



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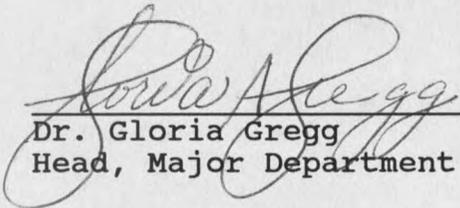
This thesis has been read by each member of the graduate committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.



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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

