce, 1995; deShazer, 1985). While individual counseling continues to be necessary in a school setting (Myrick, 1993), the time becomes limited with all the other services a counselor provides (Borders & Drury, 1992). Brief counseling is short-term, solution focused, and an appropriate technique to benefit many students through its application. Students become empowered to help themselves (Bruce, 1995).

Peer mediation has become another technique which is used in managing a counselor's time. The counselor requires specialized training in the techniques required to provide the training for the students. The students selected to receive the peer mediation training are identified leaders in the school and among their peers. They receive training in listening skills and conflict resolution. Students who have an area of disagreement or a conflict are able to enlist aid of the peer mediation team. If a resolution cannot be reached, the problem is then referred to the counselor. In this manner, students are empowered to accept the responsibility of their own actions and are able to develop intrinsic motivations. This in turn can become a lifelong empowerment for satisfying their own needs (Myrick, Highland, & Sabella, 1995).

### Counseling Roles

Counselors today must be prepared to perform the role they are to play in developing a school counseling agenda. Often, when they begin, they are given a job description one to four pages long listing duties to perform. It is often entitled "Responsibilities of the Counselor." This description usually does not include a pro-active stance and a specific counseling curriculum to be implemented; consequently, the new counselor is not able to implement the training they have received in their degree program (Morse & Russell, 1988; Parsons & Napierkowski, 1992; Wilgus & Shelly, 1988). Counselors are often faced with ill-defined roles, non-supportive principals, and budget cuts eliminating resources (Peer, 1985). Concurrently, the range of responsibilities increases (Matthes, 1992). This conflict of identity and role responsibilities produces confusion (Ribak-Rosenthal 1994).

### Individual Work

Trust in a counseling relationship is established by the counselor's sincerity. Individual work can be extremely time consuming because of the need to establish a relationship. As a result, individual counseling in a school setting may be considered "brief counseling" (Myrick, 1993, p. 155). There is not time within the context of a school day to engage in individual counseling based on a

therapeutic model of 50 minutes per person used by psychotherapists (Ritchie & Partin, 1994).

### Group Work

Because of the expansion of counselor duties and the limited time within a school day, the most effective manner to reach the largest number of students is through the use of groups (Wiggins & Wiggins 1992). Kohlberg (1984) was a trained clinical psychologist and while his writings primarily pertain to school teaching, he also extended the school counseling field with the social development of children based on Piaget's (1932/1965) inquiry into the moral development of children.

Counseling is fundamentally a social activity, and Kohlberg's work does no less than call for conceptualizing counseling as a developmental process of social interaction. (Hayes, 1994)

### Specific Group

Groups may "impart information, share common experiences, teach people how to solve problems, offer support, and aid in helping people learn how to create their own support system outside of group settings" (Corey, 1990, p. 11). The group process may be used to accomplish three different purposes. Crisis centered groups focus on physical harm such as fighting, graduating problems, or relationships in trouble. Growth centered topics can be explored regarding life's developmental issues to develop self-reliance, deal

with frustrations, or think of future actions. Problem centered, which could also be referred to as "support groups," may have the same topics as crisis counseling such as grief, drug and alcohol abuse, or teenage parent issues, but here the problems are not as urgent. The specific number in a group is usually six to eight students, but they may be as large as 12 or 15 (Myrick, 1993).

### Classroom Group

Classroom groups use general topics and would usually fit into the growth centered format. They are not at the same level of intimacy and self-revelation. Their focus may be more on direct teaching or on providing information (Greenwood & Hops, 1981; McFarland & Culp, 1992; Myrick, 1993).

A method of reaching the largest number of students in a given day is to use the classroom. To promote social skills (Maag, 1994), a collaborative relationship with teachers can be initiated. Social skills blended throughout the day with the regular curriculum is an effective tool to promote the social growth of students (Maag, 1992). Collaboration has been defined as many people with diverse skills working together to create solutions to problems or situations that have been mutually identified (Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1986). Collaboration would involve community members outside the school setting.

### Special Need Students

The Learning Disabilities Act of 1969 incorporated into federal law a definition of learning disabilities and became the model for Public Law (PL) 94-142. This is the public law regarding the right of all handicapped children to an education. There are many definitions today identifying special need students. School districts may include all students identified as learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, physically challenged, high risk, or gifted and talented. The level of social skills has never been included as part of a check list or scale to measure and identify a distinct segment of learning disabilities (Hammill, 1990b). The reality today is money. The amount of money available for special programs will determine the "scale" or definition used to identify the student requiring special services (Chalfant, 1985; Sellers, 1995).

### Clerical

Counselors may be viewed by the administration as staff members assisting the principal in the performance of administrative duties (Remy & Albright, 1988; Wilgus & Shelly, 1988). These duties are varied and may be comprised of registering new students, keeping records of immunizations, testing, and scheduling. At the secondary level, they involve providing college information, grade checks, and checks on sports eligibility. The list may

continue for three to four pages. Schools were mandated in 1994 in Montana to provide counselor services to students. The state provides a Guideline for Program Development K-12. It is the general feeling that counselors are needed to promote mental health and provide preventative programs (Street, 1994). However, this reality is not supported by time or financial and community resources (Moles, 1991; Parsons & Napierkowski, 1992).

### Risk-Taking Behaviors

The behaviors identified as risk-taking include drug and alcohol usage, gang-related activity, early sexual experimentation, criminal activity, and violence. These issues were advanced in the public opinion reported by the 26th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools (1994). Another risk-taking activity that has emerged is pseudo-Satanic involvement (Fine & Victor, 1994). Some teenagers are engaging in satanic activity as a lark, which is not to be taken seriously but which exerts a control of sorts on their environment. Others are juveniles who already engage in delinquent behavior. In either case, the religion of Satan is not the primary interest, but the outward appearance of it can be used as a control measure in an adult world (Fine & Victor, 1994).

### Community Service

The school setting is only a part of the context of a student's life. The community for the student involves the family community, the school community, and the other entities surrounding the school and the family to form the complete community within which the child operates (American School Counseling Association, 1993; Edwards & Foster, 1995). Counselors are able to become a major link in providing smooth counseling services for a student (Downing, Pierce, & Woodruff, 1993; Fall, 1995; Hobbs & Collison, 1995) and are able to enlist the aid of other professionals in the community to implement a pro-active model. Providing consultation and linking the student and family to services available throughout the community (Burtnett, 1993; Fall, 1995; Ritchie & Partin, 1994) is an important task for the counselor working with all the roles and agendas needed in today's society. Counselors can be the liaison who connects resources within the school and the community to promote education (Hobbs & Collison, 1995).

### Adult Learning

Adult educators can play a key role in helping other professions such as school counselors improve their professionalization. Since adult education is a process that is attached to diverse fields and movements (Horton, 1990), the adult educator can be the conduit for translating the

general adult education theory into practice in a specific context for those in fields that do not ordinarily think of themselves as related to adult education. Adult educators have a responsibility to help other fields by working with them to create their own knowledge base as Schon suggested and then to guide them in adult learning principles that will allow them to put their research finding into practice (Linkenbach, 1995). In this way, the adult educator functions in the role of both researcher and facilitator.

School environments teach people to work on problem solving on an individual basis. However, real-life problems are quite frequently resolved by the group process of discussion (McKenna, 1991, p. 4). Adult educators are trained in critical thinking (Mezirow, 1981), reflective practice (Schon, 1987), and defining action to be taken (Linkenbach, 1995). There is a moral responsibility to help other professions to develop and refine theory and put that theory into action.

Adult education is a time when a student has reached a developmental age to choose their manner of education. Within this context adults are able to define what they want to learn, how they go about getting the information, and where they go to get it. Examples take place in many communities with adult education evening classes. The courses offered range from line dancing to fly tying, from art appreciation to oil or water color painting. Furniture

building, refinishing, or upholstering may be next door to rebuilding farm machinery. The topics are limitless and the classes often take place in the local public school building. Learning is taking place outside of the traditional setting of four walls and can include visits to outdoor museums, floating the Missouri, fossil hunting, or eagle watching. Adult education today is spanning the theoretical world to the practical one. Originally the concept of adult education could only be described. Theory was not present at the beginning, but a phenomenon occurred as practice defined the experience and subsequent action led to theory (Cervero, 1991).

Adult education as a formal field of study is often defined as beginning with the publication of The Meaning of Adult Education by Eduard Lindeman in 1926. By the 1960s, several leaders in the adult education movement were prepared to declare that adult education was an emerging field of study, drawing heavily from group dynamics, psychology, and sociology (Jensen, Liveright, & Hellenbeck, 1964). In 1970, Malcolm Knowles concluded that adult education had emerged as a separate and distinct process called andragogy.

Education historically has been viewed as directed learning which takes place in a formalized setting. This physically is manifested by a building, a classroom within the building, books, and an instructor whose job it is to

teach. The teacher was to impart knowledge to the learner. The learner's only responsibility was to absorb the information and be able to accurately report what was learned, usually in test format. At that time in history, the process of integrating and synthesizing the information was not a requirement. The information needed to operate in the society of the past could be learned as an apprentice training and doing the work with a skilled craftsman. This should be viewed as application learning. Information was limited in all facets of life and could be learned during childhood and early adulthood. Upon receiving a degree from a formalized institution, learning was considered done. All the knowledge needed to function in society had been absorbed.

In America today, an unrest is becoming evident with the educational system of the past. Present society has been altered dramatically by the Baby Boom Era. This population group, born between 1946 and the mid '60s, has impacted society at all stages of their development. Today for the first time in America's history, there are more adults than youngsters. More Americans have a higher level of education than ever before realized by any other generation. The more educated one becomes, the more likely one is to continue some type of learning activity (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). The amount of information to be learned has taken gigantic leaps and the learning possibilities in this day and age

cannot be consumed in a lifetime (Knowles, 1970). The age demographics, the information explosion, and the technological highways have expanded the potential for more education outside a formal setting. Education no longer stops at the end of formalized education. Society has moved away from the milestones of having only students graduating from grade school to high school to some formal education beyond high school being desired. Learning is now being viewed as a lifelong pursuit (Smith, 1982).

The field of adult education has evolved with the changing times. For the adult learner, the focus may be on what has prompted one to learn. This in turn influences individual decisions as to what type of knowledge the learner wishes to gather and what the learner plans to do when the knowledge is gained.

Some major contributors to the adult education field argue that the goal for adult education is transformative learning (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1981). Transformative learning is precipitated by a disorienting dilemma when one's familiar methods of coping with life's events prove to be ineffective (Mezirow, 1981). In clarifying this concept, Mezirow originally believed that adults wishing to learn would have three areas of cognitive interest. These included the (a) technical or instrumental which was task related, (b) the practical or dialogic which involved social interaction, and (c) emancipatory which was characterized by

interest in self-knowledge and insights gained through self-reflection. He has since decided that emancipatory learning is not a separate category but rather is integrated with the technical or practical. Transformative learning requires critical thinking skills to assess the new information being taken in and to decide on a course of action or non-action. Whatever course is selected, a decision is made. In the process, reality is redefined as the learner gathers knowledge and transforms one's perceptions related to the new learning. This defines the ability for self-direction. Like Mezirow, Freire (1970) also believes in the perspective transformation powers of learning and argues that real learning must include a critical thinking component. Such learning has the ability to not only change people from within but also has implication for social action.

A major goal of adult learning is combining the expressed needs of the learners and facilitating development of the learner beyond those needs (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). If transformative learning is the goal and the learner is taken beyond the original desire for a specified learning experience, how is one to achieve the transformation? Critical thinking is a skill one can be taught and is a necessary component if one is to effect personal or social transformation (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1981). Brookfield (1987) also believes it is necessary for adults to become critical thinkers and to evaluate why they

do what they do. His critical thinking model included the four components of (a) identifying and challenging assumptions, (b) challenging the importance of context, (c) imagining and exploring alternatives, and (d) forming reflective skepticism. In this reflective process, critical thinking is not only a rational cognitive activity, but it also takes into account the affective aspects.

Transformative learning is not a polished product. The transformation cannot occur without applying critical thinking skills to complete the process. Adult learning includes the four components of (a) self-direction, (b) the breadth and depth of life experiences which may be the triggers to learning, (c) reflections on self-conscious monitoring of changes taking place, and (d) action or some other expression that learning has taken place (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). In the third and fourth components, self-reflection and critical thinking should be taking place.

Critical thinking applied to learning experiences reinforces the transformation and gives it substance. Horton (1990) understood that in a group situation, experiences are not restricted to the individual but become greater than the individual. The new knowledge has been referred to as participatory research. Participatory research "has faith in people's ability to produce their own knowledge through collective investigation of problems and issues, collective analysis of the problems, and collective action to change

the conditions that gave rise to the problems in the first place" (Gaventa, 1988, p. 19).

Schon (1987) challenges professionals to become reflective practitioners by raising their awareness of the operating forces they apply to their professional practice. Even without a known theory, professionals need to take the time to reflect on why they act in a certain manner.

Several common themes have emerged as authors in the field of adult education have developed the concept of transformative learning and the role of critical thinking in being part of achieving as fully as possible cognitive transformation. First, Mezirow links self-reflection and critical thinking. Second, Freire includes critical thinking as a part of group reflection. Third, Schon repeats the self-reflection theme and associates it with professional practice. Gaventa also repeats it and clarifies the social aspects of this type of learning when it is the group doing the reflection. Mezirow and Schon have developed their ideas while working within a university setting. However, Freire and Gaventa have formulated their theories as a result of working with community-based groups addressing problems found in the everyday world. Consequently, for them, critical thinking and self-reflection involve asking questions such as "Is my theoretical base influenced by my situation, and how is it affected?"

The traditional method of formalized educational delivery in the majority of colleges and universities today has its roots in idealism, realism, and behaviorism. Although progressivism has challenged the prevailing system to adopt a learner-centered approach to teaching and learning, a behavioral systems approach prevails. This concept illustrates the power hierarchy. Everyone participating within the system must understand the rules and the political process the system employs. Compliance is the key word for making it through school. Participants are validated on a token basis of rewards and punishments as an effective behavior management style. The systems approach is the epitome of the behaviorist theory of learning (Elias & Merriam, 1980). The teacher is the wise, knowing one, and the teaching style is exemplified by the term sage on the stage. The product of the education is more valued than the process. The learner is an empty vessel to be filled by the system into a learned person (Adams, 1975; Freire, 1970). How learning occurs is not viewed as being as important as the fact that a learning outcome will occur. The locus of control is external to the learner. In this teacher-centered setting, the learner is passive. The objectives are to produce changes in behavior with a measurable objective, to achieve certain competencies, and to assure that there is accountability for the learner based on evaluation (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Elias & Merriam, 1980).

The majority of adults today have been educated within this traditional behaviorist system. With concepts such as learning to learn (Smith, 1982), transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990), and self-directed learning (Brookfield, 1986; Knowles, 1970; Tough, 1971), adult educators have moved beyond the old system because it was discovered this did not match the characteristics of the adult learner. This second approach moves beyond the systems approach as an entity and looks at understanding the learner. While some contributors to this group have had a formal, traditional university education, they recognized that the learner is an important component in the learning process. The learner is an active participant with personal perceptions. Adult education has evolved into adult learning (Fellenz & Conti, 1989, p. 1; Kidd, 1983). In this approach, perceptions for learning are formed within multiple realities (Guba, 1978). Intrinsic motivation is an important component in the learning process. Understanding the motivation facilitates understanding the learner. The learner is responsible for individual development with guidance from the teacher (Kidd, 1983; Mezirow, 1990). The teacher spends time getting to know the learner and the learner's needs. A mutual trust and responsibility are created (Knowles, 1970).

Knowles defined this process of adult learning as andragogy. The andragogical program planning process has

seven components for individual and total program learning activities. These include:

- (1) The establishment of a climate conducive to adult learning;
- (2) the creation of an organizational structure for participatory planning;
- (3) the diagnosis of needs for learning;
- (4) the formulation of directions of learning (objectives);
- (5) the development of a design of activities;
- (6) the operation of the activities;
- (7) the re-diagnosis of needs for learning (evaluation). (Knowles, 1970, p. 54)

Such an approach blends the needs of the system with learner-centered activities. While the behaviorist methodology has been applied to young learners, adults need a different methodology (Knowles, 1970, p. 38).

The following components are integral to this second approach. First, adult learning is an individual process (Brookfield, 1986, p. 25). Learning can be viewed either as a verb or a noun (Brookfield, 1986). In the system approach, learn is considered a noun. In the learner-centered approach, learn is considered a verb; it infers an action. Learn may be used as a transitive verb which requires a direct object and which implies that something has happened to the learner. Within this learner-centered concept, learning may be defined within absolute parameters such as learning a specific task, or it can be open ended.

Second, experience and the meaning of the experience is a singular process. All major adult learning theorists beginning with Lindeman incorporate past experiences as part of the process needed for further learning. This focus on

past experiences, which is viewed in the light of new information, can be critically reflected upon (Brookfield, 1987). Critical thinking is analyzing the information within the context of the learner.

Third, the locus of control in the learner-centered concept is internal or intrinsic to the learner. In the learner-centered setting, the learner is an active participant and change is determined by the critical reflection of the learner (Schon, 1987).

A third approach is similar to the second one but requires understanding the process of learning within a group (Brookfield, 1986, p. 10). The learners together determine what is to be learned, create how it will be presented, and are instrumental in maintaining or altering the program as the group transforms. This is the direct opposite of the systems approach where a traditional program is in place and where the learners are only receiving it. In this third approach, the individual is not the core; instead, the group as a collective unit is the focus. The teacher has a different role than in the other two approaches. Formal schooling of the teacher may not have taken place, and the teacher is whomever is able to put forth a point for discussion or action. Instead of being done individually, the group as a whole collectively processes the learning using experiences, common sense, and intuition. Knowledge is related to a practical use or action

mode, and the process is of utmost importance. Trust is paramount. Learning is a social activity. Adult learning can be described as a situation where the adult has autonomy of direction and where personal experiences are a resource. The learners are cognitively aware of the importance of the group. It is always of utmost importance for the teacher to meet the learners where they are and then to work with them to new understanding and a finer sense of awareness (Adams, 1975). This requires critical thinking by the individual to participate in the group and consciousness raising (Freire, 1970, p. 63) in order to transform perspectives. Learning creates social interactions because the learning is impacting the group. The teacher's role in this concept is to work with the people and not for the people (Adams, 1975, p. 4); Conti, 1977).

Freire's (1970) work aimed at emancipatory learning which required political action aimed at changing society. Also raising levels of consciousness, Horton (1990) provided an informal forum at Highlander for people to gather to determine their own learning needs; this was not on an individual basis but was for group action. "If you don't value a person's experiences, I don't know how you can value them as a person" (Conti & Fellenz, 1986, p. 8).

## CHAPTER 3

## METHOD

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive method of collecting data to answer a specific question (Gay, 1996, p. 249). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Quantitative research is generally used in education and counseling fields today (Baker, 1995, p. 339).

This traditional approach to research:  
Requires reducing a phenomenon to attributes that can be controlled and clearly defined . . .  
[while] qualitative research . . . is supposed to inform us descriptively and in depth, providing rich, detailed information in the language of the phenomena being studied. The information is to be used constructively . . . as a foundation to formulate ideas, develop hypotheses, and generate responses based on a better understanding of the phenomena in question. (p. 239)

The research goals of the study were to (a) investigate the foundational issues of counseling in Montana, (b) determine the impact the issues have on the job descriptions of counselors, and (c) examine the connection between the theoretical and methodological teaching of the training programs, the actual job requirements, and methods employed to satisfy those requirements. Typically, descriptive research is concerned with demographics,

conditions, opinions, and attitudes of the surveyed population (Gay, 1996). One method of collection is by questionnaires which are used as a self-reporting instrument. This method was chosen in order to elicit from each responding counselor a description of the demographics, counseling roles and activities, and issues facing the counselor today.

One of the factors affecting usefulness in any research endeavor is the appropriateness of the method used to gather the crucial information (Patton, 1983). The researcher needs to be aware of a clear question that warrants an answer, the appropriate means of answering it, and the significance of the issues surrounding that question such as the social and political ramifications.

In the first phase of the study, survey data were analyzed to determine the demographics and activities of currently employed counselors in the state of Montana. In the second phase, action groups were established to discuss the data findings and to brainstorm methods and procedures to define future action for the governing bodies of counselors in the state. Any future education changes must address the knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and skills of the profession's practitioners (Linkenbach, 1995, p. 7). A primary goal of the school is to provide students with whom the counselors work the resources necessary to meet society's needs. Counselors need to determine their

professional identity and how best to accomplish the goals of meeting the student's needs. Group efforts can be used to involve people in identifying their common problems, in critically assessing the social and historical roots of problems, in envisioning a healthier society, and in developing strategies to overcome obstacles in achieving goals (Freire, 1970). In this study, action groups employed these strategies with counseling professionals working together to identify components in the counseling profession.

### Context

Descriptive studies take place within a specific context, and their purpose is to describe elements within this setting. To do so, "the researcher must be sensitive to the context and all the variables within it including the physical setting, the people, the overt and covert agendas, the nonverbal behavior. One also needs to be sensitive to the information being gathered" (Merriam, 1988, p. 38). In research which involves the collection of qualitative data, "one of the cardinal principles of qualitative methods is the importance of background and context to the processes of understanding and interpreting data" (Patton, 1980, p. 9).

Since the researcher is the primary data collection instrument for qualitative aspects of a research project

(Guba, 1978; Merriam, 1988, p. 19, 36; Patton, 1983, p. 22), an awareness of the relationship of the researcher to the context of the study is important. "Data are mediated through this human instrument. . . . The researcher as instrument is responsive to the context; he or she can adapt techniques to the circumstances; the total context can be considered" (Merriam, 1988, p. 19). Qualitative phases of research projects necessitate "that the evaluator get close to the people and situations being studied in order to understand the minutiae of the program life. The evaluator gets close to the program through physical proximity for a period of time, as well as through development of closeness in the social sense of intimacy and confidentiality" (Patton, 1983, p. 43). Therefore, since "the evaluator using qualitative methods attempts to understand the setting under study through direct personal contact and experience with the program" (p. 41), it is important and necessary that there be a "specification of the role of the researcher in conducting the evaluation" (p. 43).

The design of this study took into consideration and was partly made possible by the fact that this researcher has lived in Montana for 25 years and has been a member of the Montana school counselor community for 12 years. Employment in Class C schools as a K-12 itinerant counselor along the northern tier in the middle to eastern part of the state provided an opportunity to work closely with students,

teachers, administrators, and parents and to observe firsthand the pleasures and frustrations of life in very small communities. An itinerant counselor travels to the school sites each week and performs all the responsibilities required by the school. Being a neophyte counselor and not having any current educational or career materials at one site, the state guidance specialist and the state counseling organization became important resources. One provided materials to be used at the school, and they both provided emotional support.

Professional identity requires collaboration and the need to develop a network of trusted advisors and peers. Serving as a district representative for the state organization in the late 1980s and becoming president in 1990-91 afforded the opportunity to travel to regional and national conferences.

It was an exciting time to observe the changing climate in regard to the state and national emphasis for school counselors. At this time, career and vocational counseling was the focus, and the job of being a school counselor more closely aligned with the definition associated with guidance and counseling. One was expected to advise, to counsel, and to provide an empathetic ear to students experiencing the vagaries of growing up. While the issues of child abuse, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, teen sexual activity, and pregnancy existed, dealing with them was the

exception and not the rule. As the small schools became even smaller and consolidation was forced due to financial constraints, students who were once sport rivals became classmates. These transitions were not always smooth, and a shift occurred in the foundation of counseling. More and more workshops were offered with titles such as Preventing Suicide, What is an Eating Disorder, and Violent Children in Violent Times, and there was a heightened awareness of drug and alcohol use. Over the years, service to the state and professional associations provided mechanisms for making many friends and meeting many valued colleagues. The researcher's present position in a university setting continues to provide the opportunities to travel around the state. The last two years this access to the school counseling community has been enhanced by serving as state president of the Association for Counselor Educators and Supervisors.

This research was initiated to give voice to the counselors. It has not been a singular effort but rather has been facilitated and validated by the many friends and colleagues throughout the state. The literature is rich with the changing counseling picture in response to the changing needs of today's youth.

Montana has long been "the best kept secret" of the 50 states. Until quite recently the population had remained in a relative constant condition with neither an exodus nor an

influx to encroach on the resources available. Montana epitomized the agrarian society exemplified by farming, ranching, and logging communities. The majority of the population lived within small rural communities where everyone knew everyone else. The sense of neighborliness prevailed with all children being watched over by the elders. The standards for survival were well-defined and well-established. The environment and nature could combine to be life-threatening, and everyone pulled together in a time of trouble to support a friend or a neighbor in need. Montana did not have a large population of extremely rich people nor a large population of extremely poor people. In all ways the state seemed to have an established population who minded their own business and helped others in need. The Montana tenet was that a person's handshake was as good or better than a written contract. A person's word was trusted and was honored. The "Code of the West" appeared to be alive and well into the early 1970s.

Several natural geographic distinctions occur between the far eastern part of the state which has no large population center, the mid-area of the state with larger towns such as Billings and Great Falls, and the far western part of the state with Glacier Park and the Bitterroot Valley as its backdrop. Ranching and farming have been the mainstay of the economy in the eastern third of the state and remain so today. The golden wheat triangle in the mid-

northern part of the state moves southward into more rugged terrain with cattle ranching, mining, and tourism in Yellowstone National Park as the main economic supports. The western area of Montana has tourism and logging as the area's economic backbone. State revenue is further generated to benefit the state's educational programs by gas and oil production, Burlington Northern (today it is the Burlington Northern Santa Fe) and MRL railroads, and various mining operations within Montana's borders.

Montana had maintained a fairly stable economy until the early '70s. Then economic change ushered in social change. Gas exploration literally exploded overnight. Large and small companies formed within Montana's borders and arrived via Texas. New foods appeared in the grocery stores, and new accents were heard. While the men arrived in the beginning, their families soon followed. Fortunes were made overnight and the disparities of incomes became apparent. The Haves and the Have Nots were further apart and in greater numbers than ever before.

Montana's long tradition of self-reliance was put to a test during this period of change. Suddenly, hardworking men and women no longer had the need to wrestle a living from the land. They could sit on the land and receive royalties for doing nothing. This did not generate a need for helping a neighbor. If property did not have lucrative gas or oil well possibilities, the federal government was paying

farmers not to grow a crop. Some farmers discovered it was financially beneficial to idle crop land. One could lose everything by trusting that crop prices at harvest would provide a living after meeting the expenses incurred in seeding, fertilizing, and harvesting. Adverse weather conditions could destroy the crop or the market would fall at harvest time.

During this era, expendable income rose considerably for many families in specific areas of the state. The early to mid '70s also saw high wheat prices. Montana's economy was in an expanding nature and the state government budget operated in the black. At that point in Montana history, school districts were funded automatically. Virtually all school bond issues passed. The "Code of the West" valued schools and education for its children. The state paid its share to help all districts and padded some districts not impacted by financial growth to help balance the resources. The federal government with its subsidies to special education fueled further expansion of school services. No one thought this would ever change because Montana values included a respect for the family, for education, and for being quick to respond to one another's needs.

As time progressed into the '80s, financial changes were felt. The early '80s were a time of seemingly unlimited growth. People and money flowed into the state. Life became

easier for the majority. Town services were upgraded, new building projects were initiated, investments ruled the land, the price of farm and ranch land was inflated as subdivisions were made from prime farm land, and many Montanans became very rich on paper. The sector of public programs including education and the department of family services expanded services to take care of the less fortunate. The chasm between the Haves and the Have Nots continued to grow. Montana had a delay in following the national economic trends on the upward swing and had a modest reprieve as the downward spiral began, but it soon caught up with the national economic trends as depressed economic conditions set in.

Population shifts were stretching the resources in certain geographic areas and the small communities were being hit the hardest as the younger generation departed to find work. Investments dropped in value, farms had been mortgaged on inflated land values, and foreclosures started. It was not always possible for a neighbor to help a neighbor; the family farm started to change with larger corporations buying up homesteads. In some areas there was no neighbor to help or to call on if one needed help. The foundation of social structures was being drastically altered. The monetary deficits invaded all facets of life in Montana.

By the late '80s and early '90s, the exodus of population from rural areas to the larger towns put increasing demands on the resources to provide or even maintain educational services. The bankruptcies and foreclosures in large and small communities reduced the amount of money available for local levies to fund education. This filtered up to the state government level. Throughout the state, it appeared the well of unlimited funds had gone dry. Crop prices declined, cattle futures went down, oil and gas exploration all but halted, and there was a great swelling of the Have Nots. The families poured out of Montana, and the social structure was shattered. Young adults became one of state's largest exports. Many Montana towns held desperately to the old code and remained as they did many years ago, but some became disenfranchised as the population shifted to the more populous areas.

This shift put a tremendous burden on the financial and service resources available for the new emigrant in the larger towns. The cost of living rose. Jobs became scarce. Without the social support or network the families had experienced in the past, the members became disenfranchised. Clear codes of conduct and a way of life had disappeared for many. When the social foundation of a society is fractured by whatever means, it is a devastation for what has been.

In the early and mid '90s Montana experienced an influx of families from other states. A large number of immigrants

came from Russia, Asian, and Balkan countries. The state was still operating with reduced financial resources while the needs skyrocketed to provide essential services to the populace. These economic, social, and political changes have impacted the educational system and the guidance and counseling programs within the system in a variety of ways. From this history, school counseling had continued to adapt to the changing times.

A question had been asked the past several years in Montana as to the applicability of the state universities' school counselor training program requirements in relationship to the actual demands on the job. This question had been discussed by school counselors at the counselor's annual conference each fall and among colleagues within the colleges and universities for several years. The question was one that needed to be addressed in a more comprehensive manner and an answer documented. Research to answer the question had not existed in Montana, and yet, many people involved with the profession had definite ideas or theories. Two schools of thought had informally appeared. First, the job of being a school counselor is defined by the local school board, principal, or superintendent to include a specific set of duties as evidenced by school counselor job descriptions available from some school districts. Second, school counseling is viewed as a well-defined program of interrelated activities addressing guidance and counseling

as evidenced by some school districts having comprehensively designed guidance and counseling curricula. In 1992 the Office of Public Instruction published a complete guidance manual, Guidance in Montana: Guidelines for Program Development K-12.

The Montana State School Board has determined the requirements each public school in Montana must meet in order to be accredited. These conditions have been in place for several years and were revised in 1996 in the Montana School Accreditation Standards and Procedures Manual (Board of Public Education, 1996). The cost of the support staff necessary to meet the accreditation standards is substantial in a time when public education is being disparaged as not performing the function of educating the student (Bracey, 1996; Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1994). With the economic support for education currently in a decline, what social or political issues have led to this persona for education and what is the impact on school counselors?

Different issues pertaining to school age children appear before the Montana public every day in newspapers, magazines, television, and even on the computer talk lines (Netscape, America On Line, Chat Rooms, E-mail, and all the latest electronic connections) available to many at a finger tip touch. The topics being analyzed and discussed include disenfranchised families, gangs, drugs, suicide, and violence in the schools and communities; lack of support for

making a difference; and no time or no money to implement the saving of its most valuable resource--the young citizens of Montana. This study provided the Montana school counselors another forum to discuss the issues within the state and the impact the issues have upon job descriptions and Montana's school children.

### Sample

School counselors employed full-time or part-time in the state of Montana were the target population for the study. During the 1995-96 academic school year, there were 405 school counselors employed in the state according to the Montana Office of Public Instruction. Of these, 220 completed the questionnaire. This represented 54.3% of the population. In descriptive research, 10% to 20% of the population should be sampled (Gay, 1990, p. 124). Thus this sample exceeded the basic size needed.

This descriptive research sought to elicit a comprehensive picture of school counselors and the responsibilities they encounter. Zip codes on the returned questionnaires were utilized to ensure a representative sampling from various parts of the state. Also, the school populations as reported by the counselors were checked to verify that the various size schools in the state were represented in the sample. To present a clear picture of the representation of counselors in the schools, three size

categories were developed based on the number of students in the school district: Category 1 of 1-499, Category 2 of 500-999, and Category 3 of over 1,000. The following number of counselors responded in each category: Category 1--105, Category 2--60, and Category 3--48. Of the 220 counselors who responded, 128 were male (58.2%), and 92 were females (41.8%). Ages were reported by 218 of the counselors and ranged from 23 to 65. They were in the following age categories: 23-31 years old--10 (5%), 32-41 years old--49 (22%), 42-51 years old--114 (52%), 52-61 years old--41 (19%), and 62-65 years old--4 (2%).

This research deals with Montana counselors, so the question was asked as to how many had been trained in Montana colleges/universities. The counselors were asked to indicate if they were trained in Montana and which college or university system had granted their degree. Of the 220 responses, 194 (88%) stated they were trained in counseling programs in Montana; 26 (12%) were not. Those trained in Montana received their degrees from three Montana State University (MSU) and two University of Montana (UM) sites: Montana has had five counselor education programs which were identified as their site of training: MSU--Bozeman, MSU--Billings, MSU--Northern, University of Montana--Missoula, UM--Western. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Counselor Education Programs from which Respondents Received Training.

Institution	Frequency	Percent
MSU--Northern	64	29.1
MSU--Billings	47	21.4
MSU--Bozeman	40	18.2
UM--Missoula	35	15.9
UM--Western	11	5.0
Other	26	10.5

### Instrument

The participants were sent an eight-page survey. It was divided into sections to establish the school and counselor profiles. The Counselor Demographics section contained questions related to gender, age, and the location of counselor training.

The School Demographics section solicited information related to the school in which the counselor worked. It contained questions regarding the size of the district, the number of school counselors employed in the district, the number of students for which each individual counselor was responsible for providing services, the student population in the school, what grade level(s) the counselor served, and whether the position was full-time or part-time. Information concerning other job titles was also requested for those counseling part-time.

The Certification and Training sections contained questions related to the counselor's professional preparation and certification. Within this section, the information requested included the counseling endorsement level, type of degree classification, state or national licensure, national certifications held, and types of specialized training which the counselor may have acquired.

Another section of the survey addressed Counseling Roles. Counselors were asked to define their counseling roles and the time spent on individual and group counseling. An inventory of possible group topics was included for counselors to indicate the ones they conducted; space was provided to add other group topics not included in the list.

The section on Classroom Guidance Programs sought two pieces of information. First, it asked about the percentage of time spent on providing classroom guidance programs. Second, the types of programs provided were identified.

The Special Needs Students section sought three pieces of information. First, it asked if the counselor was a regular participant in child study meetings. Second, it elicited the type of services provided for the students. Third, it sought the type of services provided specifically for the gifted and talented students.

In the Assessment and Appraisal section, the counselor was first asked to report the areas of responsibility in regard to specific assessment or evaluation materials, and

space was provided to name the materials. Second, the counselor was to list the vocational and career materials used with students as either a computer or consumable resource. Extra space was provided to describe other instruments not listed.

In the Clerical Duties section, the counselors were asked to select which clerical duties they performed. Space was provided for the counselors to describe other responsibilities not listed.

In the High Risk Students and Youth Violence section, the counselors were asked to respond to the identification factors used to determine high risk youth. In addition, they were asked to rate on a Likert scale the amount of perceived violence in the school and in the community.

In the Community Services section, responses were requested to determine if the counselor served on any community service organization involving the needs of children and what activities or efforts are present in the school or community to address high-risk youth and youth violence.

Three open-ended questions were provided at the end of the survey. These last three questions on the survey allowed the counselor to respond in more detail to (a) their personal areas of greatest concern, (b) what activities they engage in to address any of these concerns, and (c) suggestions for counselor educators. These questions

allowed the counselor the opportunity to begin to define the present situation in the Montana schools. When professional practitioners are able to describe the current issues being faced on the job, the description begins to generate meaningful dialog to address the issues.

The items in the survey have been discussed in the literature. They require the counselor to reflect upon the job situation and represent areas noted for changes in the training of counselors and in the manner which counselors are currently interacting with students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community at large (Paisley & Borders, 1995). Since the survey involved the use of human participants, it was approved by an Internal Review Board from Montana State University--Bozeman as being ethical and capable of performing the stated goal.

Validity is concerned with what a survey actually measures (Kerlinger, 1973, p. 457). Establishing validity for a questionnaire is essential to the credibility of the instrument and because it involves several steps, "the validation of a test or questionnaire is a long process rather than a single event" (Tyler & Walsh, 1979, p. 29).

The two types of validity that are of concern for a questionnaire are construct validity and content validity. Construct validity assesses the underlying theory of the questionnaire. It is the extent to which the questionnaire can be shown to measure hypothetical constructs which

explain some aspect of human behavior (Borg & Gall, 1983, p. 280; Van Dalen, 1979, p. 137). The process of establishing construct validity for the questionnaire consisted of literature reviews and obtaining judgment on the constructs from the counselor educators at Montana State University--Northern.

Content validity refers to the sampling adequacy of the content of the questionnaire (Kerlinger, 1973, p. 458). Content validity is determined by expert judgment (Gay, 1996, p. 140). The items within the questionnaire were produced by two sources: (a) current literature and (b) Montana school counselors in field interviews in a supervisory capacity.

#### Procedure

The survey was mailed to all counselors in the state. After the returns were entered into a data management program for statistical analysis, the numerical results were analyzed by simple frequency counts. The qualitative accounts were summarized. Once the responses were reported, the second phase of the study began. This involved action groups. These are similar to focus groups. While Moran (1988) used only the term focus group, action group in this study was the term used because the groups went beyond validation and clarification of interpretation; they made recommendations for action. Since the study included

quantitative data mixed with qualitative data, it was important to further describe and enhance the quantitative data by including quotes from the counselors that clarify the points being made. Like focus groups, action groups are useful in developing the refinement of interpretation of results of an earlier study (Moran, 1988), which in this case are the quantitative and qualitative features of the counselor survey. It is an important element in research to allow the reporting population the forum to identify the original interpretation of the data as correct (Linkenbach, 1995).

The first action group session was held during the fall 1996 state counseling conference. Here research findings were presented to school counselors. The purpose of the reporting was (a) to generate awareness of the findings, (b) to ask participants to provide feedback, (c) to have the participants reflect on the findings, and (d) to make suggestions for future action. The group attending the presentation was representative of large and small school districts and from all parts of the state.

A second action group session was held with the counselor educators attending the 1996 fall conference. These counselor educators were given the opportunity to discuss the results of the study in order (a) to provide their perceptions, (b) to reflect upon the changing needs of school counselors, and (c) to provide suggestions for future

actions. The state guidance counseling specialist was in attendance and provided background for the past practices. The educators were considered new to Montana with the majority arriving within the last five years. This newness is an important item to note for the changing focus of counselor education.

## CHAPTER 4

## RESULTS

The present research was undertaken to identify the common tasks and activities performed by counselors in Montana in their varied settings. A questionnaire was developed to establish the following: (a) a description of the school counselors including their training, certification, and position; (b) school demographics to develop a picture of the various physical settings where school counselors are employed; and (c) the various services provided by counselors including group work, classroom guidance programs, special needs students, assessment and appraisal, clerical duties, community service, and activities directed toward high risk students and youth violence. In addition, three specific questions addressed (a) areas of greatest concern for counselors today, (b) activities and programs used by counselors to deal with these concerns, and (c) suggestions for counselor educators to better prepare counselors for the world in which they work.

This research was divided into two phases. In Phase 1, quantitative and qualitative data from a research questionnaire were combined to describe Montana school

counselors, their job descriptions, and their concerns. In Phase 2, a meeting was held with a group of 24 school counselors and with the Office of Public Instruction Guidance Specialist. A second meeting was held with five counselor educators representing the universities providing a school counseling program. The meetings were held to validate the research findings from the questionnaire. A second purpose for meeting with these groups was to form recommendations for future accountability in determining the course of school counselor education in Montana.

#### Questionnaire Results

There are varied settings in which school counselors perform their myriad tasks. It was necessary to determine the number of students for which the school counselors are held accountable because this number has a great impact upon the job-related activities. According to the Montana School Accreditation Standards and Procedures Manual (Board of Public Education, 1996), the counselor to student ratio in grades K-12 should be no more than one counselor to each 400 students. Yet, 55 counselors reported they are providing services for more students than allowed in the Montana School Accreditation Manual. Table 2 exhibits the school size of the counselors responding to the questionnaire.

Table 2. Distribution of Counselors by the Number of Students Served.

Number of Counselors	Number of Students
14	0 - 99
32	100 - 199
42	200 - 299
71	300 - 400
28	401 - 499
13	500 - 599
7	600 - 699
3	700 - 799
5	800 - 899
2	Over 899

Counselors reporting numbered 217. In discussions with school counselors during various site visits and at the state counseling conference, it was explained how this distribution may have happened. One counselor may serve more than one school with each school claiming a counselor. In this scenario, it is possible for the same counselor to be working with more than 400 students total. School districts faced with diminishing resources may justify using teachers and support staff in a counselor's role in order to get the student-counselor ratio appropriate for reporting. These systems do not have, nor can they afford, trained counselors to perform the myriad of tasks related to counseling. In some instances, teachers with one or two counseling courses are designated as the counselor, are assigned to counselor duties for one or two periods a day, and teach other subjects or grades. The 58 counselors working with students

above the suggested limit of 400 represented 26% of the total participants in this study.

The level of training attained influences the level of endorsement in school counseling through the Office of Public Instruction. Degrees were classified as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Counselor Endorsement Levels.

Degree Classification	Frequency	Percent
M.Ed in Guidance and Counseling	133	60.5
MA/MS in Counseling	32	14.5
M.Ed in Counseling	22	10.0
School Psychologist	2	.9
Other	31	14.7

The Master of Education or Master of Education in Guidance and Counseling is based upon a degree plan in which courses are required to explore the components of guidance programs as well as counseling theories and techniques. This degree is carried by a majority (60%) of the school counselors. The main focus of Master of Education in Counseling degrees are counseling theories and techniques. It may be but is not necessarily required to have school counseling programs included in the course work. Master of Arts or Master of Science in Counseling programs have a focus on clinical mental health counseling but may not have guidance programs as a part of the course work. The degree

is not labeled an education degree. The school psychologist degree is an education degree. The course work has a strong psychometric or testing focus and does not have in-depth course work in counseling theories and skills related to school counseling.

Certain universities may only offer one degree type, yet it may have been possible for participants to have taken guidance program courses to enhance the knowledge of the public school's settings and needs. While in private counseling the needs emanate from an individual, in school settings it is important to understand the needs are derived from a variety of sources. These include the administration, the staff, the parents or primary care givers, the children, and all other persons who come into contact with the school.

The School Psychologist is a relatively new possibility for being endorsed as a school counselor. Only within the last three years have school psychologists been used as school counselors. They must take some counseling courses to be accepted as a school counselor. The psychologist's training focuses on psychometrics and the counselor's training focuses on the development of the child.

Psychometrics deals with the measurement of a person through observation, testing, and interpreting test results for a variety of reasons. In the school setting, this draws upon a wide array of assessment choices for reporting to school personnel, parents, guardians, or primary care givers. These

activities are in tremendous demand because the results are used in the Individualized Education Plan meetings to chart a course of school work which is best suited to the student. The political force of school psychologists and the monetary force of a lack of revenue combined to allow school psychologists to be listed as the school counselor. This is especially monetarily beneficial to small school districts that may share counseling services. In this manner, each individual district would not be required to hire a counselor and a school psychologist. The two required staff positions are filled by the same person, and only one salary is paid.

Associated with having the degree is the endorsement by the Office of Public Instruction. Endorsement K-12 enables a counselor to work with students in a K-12 setting; endorsement Class 6 is a specific classification not requiring any previous school experience. Counselors who have a master's degree in counseling and who have had 3 years teaching experience are considered endorsed as K-12, Class 1 employees. This designation carries the element of tenure which is afforded to teachers. Class 6 designation for school psychologists denotes that they are professionals hired to do a specific job. However, it does not necessarily note that they are trained in the pedagogy of school and student, nor does it carry the element of tenure. The results showed 203 counselors carried an endorsement of K-12, 2 counselors showed Class 6, and 12 counselors ranged

from working on an endorsement to being endorsed for specific categories such as elementary curriculum or as a high school vocational counselor only.

Although school counselors are not required to hold a state license or national counseling certification, a total of 53 counselors indicated they hold national certification, state licensure, or both. More specifically, 28 counselors (12.8%) reported that they were licensed by the State of Montana as either Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor or Licensed Professional Counselor. In this category the same person may be licensed in both areas. The qualifications are exactly the same, but the wording of the certification was changed by the state licensure board in 1994 from Licensed Professional Counselor to Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor. Nationally certified school counselors numbered 12 (5.5%). Also, the counselors reported extra training in specific areas as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of Specialized Counselor Training.

Specialized training	Frequency	Percent
Substance Abuse	115	52.5
Crisis Intervention	83	37.7
Conflict Resolution	80	36.7
Peer Mediation	52	23.6
Violence Prevention	48	21.8
Brief Therapy	42	19.0
Play Therapy	26	11.8
Art Therapy	24	10.9

Several specialized areas exist in counseling today because the needs of the students are becoming increasingly varied. There are a variety of substance abuse training workshops available, ranging from simple awareness and prevention ideas to specific methods for initiating and maintaining support groups to prevent relapse for the student returning to the school from a treatment program. It is interesting to see that 25% to 50% of the counselors reporting have availed themselves of further training in the areas the literature has noted as important issues in the schools today. In addition to these areas, many counselors wrote in the specific types of training they had received that were not listed on the questionnaire. Some of the extra topics which were listed included: Gifted and Talented, Title IX (sexual harassment), Sex Abuse, Child Protection, AIDS, Gender Equity, and Community Involvement.

Many counselors are committed to ongoing professional development training. The 58 counselors who wrote about extra workshops and specific training showed a tremendous commitment of time and energy to gather information and techniques to aid them in performing their jobs.

### Counseling Roles

School counselors are involved in various daily roles. Within the counseling roles, two main counseling services have been individual counseling and group counseling. The

counselors are engaged in group work as 17% of a week's activity and in individual counseling as 46% of a week's activity. While 30 counselors did not report or do not engage in use of groups to serve the students, 190 reported using group techniques and provided a variety of group settings. Groups may range from a few students to an entire classroom. Counselors are engaged in presenting a variety of topics to groups of students (see Table 5). Each counselor may oversee several groups.

Table 5. Group Topics in the School Setting.

Topic	Frequency	Percent
Career Exploration and Planning	101	45.0
Divorce	98	44.5
Academic Improvement	96	44.5
Grief and Loss	86	39.3
Personal Needs	65	29.7
Work Preparation or Job Search	56	25.6
Violence, Abuse, Pregnancy Prev.	49	22.4
Parenting Skills	37	16.9
Relapse Prevention	20	9.1
Parent Support	15	6.8

It is interesting to note that virtually an equal number of counselors are conducting groups in Career Exploration and Planning, Divorce, and Academic Improvement. This can be interpreted as a statement that it is difficult to separate personal and career goals. The group topics of Divorce as well as Grief and Loss are indicators that issues

of emotional turmoil are high on the counselor's agenda. Students of divorced parents and those experiencing the loss of any person or thing dear to them benefit from the interaction with other students in a group setting.

The counselors attempt to be pro-active in providing groups whose stated purpose is to prevent violence, abuse, and pregnancy. These groups would encourage the student to feel empowered to work through some of their own issues within the support of the group. The Parent Support groups being offered in the high school settings were for the student as a parent and not for the parents of the students.

The counselors listed several other types of group counseling in which they are engaged. Several of these topics dealt with topics related to abuse and violence. Groups are being held for the specific purpose of Anger Management. Anger is often a by-product of the frustrations developmentally delayed students deal with each day.

Another category listed by the counselors dealt with preparing students for the transition to college. College preparation, testing such as the ACT or SAT for college acceptance, financial aid, scholarships, and college transition were group activities mentioned. While it is known most high schools counselors deal with these topics, they may not necessarily provide a regular group but rather discuss the items as they are required by the student. This would be interpreted as individual counseling. In the area

of college preparation, counselors also mentioned conducting groups on academic motivation, study skills, and test assessments and interpretation.

Finally, some groups topics addressed working with others, appropriate methods of communication, and self-esteem. The topics of peer helpers, peer mediation teams, and self-esteem were also mentioned. Again, caution must be used not to over simplify the results. The total picture shows group activity with specific topics, but these same topics may be incorporated into other group discussion.

#### Groups for Special Needs Children

A developmentally delayed student is one who physically, mentally, or emotionally performs at a level significantly below that of one's peer group. Developmentally-delayed students may have groups to address their specific needs. These include a variety of topics. The names of these special need groups include social skills, gifted and talented, emotionally disturbed, suicide, new fathers, new mothers, and friendship groups. This variety illustrates counselors working to fit the needs of their individual schools and the populations they serve. Many of the groups mentioned previously were again mentioned for the special need population such as the ones dealing with the issues of chemical substance abuse, self-esteem, study skills, and social skills. However, the subject matter is

handled differently to meet the cognitive and emotional level of the students. New topics specific to the developmentally delayed students would include fetal alcohol syndrome, fetal alcohol effect, attention deficit, and attention deficit/hyperactivity.

A school with a well-defined guidance counseling curriculum could use groups to address identified concerns, before the concerns reach crisis proportions (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994). One method of implementing the pro-active or preventive approach to counseling issues is handled within the classroom through discussions and presentations. The classroom group topics as noted in Table 6 have a relationship to the groups mentioned earlier (see Table 5), but within the classroom setting there is an effort to keep the discussions generic and not become person specific.

Table 6. Classroom Guidance Topics.

Topic	Number	Percent
Decision Making	141	64.1
Peer Relations	139	63.2
Conflict Resolution	128	58.2
Problem Solving	119	54.1
Social Skills	118	53.6
Communication	115	52.3
Academic Success	13	51.4
Vocational Planning and Readiness	105	47.7
Leadership	58	26.4
Wellness	53	24.1

In addition to the topics listed on the survey, many counselors added their own topics for classroom guidance activities. These included the topics of college and career possibilities and requirements, drug and alcohol, self-esteem, sexual harassment, and anger management.

The evidence of common themes in addressing student, school, or community needs continues to emerge with the topics mentioned in a variety of settings and reported by various media. Montana is not isolated from the same issues affecting schools across America.

#### Special Needs Students

Respondents were asked if they participated in child study meetings. Child study teams are to identify a child with special needs. It is not the team's role to plan an educational program, but to identify the special needs that may require a program. Nearly all (197) participated in child study team meetings. The majority of the 23 who answered they were not regular participants also stated that it was not part of their everyday work load because their building had designated personnel to work with these children and the teams. The majority of school counselors are expected to be a regular participant on the child study team. They also are responsible for ensuring the plan designed by the I.E.P process to fit the child's identified needs is fulfilled. This necessitates detailed monitoring,

and the paperwork must be kept current. Table 7 shows the activity level in specific areas for the counselors.

Table 7. Services Counselors Provide for Special Need Students.

Service or Activity	Number	Percent
Consultation and Advocacy	139	63.2
Liaison-Resource Agencies	138	62.7
Social Skills Group	131	59.5
Vocational and Career	109	49.5
Classroom Guidance	97	44.1
Parent Support Group	13	5.9

Counselors can provide special need students and their families numerous services (see Table 7). The services that are being provided by a large number of counselors include consulting with other agencies to secure community services if needed, student advocacy to protect the interest of the student, and career information planning and vocational transition activities. Nearly half (44.1%) provide classroom guidance, and a few (5.9%) provide parent support groups. In addition to these services, counselors indicated they also provided personal counseling, they assisted the student during registration, and they helped the student schedule individual classes.

When asked about the gifted and talented students, 59 counselors indicated that they provided services to this group. These activities included: advanced placement

options, working as the gifted and talented coordinator for the building, doing some of the testing to identify gifted and talented students, and working with "pull out programs." Pull out programs are for students who are out of the regular classroom for a period of time each day or each week. These programs are designed to enrich the student and provided more advanced activities. College placement, scholarship application process, vocational and career exploration are a few of the activities listed.

#### Assessment and Appraisal

Approximately half (105) of the counselors stated they were responsible for the testing in their schools, but 111 reported types of measurements they have the responsibility of administering or monitoring. The majority of counselors are involved in the following types of testing and measurements. Standardized achievement tests given at the end of the year throughout the K-12 career were cited as the most often used. Others included: (a) program assessments, (b) Title I assessment which is for special education, (c) basic skills, (d) self-esteem assessments, and (e) depression scale indexes. They also administer the college preparation placement tests such as the P-SAT, SAT, P-ACT, and ACT for the student interested in college; this testing is done at the high school level only.

These responsibilities included a specific response area for vocational and career assessments and inventories used by the counselors. The most used test reported is the ASVAB, the military test named the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. It is given at no charge to the high school juniors and seniors. Other instruments and inventories mentioned included the California Occupational Preference Survey (COPS), the Career Assessment Inventory, and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

Counselors reported administering a number of vocational aptitude and career interest assessment instruments. They fall into two categories, those that are available on the computer and those administered by paper and pencil. The Montana Career Information System (MCIS) and the Discover system are the computer programs most widely used in Montana schools (28.6% and 24.5%, respectively). The Discover for high schools facilitates group work through the use of the Career Planning Guidebook. The guidebook include files on military training, vocation technical schools, and two-year and four-year colleges. It is used on a MS-DOS computer system. The following table shows approximately 25% of the school counselors were using computer career and vocational information. One of the largest benefits is that the student is able to explore alone and does not require a counselor's time unless more information or interpretation

of the material is desired. As noted in Table 8, not every school reported having a career or testing computer system.

Table 8. Computer Information Systems for Career and Vocational Information.

Information System	Number	Percent
MCIS	63	28.6
DISCOVER	54	24.5
SIGI	1	.5
DAT	1	.5

There were a few mentions of other materials such as Career Decision Making (CDM) and the Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH), but the most often mentioned was Guidance Information System (GIS). The GIS was the first computer generated information system. The use of the computer is an advantage to students because they are able to see their results immediately. The System of Interactive Guidance and Information (SIGI) and the Differential Aptitude Test (DAT) were each being used by only one counselor. The information could be misleading if one does not keep in mind that only 110 counselors reported being responsible for or administering career related instruments.

Most assessments and inventories are administered by the traditional paper and pencil methods. The testing activity for careers and vocational information is carried

out at the secondary level. The DAT has the capability to be administered by computer or paper and pencil.

Table 9. Career and Vocational Assessments and Inventories without the Computer.

Test	Number	Percent
Self-Directed Search (SDS)	46	20.9
DAT	36	16.4
Strong Campbell Interest Inventory	29	13.2
COPS	17	7.7
Kuder Interest Inventory	14	6.4

#### Clerical Duties

School counselors are trained to fulfill a variety of needs for students and their families, to work with other members of the school staff, and to work in the community. Clerical work was reported as also being a part of the job with most clerical duties being performed at the secondary level. It would have been helpful to explain exactly how many of the respondents worked in a secondary setting, but that information was not gathered in a reportable fashion. The clerical duties listed could be performed by a computer program and a secretary. The involvement with scholastic testing for the student body and scholastic testing for Individualized Educational Plans does use the skills the counselor has gained through training.

Table 10. Clerical Duties at the Secondary Level.

Duty	Number	Percent
Class schedule changes	150	68.2
Class scheduling	140	63.6
Scholastic Testing	112	51.0
Financial aid planning	108	40.2
Credit check for seniors	99	45.0
Follow-up activity on graduates	86	39.1

Some duties were performed by counselors at all grade levels from high school, junior high, middle school, and elementary. These included the following.

Table 11. General Level Clerical Duties.

Duty	Number	Percent
Grade reporting	75	34.1
Schedule parent/teacher conference	69	31.4
Schedule IEP meetings	38	17.3
Weekly sports eligibility check	22	10.0

Other items are also considered clerical duties. In this area, 59 counselors listed such things as letters of recommendation, maintaining a master schedule of all events, working with transcripts for incoming students, and keeping all case notes for IEPs and CST meetings. One counselor estimated that 70% of a day could be spent executing clerical duties. Another counselor was proud of being designated as the contact person for services and community programs open to the students and families in that school.

Community Service

School counselors are involved in a wide variety of community service activities. Over half (122) reported involvement in one or more of the following basic groupings: anti-violence task forces; parent-teacher-community groups for the prevention of suicide, substance abuse, and child abuse; boards for Big Brothers and Big Sisters; social service agencies such as the Department of Family Services, social services, mental health, and the Department of Probation; community service organizations such as Kiwanis, Lions, and Eagles; and professional organizations and societies.

The counselors were also asked if they were a member of their community child protection team. A child protection team is a group of professionals in the community charged with the protection of children. It is comprised of but not limited to representatives from law enforcement, the medical community, the clergy, the school, and other community professionals who work with the Department of Social Services. The team's purpose is to investigate reports of child abuse or neglect from the Department of Health and Human Services (formerly Department of Family Services). The group is to determine the validity of the report and then develop a plan to protect and serve the needs of that child.

Currently, 83 (38.2%) of the counselors are part of their community child protection team.

Youth Violence in the Community  
and the School

School counselors were requested to provide their perceptions regarding youth violence in their community and in their school. Using a Likert scale with one as "low" and five as "high," the results are as listed in Table 12.

Table 12. Counselor Likert Scale Assessment of Community and School Youth Violence.

Value	Community		School	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1	47	21.4	65	29.5
2	60	27.3	74	33.6
3	56	25.5	57	25.9
4	47	21.4	19	8.6
5	9	4.1	3	1.4

Violence is seen in Montana as a low to medium threat. Nearly one-fourth see it as low in the community (21.4%) and the school (29.5%). Overwhelmingly they view youth violence as only a low to medium issue in their community (74.2%) or in their school (89%). Very few perceive their community (4.1%) as possessing a high youth violence rate and even fewer feel that there is a high youth violence rate in their school (1.4%). Overall, the schools are perceived to be safer than the community.

The counselors indicated that the identification of high risk youth in the school setting for the majority of schools is an informal process (Sellers, 1995). One counselor stated, "You just know who they are." The methods of identification mentioned most often are teacher referral, observation of changes in behavior or friends, informal identification, "you just know the students personally," conferences with teachers and parents, and referrals from the Department of Family Services and sometimes the police department. One counselor stated that 20% of the student population in the school has received adjudication in the court system.

Although most assessment of high risk status is through informal means, some formal assessment techniques are used. The more formal assessments for identification of high risk youth include using the Chemical Awareness Response Education (CARE) team questionnaires or referrals, child study teams, behavior assessment scales, and FOCUS (Friends of Children Under Stress) teams which have a specific format to follow. In many instances when the assessment used is informal, the counselor also stated work was being done to develop criteria to make it more formal. The Office of Public Instruction has an At Risk Survey to be used as a more formal checklist form. A few of the counselors indicated they use this checklist. Since there is no standard criteria for identification established by the

Office of Public Instruction, the question arises as to whether or not a youth identified as high risk in one school setting would be so identified in another school setting.

Many (144) counselors are designing or making use of programs to address the needs of the at-risk student. They are making efforts toward identification and the development of specific programs to address the issues surrounding high risk youth. Some of the activities they mentioned include FOCUS Teams, alternative high school, individual and group counseling, involving professionals within the community, and time spent with the students improving decision-making skills, thinking skills, and problem-solving skills.

#### Greatest Concerns

The last three items in the questionnaire allowed the counselors more space to express their ideas, hopes, activities, and suggestions for counselor educators. Their greatest concerns grouped into three areas in relationship to how often they were mentioned (see Table 13). The most heavily mentioned concerns were fragmented families and time. The moderately mentioned concerns were attitude, risk-taking behaviors, money, and violence. A few counselors mentioned their concerns included at-risk students. They also expressed concern for the lack of current career information in their schools and felt a need for more sharing of information.

Table 13. Greatest Concerns of School Counselors.

Areas of Concerns	Frequency
Fragmented Families	65
Time	63
Attitude	35
Risk Taking Behaviors	33
Money	30
Violence	25
Clerical	10
At-Risk	8
Career	6
Sharing of Information	6

Two concerns were mentioned most frequently. Elements of fragmented families were specifically mentioned by 65 counselors. Factors related to time were mentioned 63 times with time-referenced comments by 10 others in addressing specific areas of concern. The two items were virtually inseparable in regard to the level of concern.

Many elements contribute to a fragmented family. The counselors identified the following as issues within the fragmented or dysfunctional family: divorce; physical, mental, or emotional abuse; use of drugs and alcohol; apathy; and the high level of violence in homes today. The literature supports the counselors' observations as issues within the fragmented or dysfunctional family. "Families in which child abuse occurs often are experiencing multiple problems (marital, financial, occupational, parent-child), but the adults lack the resources and coping skills to

resolve them" (Thompson & Rudolph, 1996, p. 404). Lack of education, unemployment, lack of parenting skills, and use of alcohol and drugs were listed by the counselors as factors leading to abuses within a family system. The counselors expressed their concerns about fragmented families in the following ways:

Fragmentation of families is causing overwhelming pain and disintegration of well-being in students presently.

Inability to impact many children's lives because of lack of cooperation from or dysfunctions in the home.

Experiencing large population influx with more and more emotional problems in the children.

My greatest concern is that the educational system is not meeting the needs of children.

There are more children from dysfunctional homes than ever before.

Destruction of the traditional family structure with accompanying problems of minimal parental support, unsupervised youth; radical liberal approach to parenting.

Poor family connection and involvement for many of our kids is TV programs.

More and more serious problems of kids who have serious emotional scars from abuse, neglect, sexual assault and molestation need ongoing therapy as well as a safe place to live and adult attention. Someone fairly healthy who cares.

Counselors felt there was not enough time in a day to attend to all of the work required, the nurturing of students, the feeling of being in control of what is happening to them professionally, and feeling they can make

a difference in a student's life. One counselor was concerned that the ratio of 1 counselor per 400 students was too high to manage effectively. This number was felt to be unreasonably high and made the job impossible to provide services from a pro-active stance. Counselor's comments on time included the following:

The amount of areas I'm responsible for, I have a four-page job description that includes everything from registering new students and scheduling tests and college visits to counseling, if I have time.

Time priorities, many demands from many people.

Attending too many meetings (IEP, CST, parent/teacher); school politics/faculty concerns/counselor image; right wing censorship issues.

Not enough time in a day to reach students who have been referred to you. Career Counseling Information--I'm still trying to build some sources for students to easily access.

Not enough time to do the best job.

We are overloaded at HS levels with too many clerical duties. This leaves those counselors with hardly enough time and energy to do a good job with the vocational end, therefore personal and group counseling suffers immensely. Elementary counselors are often only part time.

So many needs and too little time. 80% of the time with 20% of students. School counselors wear so many different hats.

The attitude of others was in the moderately mentioned group. This was the third largest concern and was raised by 35 school counselors. This area includes the attitudes of the students, parents, teachers, and community. The attitude manifestations included a lack of respect for teachers and

parents exhibited by students. A lack of understanding on the part of parents, teachers, and administrators to see school counselors as willing to help but unable to be the person to "fix" things and unable to "make it right."

Teacher attitude toward counselors

Public perception of counseling as intrusive or unnecessary.

Teachers' inability to recognize the needs of the students to have counseling and the reluctance of teachers to refer because of a certain connotation of counseling. Apprehension to tell parents and get their consent. Some school administrators don't understand role of the counselor.

Risk-taking behaviors were closely aligned with attitude by 33 school counselors. Many risk-taking behaviors are closely linked with an attitude of "so what" by not only teens but also by many younger children today. It is not surprising when one looks closely at certain family systems already mentioned by the counselors. The perception by many youths is that no one cares. It is far easier for a youngster to "cop an attitude" than to risk caring and be hurt again. The emotional scars may remain evident long after the black eyes or the broken bones have healed, after the spoken words are silent, or after the isolation of no one caring.

The risk-taking behaviors are varied but some have common issues. These are related to drug and alcohol; suicide attempts; eating disorders; and sex-related issues of unprotected sex, young age sexual encounters, pregnancy,

and young parenthood. All result in the threat of harm to one's self or others.

Gang activity, early sexual activity (grade 3), use of alcohol and other substances condoned by community because it fits "cowboy ethic."

Lack of concern about violence among students; acceptance of shop lifting, lying among students.

Youth violence; teen pregnancy; family violence.

Unidentified sexual abuse; substance abuse, eating disorders.

[Lack of] attendance, drug use.

Alcohol and drugs are easily available.

The lack of financial resources was specifically mentioned by 30 counselors. In stating other concerns, money became a sub-issue to address the various needs for more support.

Large increase in the number of students with special needs and no or very little help from the state in dealing with this situation.

Budgets have been cut so that nothing happens to runaways, repeat offenders.

Limited money for travel and education [for counselor].

Continued cutback of programs to help troubled teens.

Expansion of service needs, when funding limits and cuts mean full-time work load on less than half-time hours.

Lack of affordable counseling resources.

Complexity and number of individual problems.

Overuse of ADD/ADHD; 504 labels; no resources to individually deal with all these students.

Violence as an issue in Montana communities was rated as sixth on the list of greatest concerns as 25 counselors reported this as a major concern. The rural areas ranked violence low, and it was more of an issue in the larger populated areas. Violence was defined as a growth of gang membership; "bullying, fighting, and name calling in the elementary schools;" sexual assaults; and incest. This was expressed by others as youth violence and family violence, gang ideology, and simply the word violence with no identifying parameters. Violence was a word attached to home, school, and community activities. Violence was also defined as psychological abuses as well as physical abuses.

Increasing problem with violence and chemical dependency issue with adult and older teenagers that greatly impact children in the home.

Lack of concern about violence among students.

Rising violence.

Growth of gangs and their activities.

There are many children who want to resolve conflicts with violence.

Violence in the school/chemical abuse; teen pregnancy; child abuse.

Some issues were mentioned by several respondents but not at the frequency of those in the other two categories. These included too many clerical and quasi-administrative duties; expressing the need for a template to identify and address the at-risk population; the difficulty of promoting career development activities in the midst of other needs; a

lack of sharing information and responsibilities by the family, school, and community at large; trying to work with a large number of transient students and families; programs being reactive instead of pro-active; the importance of respecting diversity and tolerance issues; how to systematically prepare students to enter the work force; and providing relevant career planning and career development education in our schools. The following comments reflect these concerns.

The lack of ability of Montana schools to provide satisfactory education for the non-college bound student.

My concern, presently, is the lack of cooperation between or among other organizations. We are presently on a committee working to enable all agencies to work together and share information.

The need to work with the whole family, not just the student.

Difficult being a counseling professional in a school setting. Can be isolating; lack of professional support.

My greatest concern is to see how unprepared graduating seniors are to enter the work world.

Counselors engage in many activities to address their concerns. Most of them included the use of groups. It was the overwhelming format of choice for addressing concerns and was mentioned by 60 counselors. Other methods employed included involving parents in the issues of the child--17, working with other professionals--15, and speaking out about the counselors' role and need to provide services--14.

### Suggestions for Counselor Educators

The last item of the questionnaire asked the respondents for their suggestions to counselor educators. Of the two main categories mentioned, one was more training in the college courses on special issues relating to students and schools. These include topics such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), Fetal Alcohol Effect (FAE), Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity (ADD/ADHD), emotionally disturbed, identifying child abuse, pharmacology, conflict resolution, play therapy, and sand therapy. The other was to include in the training more hands-on and constructive ideas to implement in the schools which have limited time, staff, and financial resources. In other words, counselor educators should "train for the real world."

### Linking with the Real World

In Phase 2 of the research, the questionnaire results were presented to a group of school counselors at the fall 1996 counselor's conference. The counselors attending had responded to the questionnaire and the presentation of the results was listed in the conference brochure. The 24 counselors present were from large and small school districts around the state and represented veteran and novice counselors.

Following a short synopsis of the results, the counselors broke into five small groups with tag board and markers to record their ideas and to refine or expand upon them where necessary. The counselors agreed upon topic headings and included the format from the questionnaire (a) family systems, (b) resources focusing on time and money, (c) risk-taking behaviors, (d) career and vocational, (e) networking, and (f) suggestions for counselor educators. Another topic the group wanted introduced for discussion became mentally-ill students in the school. Each chart had one topic and each group had a single chart. Each group generated and listed their responses to topic headings for 5 to 8 minutes. At the end of the time period, the chart being worked on was passed to the next group for further input, and a new topic chart was introduced. At the end of the time period each group was able to set forth its own ideas or suggestions on seven charts. Individuals presented to the larger group. Each chart was unanimously accepted by the participants as containing statements of facts or aspirations for the future direction of counselor educators and counselors in practice.

#### Family Systems

A total of eight suggestions emerged related to family systems. The counselors expressed a desire for better training through workshops in family therapy and a need for

a better definition of family and support groups. A concern exists over family support groups being better defined to address the needs of single, step, homosexual, foster, and grand parents who represent the student's primary care givers. Items to take into account when developing methods of providing services to the family systems are the size of the community, the economic structure of the community, and the quality of community resources available to students such as youth groups, sports, and clubs.

A need was noted for counselor understanding of the Native American family systems and the terminology used in discussing the components of the system. Suggestions for further development of practice included a need to incorporate family systems into course work, to provide family support training to reduce the need for students to be involved in gangs, and an expressed desire to work with parents as a team.

### Resources

Resources were classified as time and money. Counselors addressed the issues of desiring a lower student to counselor ratio, which is a combination of time and money, using classroom and group presentations to meet the needs of more students, and desiring less administrative duties. Other suggestions for counselors' practice included the use of peer counseling, peer mediation, peer tutoring,

mentorship programs, and the possibilities of using parent volunteers. The discussion also generated a need for developing community ownership of the counseling program. More community networking through referrals was a method suggested for cultivating the ownership.

A refinement of the counselor's role through the development of a guidance and counseling program or simply to continue to address the needs through a duty checklist was discussed. The group wanted more Internet access to aid in networking with others around the state and to collaborate with others in the community.

#### Risk-Taking Behaviors

Only four small groups chose to respond to the topic. They responded from two perspectives. One was to hold the parents accountable and responsible for the student's actions. The other was to offer ideas for support systems to combine professionals in the community and the family system. It was interesting to observe the frustrations some counselors displayed while determining what actions could be taken to address these concerns. Some took a position involving the mental health association and assumed a very pro-active stance asking the question, "What makes a healthy kid?" The majority in discussion agreed the topic required a community system approach to address the problems facing

students today, but they could not clearly state what steps were to be taken.

### Career or Vocational

The terms career and vocational are interchangeable in many areas, but vocation can be used to describe a single job while the term career is the sum of many jobs. "Career is the totality of work one does in a lifetime" (McDaniels & Gysbers, 1992, p. 138). The overwhelming core of the various groups regarded career and vocational activities as part of a lifelong ongoing process. Some counselors believe the focus should be on the relevance of school to life and work in order to develop a focus on life skills. Career development is not an isolated activity, but it is a process. Counselors put forth the concepts that human relationships and interpersonal skills are necessary and students could be taught to be flexible regarding vocational skill development.

Most students today will have five or more different types of jobs during their life span, and three of those jobs have not yet been invented. Therefore, students require knowledge of their own unique abilities and interests. It was suggested this could be accomplished through field trips, shadowing on the job, and mentoring by a professional. Some alternatives to an all-day high school were discussed and listed. These included starting Tech Prep

at 10th grade in conjunction with business classes and Work/Study programs where the student is in classes half the day and on the job half the day. An overall view was put forth stating that Career Education is an ongoing process that should be continuously implemented in kindergarten through 12th grade.

### Networking

Networking included ideas and methods for linking counselors around the state using Met-Net for school counselors and school psychologists, child psychiatrists, Indian Health Service personnel, and special school co-ops. Met-Net is the Internet system used by the school system in Montana. They included getting mental health counselors and physicians in the areas involved partly for networking and partly for collaboration. While networking was the group topic, some of the ideas fell completely into a collaboration framework: providing special training for parents by professionals; referrals to teachers in non-academic areas such as coaches, art teachers, and music teachers; becoming a resource guide for community services for youth and parents; attending child protection team meetings; working with the community resources to meet common goals; and using available community resources such as clergy, doctors, and private counselors. It was proposed that small communities should make use of large community

resources. It was also mentioned that professionalization would be enhanced by joining other organizations such as Delta Kappa Gamma.

### Mentally-Ill Children in the School

This area was not discussed in depth in the questionnaire responses but became a large topic in the small groups. A model was designed to display a communication need between the following concepts. On the one side was the need for inclusion according to the law, the lack of money, a prison mentality, special collaboration, and a lack of consistency in diagnosis between mental health care and special education criteria. On the other side were strategies for Asperger's (a disease negatively affecting development), FAS/FAE, conduct disorder, chronically mentally ill (PEH), and the effects of ADD/ADHD.

There needs to be an awareness developed by the regular student for the special educational and sensitivity problems associated with the mentally-ill student. With an asterisk listed by the word inclusion, another small group further defined their needs in this manner: full staff training regarding dealing with kids, social skills training, strong programs for the emotionally disturbed, restorative training which is community based, better connection with private and community therapists, community involvement by counselors so

they can know and be known, and a connection with a physician to assist the AD/HD child.

### Suggestions for Counselor Educators

The participants presented suggestions for counselor educators. These suggestions were separated into two areas. The first area addressed became suggestions for school counselor educators. These suggestions involved providing training to counselors in mental health issues such as behavior other than acting out, in issues related to suicide, and in every type of abuse including drug and alcohol abuse and chemical dependency. Other suggestions included how to refer to agencies, how to deal with sex offenders, and how to protect others from being victimized. Counselors educators were asked to work for improved student to counselor ratio and to assist others in understanding the value of counselors. School counselors want to better understand education and teaching, and they requested more time management and record keeping strategies which they termed "nuts and bolts." Ethics is an area where school counselors wanted more knowledge. They also want more training related to the developmental needs for each age group of students.

Suggestions were also made for clinical counselor educators. They were requested to stress (a) the importance of school success, (b) how to be a referral source for

schools, (c) how to provide support and help, (d) to work more with special education students who are quiet and withdrawn, and (e) to provide more course work on everyday counseling situations.

One group listed the following ideas as necessary for the school counselor educators and the mental counselor educator to address together in the course work. A need exists for connections such as signed releases with school counselors for a sharing of the information about the student. All counselors need to understand learning disabilities, emotionally disturbed children, and other education and special education definitions and implications.

## CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

A need existed for assessing the views and opinions of Montana School Counselors regarding the nature of the schools, students, and parents in Montana, for naming the most pressing needs as perceived by the counselors, and for identifying their major concerns related to job specifications and the methods they employed to address those concerns. Secondly, since people are invested in what they help create (Linkenbach, 1995, p. 211), the school counselors needed to be involved in the process of prioritizing the issues, developing the methods to address those issues, and generating suggestions for the counselor educators in the state to address training needs. To ensure that the findings of this study would have maximum impact, a counselor forum was included which allowed the counselor educators and school counselors to translate these findings into useful recommendations for action.

This study focused on Montana school counselors and was divided into two phases. Phase 1 utilized a questionnaire and interviews to assess the demographics, attitudes,

perceptions, opinions, and working conditions for Montana school counselors. This first phase was concerned with these primary areas: (a) certification and training, (b) counseling roles, (c) classroom guidance programs, (d) special needs students, (e) assessment and appraisal, (f) clerical duties, (h) community service, (i) high-risk students and youth violence, (j) activities in which counselors engage to address high-risk youth, (k) the areas of greatest concern, (l) activities used to address those concerns, and (m) suggestions for counselor educators.

Phase 2 involved collaborating with the school counselors during the fall state counseling conference in Bozeman, Montana. At this time, counselors in attendance were given the questionnaire results. They were then asked (a) to express their opinions regarding the accuracy of the report, (b) to put forth any additional concerns, and (c) to produce their recommendations for future actions in regard to practical educational approaches.

The data gathered from this study not only contributed to the development of knowledge defining the counselor's role in Montana schools, it also resulted in translating this knowledge into real-life, practical suggestions for educational emphasis. This study recognized from the onset that the true experts in any profession are the practitioners who are working in the field (Schon, 1987). The study was participatory in nature and involved

continuous input from the school counselors, counselor educators, and the state guidance counseling specialist. Through the process of identifying and prioritizing counselor education and practice issues and then translating these findings into recommendations for action, this study served as a catalyst for the building of relationships between school counselors and counselor educators concerned with common issues (Horton, 1990).

Therefore, the purpose of the study was twofold. In the first phase, survey data were used to describe (a) what duties comprise a Montana school counselor's job at each of the three levels of elementary school, middle school, and high school and (b) how counselors prioritize these duties. In the second phase of the study, qualitative data were used to describe the recommendations from the Montana school counselors for the state's counselor education programs. The school counselors in Montana's public schools were the population for the first phase. School counselors and counselor educators were the participants in the second phase. Information was gathered from the questionnaire, from conversations with the school counselors, and in collaboration with other counselor educators.

The primary findings of this study were reported according to the two phases. Phase 1 reported the findings based on the major sections of the counselor questionnaire. Phase 2 prioritized the issues into useful recommendations

for the education of future counselors, specialized training, and the issues to address in further research.

### Discussion of Findings

#### Age of Counselors

Phase 1 covered the demographics of Montana school counselors. An item of interest was the average age for Montana school counselors. Oregon (1992) and Maine (1995) have conducted similar research efforts and reported the average age in their states to be 43 in Oregon (Oregon State Board of Education, 1992) and 44 in Maine (Sutton & Fall, 1995). Montana's average age of school counselors is 45. The implication of the age factor is the number of years on average before a major number of practicing school counselors could be retiring. Since most counselors practicing today experienced being a teacher first and then achieving a Master of Education degree in guidance and counseling and since many began their college training at a traditional age of 17-19, they may attain a 30-year educational career by the ages of 51-53. There are 60 counselors reported in the age bracket of 51-65, representing 28% of all Montana school counselors. With the retirement of this group, the age factor will definitely play a role in the changing face of counselors in Montana.

### Group Counseling

The counselors were asked to indicate the percentage of time per week they spent (a) working with individual students and (b) working with groups of students. Results indicated counselors spent 42% of their time per week working with individual students. They spent 17% of their time per week in group counseling with students. From the 1960s to late 1980s, counselors were trained with individual counseling as a main focus of their job description. Today, this is not possible given the number of students and the magnitude of students' needs (Baker, 1996; Myrick, 1993). The major influence during this time period was Carl Roger's (1951) philosophy of focusing on the individual to empower them to solve their own problems. Presently individual counseling is not time effective and does not utilize the counselor's training and expertise (Baker, 1996; Myrick, 1993).

### Training Site

Another interesting finding lies in the fact that 64 (29.1%) of the counselors reported being trained at Montana State University--Northern. The next closest number reported graduating from Montana State University--Billings with 47 (21.4%). Montana State University--Bozeman was reported by 40 (18.2%) counselors.

The 220 counselors who responded expressed their beliefs, feelings, observations, and conclusions from personal experiences. They described their frustrations and exhilaration, giving a full spectrum of issues and ideas they believe influence or direct their responses to meet the needs of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community. They did not express a belief that they are able to exert control, command respect, or effect a direct change in their environment without networking and collaborating with other professionals throughout the state.

The responses to the open-ended questions fell into two categories. The first was issues facing the counselors with the related sub-headings of issues facing the student and the family. Issues facing the counselor educators was the second category. Even though the counselors did not address specific comments to the Office of Public Instruction or to the state counseling organization, there are definite implications for these entities in the responses.

#### Counselor Survey Findings

Concerns the counselors mentioned were issues included in three major categories. The first category was time considerations. A variety of activities were noted to be time consumers as well as some issues affecting the definition of the counselor's role. The duties centered around (a) clerical tasks such as gathering and reporting

grades weekly to determine sport eligibility for participating students, (b) class scheduling for all students for grades 6-12, (c) medical record keeping such as immunizations reports required before a student can be enrolled in a school, and (d) all related paperwork that does not directly affect the student's personal, academic, or career development. Not one activity listed requires a master's degree in guidance and counseling. Each could be adequately performed by any trained clerical staff.

An issue impacting counselor's time derives from demands of administrators and teachers to perform what the counselors term as "miracles."

Too many looking for a quick fix.

Having people look to you for the solution to all problems.

It is considered the duty of the counselor to assume the responsibility of "making students behave and for assuring the student is ready to learn within the confines of the school community." Put succinctly, some teachers and administrators expect the counselor to "fix" any broken student.

Time is a needed commodity for developing and coordinating liaisons or networks with other professionals in the community. Just as trust is a paramount requirement in a counseling situation, time is required to develop a knowledge of methods other professionals employ to achieve

their goals and for a bond of trust and mutual respect to be established.

The amount of time required to educate a tax-paying community regarding the need for the counselor's services and the diversity of the role is an ongoing task. With every action taken, the counselor must be aware the public is evaluating the worth or cost effectiveness of counselors in the schools. Misperceptions by parents as well as by community members, some of whom have no direct relationship with the school, tend to obstruct the counselor's effectiveness and prevent the counselor from becoming a complete resource to the school, the family, and the community at large. The concern regarding the lack of time to provide for everyone's needs raises the question as to whether the functions of guidance and counseling should be separated. Only 25% of the tax-paying population have children in the K-12 public school system (Joanne Erickson, 1997, keynote comments at the February M-CATE meeting, Helena, MT).

Included among the professional issues facing the counselor are personal fears in regard to litigation which would require time away from the job to appear in court and possibly money to defend. A school is held liable for the actions of a counselor, but the plaintiff may also sue the counselor as an individual. Counselors need to know how to

maintain a positive attitude while facing the myriad problems students and others place on their daily agendas.

The second category of issues facing the school counselor involve time and money. This category goes hand in hand with regard to personal and professional growth and development. To further the counselor's skills and abilities through professional development activities, the counselor would need the time to be released from duties in the school and the money to attend a conference or seminar. Program development requires finances to purchase materials needed to provide a program and the time to develop its implementation. These materials may include assessment instruments to be used for identifying special needs students, developmental materials to assist with inclusion requirements for all handicapped students, and vocational assessment items.

The third category contains issues which rely heavily upon the single factor of money. Money is a requirement for purchasing program development materials. It is required to pay counselors in order to preserve the counselor to student ratio required by the state agency. In addition, the counseling office needs money to purchase computers, testing materials, and resources to enhance career and personal development to broaden the student's horizons and aid in developing a realistic picture of the world of work.

Counselor Concerns: Issues  
Facing the Student

The sub-heading of issues facing the student include fragmented families. The student from a fragmented family may be unable to develop respect or appreciation for self or others because this positive behavior is not modeled in violent, abusive homes where parents or primary care givers abuse alcohol or drugs or in homes where the children are physically, mentally, or emotionally abused.

My greatest concern today is the lack of respect that today's young people have for themselves and the people and property around them.

Students "at risk" have no respect for themselves or others.

In other homes, the abuse is not as readily apparent because drug use, alcohol use, and home violence are not factors, but the abuse is one of neglect and the parent(s) do not interact with their children in any manner. Physical, mental, or emotional abuse is perpetrated in some homes by the lack of care or complete neglect on the part of the parent or responsible adult to provide the most basic needs required for a child to thrive. Counselors noted the following:

Throw away kids who are supporting themselves

Schools becoming the largest social services agency in cities. Hot lunch/breakfast/free reduced lunch.

Without the food programs, many children would not have access to adequate nutrition. Within each of these family

systems live children who experience loss, sadness, grief, and unrecognized and untreated childhood depression.

Counselors pointed out that "more and more children come to school with sadness, chaos."

Some students rise from the homes just described with the characteristics or labels used to identify the "at-risk" student while others emerge from these families like a "phoenix" rising from the ashes. They are capable of achieving, and in some cases of excelling, in areas of academic and personal traits expected by society. These children are the "resilient" ones. They are not defeated by the lack of nurturing role models in the home, the lack of nutrition, lack of behavior boundaries, or the lack of demonstrated decision-making skills. Instead, they are able in spite of society's dire predictions to succeed and contribute to society (see Benard's undated report, funded by the Western Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities; Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Sharpio, Friedman, Meyer, & Loftus, 1996).

For many, however, the loss of a role model in the home leads to risk-taking behavior (Benard, no date; Sellers, 1995). These behaviors may include drug or alcohol use; early experimentation with sex; unprotected sex leading to becoming a teen parent or contracting a sexually transmitted disease; eating disorders such as bulimia, anorexia nervosa, or overeating; or becoming a gang affiliate or gang member

in order to satisfy the very human need of belonging. These students may embrace crime as a method of getting their needs met, as a method of getting attention, or as a means of retaliating against society. This may be demonstrated as a "you owe me" attitude.

A big concern is the overall attitude of students today. They don't seem to think school is of any importance. If they get an F, they don't care. It's as if they believe everything should be handed to them.

Without a parental or societal role model, these students do not or are not able to understand the purpose of school. They do not feel they "belong" and are not able to develop knowledge of how to solve problems without the choice of violence.

The fighting, name calling, bullying that goes on among the children on the elementary level.

I am concerned about the violence that is growing and appears to be first choice for solving a conflict.

They exhibit poor decision-making skills and may assume a "victim" or a "bully" stance or mentality. The significant force at work here is extrinsic motivation. The student believes that "someone" or "something made me do it." The student does not exhibit an ability to recognize intrinsic responsibility for personal motivations or actions.

Without the intrinsic motivations and the acceptance of personal accountability, it is impossible for these students to understand the purpose of school or identify any personal

responsibility for their actions. They are unable to develop any ownership in the process of education. The students do not develop social skills, study skills, or lifelong learning skills. Education and knowledge are not considered a valuable asset. Their basic needs are not being met according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1966). Many become truant and engage in delinquent behavior resulting in misdemeanors or felonies. The focus for these students is on the present rather than any long-range planning or preparation for the "world of work." More students need guidance in choosing a career or higher education path than ever before. An issue that is beginning to present itself is whether or not it may be time to begin a separation of the guidance and counseling components within the school setting. The following counselors' comments are only a small sample of the actual frustrations again related to the issue of time to deal with all the needs of the student and the community.

Students not prepared for college or work force.

Lack of a work ethic of students

My greatest concern is to see how unprepared graduating seniors are to enter the work world.

One result of focusing on the "at risk" student is the average and the excellent students receive very little of a counselor's time, energy, or expert guidance in planning for their present and future needs.

We as school counselors spend 99% of our time with students who are "at-risk" and almost no time with the students who are working to be good students and productive members of our society.

It does not seem to matter whether the transition is from high school to college, to vocational technology school, or directly to the working world; more and more often these students are being viewed as a "victim" of the system and ill prepared to face the future. A new idea being put forth is the Resiliency Model as a program or method to identify the components the at-risk student may employ to achieve success. The components enable the student to succeed in the school and the community and can be used to identify and promote equal success for other students, spanning a much larger population (Benard, no date; Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Sharpio et al., 1996).

Counselor Concerns: Issues  
Facing the Family

Family styles were defined within the parameters of two basic types, very liberal or very conservative. The liberal parenting style has no rules or boundaries and no one outside the family is allowed to interfere with the family system. In other family settings the counselors described that the double standard was adhered to empathetically. There were no consequences for drinking, using drugs, or becoming sexually involved at a young age if the student was a male. The attitude described was labeled the "cowboy ethic." It was

also expressed that men never cry and boys just had to get tough. There is a very real denial of emotions and for a student to express such may produce harsh results.

The other side is the extreme conservative, Christian fundamentalist parental style (Miller, 1995; Simonds, 1993). In this family system, the parents are telling the school that it cannot teach values or ethics, that it cannot do mental imagery, and that there will be no mention of Pumsy or Duso (Developing Understanding of Self and Others; Dinkmeyer & Dinkmeyer, 19??). Both of these are the names of programs which may be used in classroom counseling settings within some schools' established classroom curriculum. The objection to these school counseling programs is that they require mental imagery, self-relaxation techniques, and promote self-esteem and self-understanding. The Citizens for Excellence in Education (CEE) are against "classroom methods" of teaching using techniques such as "cooperative learning" (Burry, 1993/94). Both family systems may be looking at the school as a "culprit" in the declining achievement of their individual child. On one hand, the school can be viewed as being too restrictive to the student's development, and on the other hand the school could be viewed as promoting too great a variety of choice or temptations seen as unacceptable for the family. The issue is best summed up by Robert L. Simonds, president of the CEE, in "The Religious Right explains the Religious

Right." He was responding to a question about the causes of the downfall of educational leaders or the lack of education in different cities in the states:

It's complex because of the often-irrational influence of left-wing educational radicals whose agenda is a socialist, anti-Christian diatribe designed to denigrate all religions, but especially Christianity.

The issues surrounding who has the right to determine the activities within a school setting and how those activities affect the family is becoming more and more heated as the rhetoric grows.

One of the greatest issues impacting family life today is a transient lifestyle. For example, the counselors reported:

Many students coming to our state with multiple needs that are hard to meet.

Transient families - their children have overwhelming needs

For reasons of seeking better jobs or because of losing a job, families are on the move. The once extended-family support systems are no longer able to provide support because of such movement. When parents are unemployed, there is no insurance or money to pay for referral counseling outside the school to the community mental health professionals. There is no money for day care, producing the latch key kids. There is no supervision provided in many instances to meet the young student's physical and emotional

needs or the physical and emotional needs of the older student.

Counselor Activities to  
Address Concerns

The counselors who reported being engaged in a variety of community activities to address their concerns are sharing the responsibility with the community. These professionally active counselors move outside the school day and engage in activities to further help students and families define and achieve their goals. The activities included facilitating groups after school to address the issues of (a) anger control, (b) divorce, (c) grief and loss, (d) Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD), (e) chemical abuse relapse prevention, (f) parenting classes for students as well as their parents, (g) eating disorders, and (h) suicide awareness. From various discussions it is clear these counselors understand the need to become proactive in the community. They understand that it is necessary for public and political awareness in order to promote the services they are able to provide not only to the school but also to the community. They speak out at meetings, let their principals know that not all things are possible, implement counseling curriculum, and become accountable for their time in myriad ways. They collaborate with other professionals and network to maintain and improve their skills and to develop new insights into being a pro-

active liaison within the community. All counselors were not able to define their pro-active activities or stated they were emotionally, physically, and mentally exhausted by the end of the day and could give no more.

School counselors spoke out in regards to what they view as the problems today in the school, the family, and the community systems. They stated what they were able to do and what they were not able to do to effect change. The frustrations of overloaded schedules, of students being in need greater than resources could address, and of the feeling of being inadequately prepared for the situations encountered in the school counseling world were vented. While perception is reality, there are still avenues of action some counselors may take to address the issues facing them as evidenced by the counselors moving toward advocacy roles in the community. During the fall conference presentation and clarification of the results from the questionnaire, the suggestion was made for each counselor to develop a needs assessment for their individual and unique school district and in relationship to the community. The physical responses from the participants were eyes rolled, heads dropped forward or backward, arms folded, and faces expressing closure to the suggestion. One major reason given for their responses was that a needs assessment was not a practical idea because there was no time to implement one.

School CounselorsConclusions

1. Proportionally few school counselors are pro-active in the development of their professional identity. They are missing the resources of many entities within their schools and the community.

2. School counselors in Montana today have not engaged in needs assessment activities and are not receptive to the suggestion of implementing one.

3. School counselors have not demonstrated a deep reservoir of knowledge with regard to the components necessary to develop an inclusive pro-active counseling program.

4. There are vast deficiencies in school administrators' and the public's knowledge base as how to effectively utilize the counselor's knowledge and training in the school setting and community setting.

5. Crisis management absorbs a large amount of a counselor's time and reduces the effectiveness for the largest part of the school counseling population.

6. School counselors are looking for a template or a book to direct their reactions and responses to students' myriad needs.

7. School counselors are divided as to their role definitions. Some believe they are based in education and

provide services to promote learning for a student. Others believe they are to provide mental health services from a clinical or medical point of view.

### Recommendations

1. Counselors need to develop their professional identity. They need to become self-directed and initiate a pro-active professional stance. This stance may be enhanced through joining and taking an active participatory role in professional organizations. The American Association of School Counselors, the American Counselor Association, and the Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors are rich resources on the national level. These organizations are also represented at the state level. These associations have developed a code of ethics and suggested methods of attaining goals within the school setting.

2. Counselors must invest the time to initiate a needs assessment. A needs assessment is imperative, in order for a good counseling program to be successful and to meet the needs of the students, the families, the teachers, the administrators, and the community at large (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994; Paisley & Borders, 1995; Myrick, 1993.) Rich resources abound at the state level for conducting needs assessments, and they are not being employed to address the issues. The needs assessment is not to be

limited to the school setting but should include an integration with the community.

With the needs identified, a program can be developed through collaboration, coordination, and networking among professionals from each system in the community to meet the identified needs (Jones, 1992). Ownership is shared, and each professional has a responsibility to implement the plan. There is not one person trying to meet all the needs, and the counselor is in a unique position to be the liaison to provide the connections between a wide variety of entities.

The Office of Public Instruction has produced a developmental K-12 counseling program and curriculum. The manual for this program was not mentioned by a single counselor in addressing their concerns or needs. Yet, on page 10 it states that "guidance should be coordinated with other agencies" and goes on to list 11 possibilities for coordination. Pages 20-24 list the activities for the current program assessment and the needs assessment for future considerations. It is known that some school districts have used the format suggested to develop their individual programs, but it was not cited as part of an ongoing resource to meet many counselor's stated needs. Publications authored by Gysbers and Henderson (1994), Myrick (1993), as well as the Montana Office of Public

Instruction give ideas and formats or questions for needs assessment instruments.

3. School counselors need to develop a broader base for the understanding of the components necessary to develop an inclusive pro-active counseling program.

Rule 10.55.1901 DEFINITION Guidance counseling is the specific educational service that helps individual students develop their personal, social, educational, and career/life planning skills. (Montana Board of Public Education, 1996, p. 18)

This quote should be taken seriously as it describes the charge given to counselors in education to provide a service for the student. The literature today is bursting with information to assist in designing an inclusive pro-active counseling program. Sources to be considered for self-directed learning include journals and magazines such as The School Counselor, Counselor Education and Supervision, and Journal of Counseling and Development. Major works to seek are Norm Gysbers and Pat Henderson's (1994) Developing and Managing Your School Guidance Program, Stan Baker's (1996) School Counseling for the Twenty-First Century, Robert Myrick's (1993) Developmental Guidance and Counseling: A Practical Approach, and Sherry Jones's (1992) Guidance in Montana: Ideas that Work. Another rich source of references is the Internet. Search engines such as Yahoo and Web Crawler make it easy for counselors to access libraries and specific education topics. The American Counseling

Association has its own Internet address at <http://www.counseling.com>.

4. Counselors need to become politically active to educate the school administrators, teachers, and the public as to the purpose of the school counselor. Counselors can employ a variety of methods to inform the public, including the school administrators and teachers. They may use weekly or monthly newsletter or use the newspaper and radio media to promote an activity or tidbit of the day, week, or month describing the student-related activities in which the counselor is involved. While in the past the counselor sat in the office and waited for students, today the counselors must be an active voice for the profession. This can be done by becoming indispensable members of the school and the larger community (Anderson & Reiter, 1995, p. 268). They must employ a variety of methods for educating the public. It is no longer acceptable to say there is no time without developing accountability scales (Fairchild & Seeley, 1994; Hughey, Gysbers, & Starr, 1993).

5. A pro-active, well-designed program is needed to capitalize on the time and energy of the counselor. Some school districts have already designed and implemented a coordinated school and community response to crisis. A methodical plan is in place and personnel are trained in the response methods required. This again requires a needs assessment and program development in each individual.

community. It is imperative to develop a K-12 program that is able to address the needs of all the students. School counselors impact the entire community within and without the school walls. A well-developed program should have a wellness component, tie into community resources, and be able to more systematically meet the challenges it faces.

6. Counselors need to feel empowered to address individual feeling of inadequacies. It is not possible for a college or university to offer degree course work to develop an in-depth knowledge of specific areas the counselor will be expected to address in the work world. Counselors need to self-reflect and self-direct energy to fill in the gaps. "In our rapidly changing society, if counselors wait for research, in many cases, it is too late to act" (Anderson & Reiter, 1995, p. 275). Cole (1988) suggests "those entering the counseling profession must be capable of and willing to acquire new sets of skills as client demands change" (Cole, 1988, p. 142). When counselors define who their community is, they will be able to develop networks and establish partnerships with community resources, universities, and the state agencies.

7. School counselors need to decide on an individual basis what the role is that they wish to assume in the school. School counseling has evolved through many changes in the educational system and, therefore, experiences a greater identity problem than the other professionals in the

educational field (Baker, 1996; Welch & McCarroll, 1993). It is important for counselors to decide if their individual identity source is with a mental health focus or an educational focus. Mental health focus has a medical model as its base. It assumes there is something wrong with the person. The mental health model requires a more in-depth and long-term commitment to the patient or client. The underlying belief in an educational model is that the student is a very normal person learning to work through problems. This identity needs to be clarified with all participants in a school setting. Again, the case could be made to separate the needs of the student into a guidance or educational focus and a mental health counselor focus. The judgment of one role being considered right or wrong is not so much the issue as the need for counselors to inform others of their philosophy and self-perception (Huey & Remley, 1988; Remley, 1991).

### Counselor Educators

#### Conclusions

One of the goals of this study was to identify what counselor educators could do to respond to the stated needs of the school counselors. In discussion with counselor educators around the state, it was discovered that many of the suggestions of the school counselors have been implemented within the last 3 to 5 years. The majority of

counselor educators educating school counselors have had relatively recent experience as school counselors and are able to capitalize on that experience and bring the work world into the classroom.

1. A number of counselor educators have been employed as school counselors and have had in-depth field experience.

A number of counselors suggested counselor educators have more field experience. It was discovered through the action group at the fall 1996 conference that a considerable number of counselors in the schools today were trained during a time when the counseling programs emphasized individual or one-on-one counseling and the counselor educators were perceived as far removed from the classroom.

2. The practicing counselors more recently trained had a philosophical change during their internship due to the influence of their supervisor. Some encouraged interns to

forget all the stuff you were told in school. This is how it is really done in the real world. There isn't time for all the stuff they tell you to do.

Some supervisors believe that theory is bunk and no one should waste time on that in school. Some counselors in this study suggested:

Give up Rogers and the other idealists from the 1960s and emphasize results.

Spend less time on theory and much more time on practice. Have your students spend time face to face with people. Freud, Rogers, Jung, etc. have very little effect for school counselors.

Some believe that the counselor should just do personal counseling and that the career counseling will take care of itself. Others believe the opposite, that the focus should be on career counseling and the personal agenda will again take care of itself. Montana counselors said:

Deal more with personal issues; too much focus on vocational.

Focus on personal counseling. Career counseling, etc. will come naturally, can be more self taught once we use it in the work place.

Career information is a high concern of most students. Here again, the argument could be made to separate the guidance counseling functions into career education and personal counseling. However, the question must be asked if it is possible to separate the two activities.

The supervisor at the school site has tremendous influence on how a counselor will be practicing in the future. Supervisors are often not trained in the art of supervision, and they should have supervision training and updated information in order to understand the new paradigms of school counseling (Nance, 1996; Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987).

3. The role identity crisis exhibited in the school setting is a result of the counselor educator's identity crisis. There are a few educators in the state who believe the clinical or medical model of mental health is the professional identity required in order for counselors to be

taken seriously in the public's eye. Most of these educators have been trained by the model they espouse and have not experienced an intensive school counseling model. They pass their training on to students who perpetuate the ambivalence and unclear roles to be performed. This is pervasive due to the rapidly changing needs in the school setting. School counselors expressed this in the following ways:

Practical preparation of school counselors; school counselors attempting to do more therapy than they are trained to do.

The lack of a defined role for counselors! We seem to be expected to be a master in all areas.

### Recommendations

1. Counselor educators need to continue to be actively involved in the school and larger community settings and to relate material being learned to establish credibility in the public's eye. These experiences may be accomplished through volunteering in the K-12 school setting and through intern supervision. Counselor educators should be active in establishing partnership agreements with public schools. Again, this could demonstrate collaboration, networking, and empowering by sharing resources and information throughout the community. A continuing dialog between the counselor educators and the counselors practicing in the field is imperative.

2. Counselor educators need to offer courses and in-depth workshops involving current issues and changing

methods of practice in the schools today. It is not possible to educate with a template covering in depth all the topics the school counselors mentioned during a two-year program. A 48- or even a 60-hour program of training does not allow for courses on each important topic. It is the responsibility of the educators to model for the novice counselor the responsibility of becoming a self-directed learner, of becoming a reflective practitioner, and of becoming politically aware and actively promoting the profession. They must be able to develop the resources for the acquisition of future knowledge. The ability to relate theory with practice should be modeled by the counselor educators. Counseling students should be trained to develop and conduct workshops for public school students, teachers, administrators, and people in the community. These are activities used to promote an understanding of the proactive counselor. Educators should develop programs which encourage empowerment to the student and design course work to illustrate the steps needed to accomplish the goals.

3. The counselor educator must accept the responsibility of training intern supervisors to become critical thinkers and reflective practitioners. It is imperative that the supervisors are able to assess the intern's ability to perform the duties required of a counselor. They need to understand the ethical and legal ramifications of actions as well as the failure to act (Huey

& Remley, 1988; Remley, 1991). A resource for supervision training is Don Nance from the University of Kansas. He holds intensive 2- to 7-day workshops covering all areas of a supervisor's responsibilities. Other authorities in the area of supervision are Peter Oliva and George Pawlas (1997). Their book Supervision for Today's Schools focuses on the teacher. If the counselor is more and more becoming a teacher, this is a most appropriate book. It is important not to limit resources but rather to gain knowledge and be able to transfer its application to new content areas.

4. Counselor educators who will be involved in training the future school counselors should have school experience. It may not be necessary to have school counseling experience in order to teach school counselors, but it is important to have developed an understanding of the issues surrounding the practice within a school setting. It is equally important for the educator to have an understanding of the mental health system and to be able to model the collaboration and networking needed for all counselors whether in the public arena or school setting.

#### State Agencies Implications

The wealth of information at the state public education level should be more aggressively marketed. The isolation and time constraints of the rural counselors leave them little time to explore resources. Counselor educators need

to work more closely with the state agency in promoting the resources to develop pro-active strategies while the counselors are still in training. The education degree does not finish the learning process. The emphasis in the past was on guidance career counseling and not on personal counseling. The huge pendulum shift to personal counseling took place in less than 10 years. Role confusion is a result, and now an aggressive political campaign to define the balance between personal and guidance counseling is necessary.

#### State Counseling Organizations

Each fall in Montana, there is a counseling conference which is held concurrently during the Montana Education Association meeting time. School is not in session, and all school counselors should be able to attend. Unfortunately, many of the school districts do not fund for conference or travel costs. While it is a mark of a professional to become personally responsible for further education, realistically it cannot always be accomplished without financial resources.

State professional associations face the question of how best to reach the majority of the school counselors. The questionnaire information from this study has provided the state counseling association and the state school counseling association with information to address the specific issues

and needs stated by the counselors. These results are already being discussed for future fall conferences, and the possibility of having regional workshops is under discussion. This information could be made available to all counselors in the state by putting the results from this study on a state web site for ease of access by counselors separated by great distances. The web site would be able to provide current information and resources to enhance public awareness and promote the social actions needed for change in the profession.

#### The Adult Education Connection

The foundation and philosophy of adult education is an important gift to the developing professional engaged in school counseling. To further advanced professionalism, it is important to become a reflective practitioner (Schon, 1983). Malcolm Knowles (1970) and Stephan Brookfield (1986) have written extensively on becoming self-directed learners. Myles Horton (1989) in America and Paulo Freire (1970b) in Brazil have spoken for empowering individuals to take action for social changes and not just that which would affect the individual. Jack Mezirow (1990) has pointed out that:

It is through dialogue that we attempt to understand--to learn--what is valid in the assertions made by others and attempt to achieve consensual validation for our own assertions. . . . Rational thought and action are the cardinal goals of adult education. (p. 354)

By capitalizing on the process of adult education, individual counselors can open a pathway for dialog and move toward professionalization. As Marcel Proust said, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

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APPENDIX  
SURVEY INSTRUMENT



## SCHOOL COUNSELING SURVEY

### Department of Counseling

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October 25, 1995

Dear School Counselor,

The faculty of the counseling program at Montana State University-Northern is requesting your participation in a job analysis survey to determine the various tasks of a school counselor. The survey will be used to develop workshop training for the summer program as well as update current curriculum offerings.

By completing the enclosed survey, you will be participating in the unique effort of MSU-Northern to involve school counseling practitioners in the development of curriculum. The results will be prepared and presented to Northern's Administration, Office of Public Instruction (OPI) personnel, and school counselors at the Montana Counseling Association's State Conference in October of 1996. Results from this survey are available to each participant by requesting them from Judy Birch, State Guidance Coordinator for OPI.

Please take the time to complete the attached survey. After completing the survey (return postage has been provided) simply fold the back page over the front page, fold in half and staple. We are asking you to return it by November 30, 1995. If you have any questions about the instructions, any of the items, or need assistance in marking your responses - please call Mary McCroskey, Shirley Watts, or Jerry Kiser at (406) 265-3745.

On behalf of the graduate counseling faculty at MSU-Northern we would like to thank you for taking time to complete this important survey. By your participation, you are helping us identify and fulfill the professional training needs of school counselors in Montana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary McCroskey".

Mary McCroskey  
Assistant Professor, Department of Education

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shirley Watts".

Shirley Watts  
Assistant Professor, Department of Education

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jerry Kiser".

Jerry Kiser  
Assistant Professor, Department of Education

## SURVEY OF THE ROLES OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR IN MONTANA

You are being asked to participate in a study regarding school counselors.

School counselors perform myriad tasks and engage in a variety of activities in their daily professional lives which often go unrecognized. This survey contains questions relevant to the various tasks performed by counselors in Montana public schools for the purpose of comprehensively identifying exactly what counselors like you do in Montana schools today. This information will be used to assist colleges in designing counselor educator programs that fit the needs of counselors entering the 21st Century.

This survey is completely confidential. Although we very much need your responses, participation IS voluntary; you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time. ALL PARTICIPANTS WILL REMAIN ANONYMOUS.

### COUNSELOR DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Are you: (circle one number)
  - 1.1 Female
  - 1.2 Male
  
2. What is your age?  

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age
  
3. Did you receive your training as a school counselor in a Montana college/university?  
(circle one number)
  - 3.1 yes
  - 3.2 no
  
4. If you did receive your training in a Montana college or university, please identify which:  
(circle one number)
  - 4.1 MSU-Bozeman
  - 4.2 MSU-Billings
  - 4.3 MSU-Northern
  - 4.4 UM-Missoula
  - 4.5 UM-Western

**SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS**

5. Please circle the number that best indicates the student population in the school district in which you are employed: (circle one number)

- 5.1 1 - 499
- 5.2 500 - 999
- 5.3 over 1000

6. Please state the total number of school counselors employed in your district:

\_\_\_\_\_

total number of counselors

7. How many students are you responsible for providing counseling services?

\_\_\_\_\_

number of students

8. What is the student population in the school(s) you serve?

\_\_\_\_\_

total student population

9. Circle the grade level(s) you are assigned:

K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 or All

10. Circle the number that best describes your position:

- 10.1 Counselor -- Full Time
- 10.2 Counselor -- Part Time

Some part-time counseling positions consist of split days; other positions consist of split weeks. Please tell us how many hours you spend performing counseling duties:

hours spent per day \_\_\_\_\_

or

hours spent per week \_\_\_\_\_

10.3 If you are a part-time counselor, please indicate what the title of your other position(s) is (are):

\_\_\_\_\_

title of other position (e.g., teacher, librarian)

**CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING**

11. Circle the number that best describes your counseling endorsement:

- 11.1 K-12
- 11.2 Class 6
- 11.3 Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

12. Please state the number of credits you have completed in your counselor training program:

\_\_\_\_\_   
 number of hours

13. Please circle the degree classification that you hold:

- 13.1 M.Ed. Guidance and Counseling
  - 13.2 M.Ed. Counseling
  - 13.3 M.A./M.S. Counseling
  - 13.4 MSW
  - 13.5 School Psychologist
  - 13.6 Other (please state)
- 

14. Please list any state licensure or national certifications you hold in the field of counseling: (circle all that apply)

- 14.1 NCC (National Board Certified Counselor)
  - 14.2 LCPC (Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor)
  - 14.3 LPC (Licensed Professional Counselor)
  - 14.4 NCSC (National Certified School Counselor)
  - 14.5 Others (please state)
- 

15. Have you obtained specialized training in any areas related to your counseling position? (circle all that apply)

- 15.1 Brief Therapy
  - 15.2 Play Therapy
  - 15.3 Art Therapy
  - 15.4 Peer Mediation
  - 15.5 Conflict Resolution
  - 15.6 Crisis Intervention
  - 15.7 Violence Prevention
  - 15.8 Substance Abuse Prevention
  - 15.9 Other (please state titles -- please do not abbreviate)
- 
-

**COUNSELING ROLES**

Please indicate those counseling-related services you provide and/or supervise on a regular basis. For purpose of analysis of the following questions, please mark which level(s) you serve:

- Secondary  
 Elementary  
 Both

**16. Individual and group counseling**

- 16.1 Approximately what percent of your total time per week is spent in individual counseling?

\_\_\_\_\_ percent of time

- 16.2 Approximately what percent of your total time per week is spent in group counseling?

\_\_\_\_\_ percent of time

- 16.3 What is the focus of the various groups you conduct: (circle all that apply)

- a. academic improvement  
 b. personal needs
  1. divorce
  2. grief and loss
  3. violence, abuse, pregnancy prevention
  4. relapse prevention support groups
  5. parent support groups
  6. parenting skills groups (for parents or students)
  7. other (please list)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- c. career exploration and planning  
 d. work preparation/job search  
 e. groups for special needs students (please specify)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- f. other groups that you conduct (please list)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**CLASSROOM GUIDANCE PROGRAMS**

- 17.1 Approximately what percent of your total time per week is spent in providing classroom guidance programs?

\_\_\_\_\_ percent of time

- 17.2 What are some of the themes of your classroom guidance units? (circle all that apply)

- a. conflict resolution
- b. leadership
- c. communication
- d. academic success
- e. peer relations
- f. wellness
- g. decision-making
- h. problem-solving
- i. social skills
- j. vocational planning and readiness (e.g., resumes)
- k. other (please list)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS**

- 18.1 Are you a regular participant in Child Study meetings?

- a. yes
- b. no

- 18.2 What services do you provide for special needs students: (circle all that apply)

- a. parent support groups
- b. vocational/career exploration and planning
- c. social skills
- d. consultation and advocacy
- e. classroom guidance programs
- f. liaison with resource agencies
- g. other (please state)

\_\_\_\_\_

- 18.3 Do you provide any specific services for gifted/talented students?

- a. no
- b. yes (please list)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**ASSESSMENT AND APPRAISAL**

19.1 Are you responsible for any specific assessment or evaluation in your position as counselor?

- a. no
- b. yes

If you answered "yes", please list which assessments for which you are responsible:

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19.2 Please indicate which vocational/career assessments and inventories you use with students: (circle all that apply)

- a. computer programs
  - Discover
  - Sigi
  - MCIS
  - Other (please list)

b. Strong Campbell Interest Inventory

c. Differential Aptitude Test (DAT)

do you use the computerized version of DAT? \_\_\_\_\_

d. Kuder Occupational Interest Inventory

e. California Occupational Preference Survey (COPS)

f. Self-Directed Search (SDS)

g. other (please list)

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**CLERICAL DUTIES**

20.1 Please indicate those clerical duties you provide: (circle all that apply)

- a. class scheduling
- b. class schedule changes
- c. grade reporting
- d. weekly sports eligibility reports
- e. weekly grade reports to parents
- f. scheduling parent/teacher conferences
- g. scheduling IEP meetings
- h. credit checks
- i. follow-up activity on high school graduates
- j. individual student contacts regarding scholastic testing for higher education
- k. individual student contacts regarding financial aid planning and deadlines
- l. other (please state)

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22.5 What activities or efforts are present in your school(s) and communities to address high risk youth and youth violence? (circle all that apply)

- a. identification of high risk students, using a set criteria established by an advisory committee
- b. planning committee directed toward prevention of youth violence
- c. cooperative committee of school, community, church, parents. etc., to implement and supervise youth activities in the community
- d. mandatory conflict resolution training for all students
- e. peer mediation teams
- f. leadership training for all students
- g. community outreach by specific groups to involve parents and organizations
- h. other (please explain)

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23. Please share with us areas of greatest concern you have as a school counselor.

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24 Please share with us activities you use to address any of these concerns. Toot your own horn; what do you do that seems to be highly successful in dealing with particular issues facing today's school counselors?

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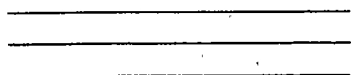
25. What suggestions do you have for us as counselor educators?

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**TO RETURN, FOLD THIS PAGE OVER THE FRONT PAGE, FOLD IN HALF AND STAPLE.**



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