

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Counselors in the 1990's have faced (and continue to do so into the new millennium) an ever-changing social climate where young children are presented with a multitude of choices, decisions, freedoms, and conflicts not seen in past generations (Graham, 1997; Paisley & Borders, 1995). Today school counselors must deal with a number of difficult social issues, such as an increased number of unsupervised children in two-working-parent families, in single-parent homes, and in homes of a teenage parent, drugs and alcohol abuse, violent behavior, poverty, and homelessness. Other issues facing the school counselor are increasing numbers of non-English speaking students, children with symptoms of boredom, low self-esteem and lack of motivation, and an increase of revealed cases of sexual abuse.

School counselors also deal with the random acts of violence that seem to be sweeping across the nation. Children are killing children. The search for warning signals among school children who may be prone to violence is a burden that appropriately falls on the entire community. Several authors (Batsche & Moore, 1999; Facundo, 1999; Schmitt, 1999a) indicate that the public and professional communities are concerned with the roots of abusive behavior that have life-long consequences not only for the abuser and the target(s) but also for the family and the community. Given these issues, a call has been made to school counselors, administrators, and legislators to reduce the counselor-to-student ratio and to consider current functions that include more time working directly with students addressing core issues (Kareck, 1998; Schmitt, 1999b).

This chapter begins by describing a brief overview of school counseling practices as a prelude for understanding the variety of roles and challenges that school counselors have experienced and continue to face today. Problems with the current functions of school counselors are identified, and the importance of studying the role of school counselors in Northern Virginia is emphasized. A series of research questions are posed to guide this investigation, followed by assumptions and potential limitations of the study. Key terms are defined.

### Background of the Problem

Counseling in the public schools has endured significant change since its inception in the early 1900's. Placing and matching students with jobs was the primary role of the guidance counselor in the era of Frank Parsons (Nugent, 1994). In subsequent decades, E. G. Williamson was instrumental in creating strategic, directive counseling approaches to help students (Nugent, 1994). He also promoted the training of teachers as guidance counselors to meet students' needs regarding occupational choices and decisions (Hackney, 1990; Paisely & Borders, 1995). By the early and mid 1950's and 1960's another massive campaign was created to train teachers in guidance, counseling, and testing as a reaction to the Soviet launching of Sputnik I. The National Defense Education Act of 1964 pushed for American students to be as competitive as their Soviet counterparts in areas such as science and technology. Client-centered Rogerian theory also received great emphasis among school counselors during this time. By the late 1950's and early 1960's, many counselors persisted in working primarily with individual students and retreated into isolation from the overall school program. Others became pseudo-administrators by alienating themselves from teachers and identifying with school administrators (Hackney, 1990; Muro & Kottman, 1995; Paisely & Borders, 1995).

In the mid to late 1960's and 1970's, the influence of behaviorism found its way into the schools, not only as methods of teaching but also for helping children with problems and shaping their attitudes. By the late 1970's, researchers began to question the effectiveness of school counseling as well as the tenet that teachers could be trained to be effective counselors (Hackney, 1990; Poidevant, 1991). In some school districts, counselor supervisors were replaced by coordinators who often had little interest, knowledge, or training in school counseling (Hackney, 1990; Schmidt, 1990). Moreover, the demand for accountability and evidence of school counseling programs' effectiveness increased. Evaluation and outcome studies became a popular necessity (Borders, 1991; Gysbers, Hughey, Starr, & Lapan, 1992; Hughey, Gysbers, & Starr, 1993).

Efforts to legitimize the profession and remediate role conflicts and problems of definition and practice among school counselors characterized the 1980's. The American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) created task forces that studied and set guidelines for ethical codes, licensure, accreditation, and role

definition of school counselors (Hackney, 1990; Paisley & Borders, 1995). Change in the role of the counselor emphasized the need for counselors to continue to adapt to social changes and to engage in frequent re-evaluation (ASCA, 1990; Hackney, 1990; Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, & Williams, 1989a). By the late 1980's and early 1990's, the American School Counselor Association (1993, Appendix A; 1990, Appendix B) recommended that the focus of the school counselor should be on developmental concepts (introduced in the form of guidance lessons) for prevention and not remediation (Baker, 1996; Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997; Sink & MacDonald, 1998). ASCA also recommended short-term consultation, rather than long-term counseling, with a variety of populations (students, parents, teachers, administrators, the community) (Welch & McCarroll, 1993; West & Idol, 1993). Welch and McCarroll (1993) and West and Idol (1993) concluded that consultation was effective for prevention and intervention, and for enhancement of school achievement, improving self-concept, and reducing stress. Consultation was also shown to be effective in helping teachers learn new skills in classroom management, communication, and facilitating value and moral growth of students (Blum, Bleiweis, Furick, Langholz, Smith, Woodley, & Fisher, 1995; Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997; Sink & MacDonald, 1998; Wiggins, Schatz, & West, 1994). Additional suggestions for changing the role of the counselor involved a shift from extensive individual counseling to group work (Graham, 1997; Whiston & Sexton, 1998) and implementation of peer mediation, solution focused, and brief counseling programs that would help alleviate issues in a limited number of sessions (Alcorn, 1997; Littrell, Malia, Nichols, Olson, Nesselhuf, & Crandell, 1992; Schmitt, 1999c).

Counselors in Virginia have been influenced by the many changes recommended by professional, state, and national organizations. In particular, the role of the counselor has been affected by the Department of Education that accredits public schools. The most recent accreditation standards (Virginia Department of Education, 1997) state that each public school will be accredited primarily based on the percentage of students who achieve a passing score on the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. Because counselors are an intricate part of the school environment, their programs have been influenced by the strong emphasis placed on SOL tests. In the late 1990's, efforts have been made to design program guides that provide standardization and consistency for counseling programs within each jurisdiction. The Virginia Counselors Association (1999), for instance, developed a draft of essential SOL competencies for counseling and guidance programs to be presented to the Board of Education. These competencies closely

correspond with those mandated in the 1997 regulations for accrediting public schools, and they specifically focus on student completion (by grades 3, 6, 9, and 12) of indicators in the areas of academic, career, and personal/social development. In Northern Virginia, several school districts have already developed guides defining the role and functions of the school counselor in terms of SOL goals and objectives (J. Siegel, personal communication, October 8, 1999). For instance, counselors in Arlington are being asked to specifically match each function they perform with a SOL objective specified in their guide (Arlington County Public Schools, 1999). Alexandria City Public Schools is in the process of developing such document and asking counselors to do the same (M. L. Wall, personal communication, October 15, 1999). The standards of learning adopted by the Virginia Department of Education, combined with the recommendations provided by the Virginia Counselors Association (1999), ASCA, and those in the professional literature, appear to play an important role in defining the current functions of Virginia school counselors.

The school counseling profession has undergone many transformations, and many factors appear to influence the day-to-day activities of school counselors. The counselor of the new millennium is faced with challenges in role definition, ideal versus actual functions, and the demands placed by individual school districts and the state of Virginia. At a time when high demands are placed on the student, counselors appear to struggle in allocating sufficient time to counseling activities.

#### Statement of the Problem

For many years, school counseling programs have operated from a traditional (emphasis on administrative and clerical duties, crisis-centered approaches of intervention), non-developmental approach to counseling. Unfortunately, this method does not appear to meet the developmental needs of all students. To keep up with the trends of society and meet the needs of all students, school counselors must operate from a philosophical base that encompasses developmental counseling, consultation, coordination, and group guidance (Carroll, 1993; Neukrug, Barr, Hoffman, & Kaplan, 1993; Welch & McCarroll, 1993). Significant problems can emerge when counselors and administrators establish their own standards of practice to meet personal, institutional, or administrative needs. And although counselors in Virginia and across the country (Sink & MacDonald, 1998) have increasingly designed and implemented effective programs in public schools that follow the developmental approach taught in counselor-

education programs, some traditional counseling programs continue to exist primarily due to great variability in school-counselor expectations by administrator, teachers, and other school personnel (Neukrug, Barr, Hoffman, & Kaplan, 1993; Schmitt, 1999c; Sink & MacDonald, 1998).

Additionally, school-counseling positions, particularly at the elementary level, suffer the constant threat of abolishment by State legislators. Virginia instituted a regulation in 1997 no longer requiring that elementary school counselors be mandatory school staff. As a result, local schools districts could decide whether to allocate financial resources to hire elementary school counselors or reading specialists. This unfortunate legislative reality, coupled with counselor role confusion and limitations, and a strong, conservative group that opposes counseling in the schools, amounts to a tremendous challenge for the practicing school counselor. Although some school districts in Northern Virginia have adopted guidelines and policies to protect and support counselors in schools, Kaplan (1994) recommends that the functions of school counselors should not constitute an ancillary role, but rather a central role that enhances both student learning and strong communication with parents. (Due to persistent legislative efforts by school counselors in Virginia, ASCA, and the Virginia Counselors Association, Virginia legislators passed Law HB 245 in March, 2000 reinstating elementary school counselors in all Virginia public schools. HB 245 was awaiting the governor's final approval at the time this study was completed.)

Studies that address the current functions and roles of the school counselor are essential in this debate. According to Podemski and Childres (1987), role ambiguity and confusion can have significant negative consequences leading to counselor burnout and frustration, poor communication of program goals, underutilization of counselor's skills and abilities, inadequate supervision, and lack of criteria for program effectiveness and counseling staff.

Of particular interest to this researcher is the area of Northern Virginia. This area is directly influenced by the economic, social, and political trends of the large Washington, DC metropolis. The high academic demands of a very competitive environment and the unprecedented number of immigrants residing in these areas can be quite challenging to school counselors. This challenge often interferes and inhibits the students from meeting their needs.

In some areas of the United States, change in the functions of the school counselor has been reported to be slow, inconsistent, or non-existent (Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989; Miller, 1989; Rowe, 1989). Studies have not been conducted describing current functions of the school

counselor in the fast-paced, often transient, and ever-changing Northern Virginia multicultural community. Because of the lack of research in this area, this research explores how school counselors allocate their time to various activities.

### Significance of the Study

National studies have shown the importance of understanding the tasks and functions of school counselors from a practical and counselor-education viewpoint (Ballard, 1995; Coll & Freeman, 1997; Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989; Rowe, 1989; Sink & MacDonald, 1998) and studies from specific areas of the United States (Crow, 1997; Graham, 1997; Hardesty & Dillard, 1994; Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997; McCroskey, 1997; Moore, 1997; Scruggs, Wasielewski, & Ash, 1999; Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, & Williams, 1989a). In Virginia, elementary school counselors have been viewed by some as non-essential and even damaging to the moral development of students (Kaplan, 1995, 1997). This perception may be the result of inconsistent practices among school counselors at different grade levels and in different geographical areas of the state. It may also be attributed to the lack of knowledge about what school counselors really do, the limited amount of empirical studies on outcome evaluation, or the misinterpretation of what counselors do.

Outcome studies conducted in Virginia clearly indicate the effectiveness of well-established and -implemented counseling services (Glosoff & Koprowics, 1990; Hoffman, 1992). Studies describing the functions of school counselors, the frequency and importance of their functions, and the desired counselor role have been conducted in other parts of the country but not in Northern Virginia (R. House, personal communication, October 25, 1999). In this area, no studies have been conducted that describe what services are currently being implemented, how often, or whether or not counselors are meeting the state accreditation requirements. In order to meet the needs of the students in this complex society, school counselors must be not only clear in defining their role but also willing to advocate for change.

A unified and clear understanding of the desired school counselor's functions can have direct implications for the students. For instance, by increasing the amount of time providing direct counseling services, student problems can possibly be minimized or prevented from happening again (including problems likely to have an impact in the home environment). Moreover, a decrease in non-counseling duties may allow the counselor to fulfill the Standards

of Learning guidance and counseling program requirements in addition to the Virginia direct-counseling service mandate. This mandate requires school counselors to spend a minimum of 60% of their time working with students, parents, and staff, assisting them in areas of personal, social, emotional, career, and academic development (Virginia Department of Education, 1997). These areas are well defined and supported by ASCA (1993; Appendix A). They involve the broad categories of counseling, consultation, and developmental/career guidance, and constitute the first eight activities described in the survey instrument used in this study: counseling individual students, small groups and families, crisis intervention and mediation, consulting with parents, staff, and agencies, test result interpretation, student placement/special education meetings, classroom guidance, and career/job/vocational education (Appendix C). The broad categories are described at the end of this chapter.

An accurate account of the actual role of the school counselor could also have a significant impact on counselor education programs. It could assist training programs in better understanding the present functions, needs, and demands of the school counselor. For instance, courses in brief, grief, and crisis counseling could be offered if results indicate that counselors are not well prepared in these areas but spend a significant amount of time performing these services because of student need. Career counseling courses could offer information on the college application process, entrance exams, and writing recommendations if secondary counselors spend a large amount of time doing that and feel unprepared to do so.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to study school counseling functions by measuring and analyzing how counselors allocate their time to the various developmental functions. Five research questions are posed:

1. How do counselors spend their time?
2. In what way do counselors want to change their allocation of time to various counseling activities?
3. How do school counselors feel about their level of preparation-knowledge and skills-to conduct the counseling activities identified in the survey?
4. What variables (work setting, gender, level of education, counseling experience, teaching experience, student-to-counselor ratio, desire to spend less or more time on an activity,

and level of preparation to perform an activity) affect the way in which counselors allocate their time?

5. Do differences exist between school counselors' estimated allocation of time to the various counseling activities and the Virginia mandate?

#### Assumptions and Limitations

This research study is descriptive in nature. It attempts to realistically describe (by asking counselors to complete a survey [Appendix C] and a daily log [Appendix D]) the estimated amount of time spent on certain counseling functions. This study predicted an accurate recording of data. These are the perceptions of the counselors themselves, not of administrators, teachers, students, or parents. Participants are school counselors working in K-12 programs in public schools in Northern Virginia. The fact that this study is being conducted in a specific region of Virginia limits its generalizability to other areas of Virginia and of the United States.

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to better understand the scope of this research.

1. School counselor: a master's level, state certified school counselor currently working in the public schools with students in grades K-12. An elementary-school counselor works with grades K-5 or K-6; a middle-school counselor works with grades 6-8 or 7-8, and a high-school counselor works with grades 9-12.
2. Developmental counseling: counseling based on the developmental needs and concerns of all students and fostering academic, personal, social, and career development at the various age levels. It helps students deal effectively with conflicts and issues as they may arise, before they escalate. Developmental counseling is based on the theory that specific tasks need to be mastered at each life stage (Barr, Hoffman, Kaplan, & Neukrug, 1990).
3. 1997 Standards for Accrediting Public School in Virginia (Virginia Department of Education): 1) at least 60% of each counselor's time is devoted to counseling students and parents; 2) duties include needs assessment and program planning, and evaluation of program by counselor, principal, parents, and staff; 3) minimum staffing requirement (counselor-to-student ratio) for elementary schools: 1:500, middle schools: 1:400, and secondary schools: 1:350; and 4) provide opportunities for parents, teachers, and other

adults to participate in planned activities that encourage the personal, social, educational, and career development of students.

4. Counseling is a complex helping process in which the counselor establishes a trusting and confidential working relationship; the focus is on problem-solving, decision-making, and discovering personal meaning related to learning and development.
5. Consultation is a cooperative process in which the counselor-consultant assists others to think through problems and to develop skills that make them more effective in working with students.
6. Coordination is a leadership process in which the counselor helps organize and manage the school counseling program and related services.
7. Developmental/career guidance is composed of organized objectives and activities that are delivered in the classroom or in advisory groups (ASCA, 1993).

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of Related Research

The demands and trends of society directly affect the functions of the school counselor. Presently, it appears that the focus of school counseling is on decreasing violence and increasing problem-solving skills among students (ACA, 1999b; Facundo, 1999). Recent school violence has alerted society to troublesome facts regarding some of our youth and the important role that counselors can play in the overall well being of students. Trends like this one are central to this study because they address the need for change in counselor's functions, and more importantly, in the way counselors spend their time. Frequent studies that address current school counseling practices are paramount in defining the profession and reducing role confusion. Indeed, successful attempts have been made, over the past 40 years, to identify the need, appropriateness, and relevance of school counseling programs in America (Dinkmeyer & Caldwell, 1970; Hackney, 1990; McNassor, 1967; Patterson, 1966; Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, & Williams, 1989a; Wells & Ritter, 1979). These and other studies cited in the following pages provided direction, understanding, and even clarification to the role of the school counselor. Yet, despite these findings, the role and functions of school counselors are often confusing to those closely working with them: students, parents, principals, and teachers.

The goal of this literature review is threefold. First, it provides a historical overview of pertinent issues, trends, and practices affecting school counseling since its birth in the early 1900's. The evolution of role definition and school counseling programs in the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's is emphasized in order to better understand present school counseling programs and continued struggles with role definition. Second, an in-depth review of the most recent studies affecting the role and functions of school counselors in the 1990's is presented. This is accomplished by reviewing three specific topic areas in the literature: 1) developmental school guidance and counseling programs, 2) studies and opinions that assess the role and functions of the school counselors from the viewpoint of the school counselor, and 3) research that assesses the role and functions of the school counselor as perceived by administrators, parents, teachers, and students. Emphasis is given to this last decade because it supports the relevance and importance of this study. And third, studies are reviewed to explore the possible effects of certain demographic variables on the way counselors allocate their time to various counseling activities.

Of particular interest to this study are the variables work setting, gender, years of experience, student-to-counselor ratio, and feelings of preparedness to perform counseling functions.

## Historical Overview

### 1900-1909

The guidance movement began in the early 1900's around the time of the Industrial Revolution, and over time evolved into the profession of counseling. Most people involved in the early stages of the movement were social reformers. They saw needs in American society and took action to meet those needs. These pioneers were involved primarily in education/vocational guidance, child study, legal reform, and psychometrics. There was no recognized discipline of counseling during this early period, and counseling was not mentioned in the professional literature until 1931 (Nugent, 1994). Jesse Davis, school superintendent of Grand Rapids, Michigan, was the first person to set up a systematized guidance program in the public schools. In 1907, he suggested that classroom teachers of English Composition teach their students a guidance lesson once a week (Muro & Kottman, 1995). Davis recognized the value of guidance in helping students solve problems, build character, and explore vocational interest. Parallel events were happening in Boston as a result of the Industrial Revolution and the massive influx of immigrants into this urban area. Frank Parsons, who is often referred to as the "Father of Guidance," guided students in preparing for and entering occupations in 1907 (Nugent, 1994). Parsons theorized that choosing a vocation was a matter of relating three factors: a knowledge of work, a knowledge of self, and matching these two. Influenced by Parsons' work, the superintendent of the Boston's public school system designated elementary and secondary teachers as "vocational counselors." This soon spread to other cities as school personnel recognized the need for vocational planning. By 1910, 35 cities emulated Boston (Nugent, 1994).

### The 1910's

After Parsons' death in 1909, the idea of vocational counseling turned into guidance, and counselors began to limit their functions to distributing job information and offering vocational and occupational education as part of the school curriculum (Nugent, 1994). Significant historical events during this decade included the establishment of the first training program in vocational guidance and counseling at Harvard University in 1911, and the founding of the

National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA) in 1913. The NVGA began publishing a bulletin in 1915, which later evolved into a professional journal for all counselors. The name and focus of the journal has changed over the years, and it is now the Journal of Counseling and Development. Another important event occurred in 1917 when the Smith-Hughes Act was passed to support the work of counselors in placing school dropouts and immigrants directly into occupations (Hackney, 1990).

### The 1920's

Progressive education, introduced by philosopher John Dewey in the 1920's, boosted the idea of counseling, not guidance, into the schools. Progressive education focused on the idea that it was the responsibility of the school to change the student's environment and to develop the total child, including moral, personal, and social development (Nugent, 1994). This concept was to be introduced by every teacher in the school. Classes in life skills, adjustment, and group interactions also became popular during this era. Elementary school counseling, based on developmental concepts, was beginning to gain recognition partially due to the writings of William Burnham in the 1920's and 1930's (Rotter, 1990). As the guidance movement mushroomed, parents, teachers, and the general public began to attack progressive education. Part of the discontent was attributed to counselors expanding their focus to include issues of personality and to the notion that moral development belonged in the home and at church, not in the school.

### The 1930's

The first counseling theories emerged as E. G. Williamson (and his colleagues at the University of Minnesota) modified Parson's theory and employed it to working with students (Nugent, 1994). This was a directive, counselor-centered approach, which would dominate the counseling field for the next two decades. Teachers, the primary source of guidance delivery, were taught a systematic way of gathering student information and matching it to occupational choice (Hackney, 1990; Nugent, 1994). The theory was based on the assumption that personality consists of measurable traits that relate to occupational choices and success. As standardized tests were introduced during World War I (and later in World War II) to measure intelligence and personality traits of army recruits, educators adopted revised forms of these tests to be used as part of vocational guidance in the schools (Muro & Kottman, 1995). Leading into the 1940's, a trend developed toward working with psychological concerns of normal people. Unfortunately,

by the late 1930's counselors were rapidly disappearing from schools, and the popularity of elementary counseling programs was delayed until the 1960's (Nugent, 1994). Critics attributed this decline to the Great Depression and lack of funding.

### The 1940's

Interest and aptitude tests were also being developed by psychologist E. K. Strong and educator C. Hull (Nugent, 1994). This approach to guidance and counseling was popular in the 1940's until Carl Rogers began to challenge the counselor-centered approach and advocated a client-centered, non-directive approach to working with clients (Bankart, 1997). His ideas were both widely accepted and harshly criticized. Rogers' popularity grew because of his emphasis on the holistic growth of the individual and because client-centered principles were taught in colleges and universities that provided certifications for counselors seeking employment in the school setting (Hackney, 1990). The criticism, primarily seen in later decades, focused on the apparent simplicity of client-centered techniques and the lack of effective, concrete results (Bankart, 1997).

### The 1950's

Professional associations and organizations began to acquire power by merging. The National Vocational Guidance Association (founded in 1913), the American College Personnel Association, and the National Association of Guidance Supervisors and Counselor Trainers created the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA) in 1952. APGA would later change its name twice, first in 1983 to the American Association for Counseling and Development, and then in 1992 to the American Counseling Association (Nugent, 1994). Also in 1952, the American Psychological Association (APA) dropped the word guidance from its Division 17 and created counseling psychology programs to meet the psychological and vocational demands of post-World War I and II veterans. Donald Super became a key player in the creation of the APA's Division of Counseling Psychology by combining humanistic concepts with vocational development (Nugent, 1994). Counseling psychology became known as the profession that emphasized normal and healthy developmental aspects of the individual.

An additional event influencing the school guidance and counseling program was the National Defense Education Act, passed in 1958 following the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik I. The Act's primary purpose was to identify scientifically and academically talented

students and promote their development. The Act also provided funds for upgrading school counseling programs and training counselors (Hays & Johnson, 1984).

### The 1960's

The launching of the Russian spaceship Sputnik I appeared to mark the beginning of well-established secondary school counseling. High school counselors more than doubled between 1958 and the early 1960's (Cole, 1988), and the American School Counselors Association (ASCA), founded in 1952, began to provide support and a forum for counselors to better communicate their new and unique role: educational (rather than vocational) guidance (Minkoff & Terres, 1985). In 1961, APGA published a sound code of ethics for all counselors.

Subsequent legislative initiatives and updates continued to define the role of the school counselor. For instance, the Vocational Education Amendment of 1963 forced the counselor to focus, once again, on vocational guidance that included job placement, social welfare, and education for employment (Minkoff & Terres, 1985). The National Defense Education Act Title V-A of 1964 and the 1968 Vocational Education Amendment expanded the role of the school counselor to work with all students, including dropouts, handicapped, economically disadvantaged, and elementary level students (Cole, 1988; Minkoff & Terres, 1985).

The social trends of the 1960's also played an important role in defining the role and functions of the school counselor. McNassor (1967) believed that American children were subject to unprecedented academic pressure, and thus the counselor was there to "insure that individuals will not suffer a failure of spirit, will not lose their natural inclination toward warmth and caring...[and to] develop the spirit along with the brain" (p. 85). The sexual revolution, the Vietnam War, an increase in divorce, depression and drug use, women entering the work force, and civil rights protests challenged the counselor to become more involved in the social and personal aspects of the student (Cole, 1988). Patterson (1966) questioned the responsibility of the schools in providing personal-social-emotional development to the student and argued that psychotherapy belonged in the schools. He believed that if counselors were trained to deal with vocational problems, they would also be prepared to work with personal problems. Having access to the child at school made counseling efficient and convenient, avoided waiting lists problems in mental health clinics, and reduced the long-term cost (to the school and to the community) of emotionally challenged citizens (Patterson, 1966). In a later publication, Patterson (1967) defended the notion that verbal counseling with children worked, and that

elementary counselors, not child development consultants, should be employed in the schools. This technique (verbal counseling) was under attack because of the belief that children could not verbalize, conceptualize, or control their own environment (Patterson, 1967).

Additional models of human development (suited for the counselor's own theoretical framework) were being taught in counselor-education programs (Blocher, 1966). Among the most popular approaches continuing to impact school counselors in the 1960's and early 1970's were based on humanistic theory, particularly Rogers' client-centered therapy and Allport's mature personality (Hackney, 1990). Group-centered counseling, where positive self-growth occurs through the dynamic interaction with other group members, was introduced in the schools primarily for students who were dropping out or joining a gang (Minkoff & Terres, 1985). Gestalt counseling, stressing here-and-now awareness and the role of unfinished business on present functioning, was also found to be an effective method of counseling the individual (Bankart, 1997).

Rogers' unconditional regard, although the most influential approach to school counseling to date, began to be seen by school counselors as ineffective, incomplete, and deceptively easy (Hackney, 1990). It was soon replaced by methods that yielded concrete behavioral change in fewer numbers of sessions (Cole, 1988). Behavioral therapy theories emerging in the school setting were based on identifying what behaviors would be changed and how they would be modified (Blocher, 1966). This behavioral approach provided the flexibility and versatility required to meet the goals of many students.

### The 1970's

The need for guidance intensified in the 1970's. The increase in teenage pregnancies, suicide, alcoholism, and dropouts among American youth called for counselors to become primary mental health providers (Gibson, 1989). Dinkmeyer and Caldwell (1970) introduced the concept of developmental counseling and guidance that included services for all school children, not just for those with difficulties meeting societal and academic demands. Developmental counseling were to be available to all children during their critical years, and therefore was introduced primarily at the elementary level. It emphasized prevention. Dinkmeyer and Caldwell (1970) wrote:

Guidance is that part of the educational program which emphasizes the individual. While it does not deny the remedial and corrective aspects of guidance, developmental guidance

instead works toward assisting with the average youngster who, because he presents no special problem, frequently receives minimal attention. This service is not a specialized therapeutic service adjunctive to the school, but it is a part of the educational process. It is concerned with helping the child as a learner (p. 9).

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, legislation introduced in 1974, had serious implications on the role of the school counselor. Although societal trends seemed to emphasize counseling with all individuals, the Act cited the counselors' role as "guidance" and required counselors to work with handicapped youth in a variety of situations (Humes & Hohenshil, 1987). Some counselors adapted their duties to become specialists in special education; others, who viewed the Act as a step backward in counselor-role definition, worked in discontent. Given the great geographical diversity of demand placed on the school counselor, the American School Counselor Association developed a position statement, The school counselors' role in the implementation of Public Law 94-142, that defined the role of the school counselor in the delivery of services to handicapped youth (Minkoff & Terres, 1985). Simultaneously, grass-root organizations were working with legislators to unify and recognize school counseling as a profession. In 1975, the first state licensing law for counselors was passed in Virginia, and in 1979, Arkansas and Alabama became the second and third states, respectively, to legislate licensing for counselors (Nugent, 1994).

ASCA was criticized for being reactive (not proactive) to the external forces influencing the role of the school counselor. In turn, it published four important role statements aimed at identifying and defining the role of the counselor at all levels: The unique role of the elementary school counselor (1974), The role of the middle/junior high school counselor (1978), The role of the secondary school counselor (1974), and The role and function of postsecondary counseling (1974) (Minkoff & Terres, 1985). For the first time school counselors had clear guidelines describing their role, commitment, and responsibility. Elementary counselors were expected to assist parents with child development needs, cooperate with staff in early identification and remediation of problems, increase student career awareness, and consult with teachers by providing in-service training and assistance in incorporating developmental concerns into the classroom (ASCA, 1981). The role of the middle/junior counselor was to ease student transition between elementary and secondary school, encourage teachers to include developmental concepts into curriculum areas, and organize and implement a career guidance program (ASCA,

1981). The American School Counselor Association recommended that secondary counselors organize and implement interventions that focus on adolescent development, organize vocational materials, assist students in personality assessment, and provide remedial interventions for those with "adjustment problems, vocational immaturity, or general negative attitudes toward personal growth" (p. 10). Post-secondary counselors were expected to assist students with transitional needs to adulthood, offer opportunities for psychological education, and finalize vocational and career plans (ASCA, 1981).

Although the role of the school counselor was becoming more refined, problems of definition continued. For instance, in 1963, the results of a survey conducted with administrators, teachers, parents, and students regarding the role and function of the school counselor found that counselors attended primarily to vocational needs, their programs were not well publicized, and they were seen as administrators providing ancillary services (Shertzer & Stone, 1963). Studies in the 1970's also revealed similar discouraging reports. Van Ripper (1971) studied the perceptions of 735 ninth-grade students in Michigan to determine the counselor's role, amount of assistance, and comparative utilization. Results indicated that the counselor was seen as someone who could help with educational plans and school problems but not with personal concerns. Indeed, students viewed the counselor in direct link to the function he or she performed. If the counselor spent most of his time providing curriculum assistance and college planning, he or she was viewed as a vocational counselor. In addition, no noticeable differences were indicated in the roles of the counselor, teachers, and principals (Van Ripper, 1971). Leviton (1977) obtained 550 responses from surveys given to 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders in randomly selected homerooms in Minnesota public schools. In evaluating counselors' effectiveness (in terms of various functions), students rated program planning, academic counseling, and career planning and education as highest in importance (Leviton, 1977). Many students had at least one contact with their counselor, and 76% reported that their contact had been helpful. Unfortunately, students also viewed the counselor as more effective in administrative matters than in personal and family-related concerns (Leviton, 1977). Leviton's (1977) recommendations urged school counselors to promote counseling duties to students, teachers, parents, and administrators, to verify their expertise in dealing with personal problems, and to maintain discipline and student supervision as low priorities.

Almost identical results were found in a study conducted by Wells and Ritter (1979). Students reported that they would seek the counselor for traditional services (e.g., career education, and vocational placement) and only minimally for personal issues. In this study, almost half of the students felt uncomfortable discussing problems with their counselor and felt that their counselor was mostly unavailable (performing non-counseling tasks; Wells & Ritter, 1979). This traditional way to school counseling was also supported by the results of a study conducted by Furlong, Atkinson, and Janoff (1979). These researchers studied the responses of 54 elementary school counselors in California who prioritized 14 functions according to actual and ideal roles: counseling, consultant, appraisal, parent help, referral, change agent, ombudsman, disciplinarian, curriculum planning, public relations, career development, local research, screening, and program planning. Furlong, Atkinson, and Janoff (1979) discovered statistically significant differences between ideal and actual roles in counseling, change agent, program planning, and career development (counselors desired more time), and appraisal and disciplinarian (counselors desired less time). Individual, small group counseling, appraisal, parent help, and referral occupied most of the counselors' time (Furlong, Atkinson, & Janoff, 1979). Discouraging results, however, indicated that counselors spent very little time in the third major role identified by ASCA in 1974—evaluation and accountability—and that a significant amount of their time was spent conducting administrative tasks (discipline, appraisal, referral, and curriculum planning).

Counselor role identity suffered in the 1970's. Counselors' popularity declined, and activities and jobs for school counselors were being curtailed and modified due to financial cuts (Cole, 1988; Leviton, 1977; Peck & Jackson, 1976). Although the emphasis was shifting from working on vocational issues and with a selected individual at risk to working with all children addressing a variety of personal, social, career, and academic developmental needs, change was slow. As social demands continued to influence students and their families (e.g., racial tension, teenage pregnancy, and drugs), school counselors were challenged to define their role even more and to deliver a comprehensive guidance and counseling program to all students (Carr & Hayslip, 1989).

### The 1980's

The American School Counselor Association's commitment to unify the profession and to set guidelines for excellence in practice bloomed in the 1980's. For example, ASCA launched

relationships with the National Association for Secondary School Principals, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, and with Educational Resources Information Center/Counseling and Personnel Services (ERIC/CAPS; Minkoff & Terres, 1985). As a result, role recommendations were made and included a counselor who is flexible to and aware of the changing values and needs of the student, the family, and the community (including technological advances), whose focus is on developmental and prevention programs, and who is equipped to handle personal as well as academic crises (Humes & Hohenshil, 1987). ASCA published a series of role statements that kept up with social demands and strengthened the position of the counselor: The role of the school counselor in career guidance: Expectations and responsibility (ASCA, 1985), The school counselor and developmental guidance (ASCA, 1978; revised 1984), The school counselor and comprehensive counseling (ASCA, 1993; Appendix A), and Role statement: The school counselor (ASCA, 1990; Appendix B).

ASCA, state legislators, and counselors also worked cooperatively to develop education policies that would allocate funds, create mandates, and influence public opinion toward the evolution of school counseling (particularly at the elementary level). The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) was formed in 1983 and increased unification of the profession by certifying counselors at the national level. In addition, the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP) developed standards to ensure uniformity in the preparation of school counselors by accrediting counselor education programs across the country. In 1989, Paisley and Hubbard observed that although not the majority, school counselors in nine states (Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Ohio, South Carolina, and Texas) were considered more qualified or were given preferential treatment in employment if they were graduates of a CACREP approved institution.

Virginia served as an example of long-term and successful efforts in establishing statewide elementary school counseling programs and in passing the first licensure bill for counselors in 1975 (Glosoff & Koprowics, 1990; Nugent, 1994). By 1987, Virginia supporters of school counseling programs, local and state task forces, and professional associations collaborated to pass resolutions that would provide mandates, allocation of funds, or grants in support of counseling in all schools (Glosoff & Koprowics, 1990). Promising results were seen in 1981 when a joint legislative subcommittee recommended counseling programs in all elementary schools. However, funding was not allocated until 1987 when a resolution was

passed to phase in the elementary guidance and counseling program. In 1987, the Virginia Board of Education passed accreditation standards that established a 1:500 counselor-to-student ratio and mandated counselors to spend at least 60% of their time in counseling functions. This was an attempt to move traditional programs into comprehensive, developmental programs that served the needs of all students. Although the ratios and percentages remain in effect today, the Virginia Board of Education amended the accreditation standards to make elementary school counseling optional (Virginia Department of Education, 1997). Successful efforts to revoke this decision were seen in March, 2000 when House Bill 245 was passed. Glosoff and Koprowics' (1990) detailed summary of Virginia's legislative efforts between 1975 and 1987 can be found in Appendix E.

Increased recognition of counseling (with an emphasis on human development) and best practice approaches that would help refine the role of the counselor inundated the professional literature in the 1980's. For instance, Aubrey (1982) and Lombana (1985) stressed the need for accountability (the systematically planning, implementing, and evaluation of counseling programs) or face the risk of extinction. In particular, Lombana (1985) emphasized a matrix that included client and program objectives measured through empirical and perceptual evaluations. These various matrix combinations yielded four important questions: 1) Did the counselor accomplish the task identified in the program objective? 2) How effective was the counselor's accomplishment as perceived by others? 3) Did the student (or other clients) change their behavior as a result of the counselor's efforts? and 4) How effective were student behavior changes (or other clients) as perceived by others? Lombana (1985) warned not to confuse research with evaluation and pressed on the importance of including technology to assist in reporting counselor's efforts (accountability).

Other recommended practices called for prevention programs to substitute remedial programs, and although these included elementary students, efforts to prevent high-school dropouts were still a priority (Gibson, 1989). Preventive programs mostly included group practices. Indeed, group experiences for students were considered the most efficient way in meeting the developmental needs of all students (Larrabee & Terres, 1984). Larrabee and Terres (1984) believed that the counselor of the future would provide personal, social, and vocational information through group interventions, emphasizing experiential and didactic activities in small groups or classroom guidance. Moreover, they reported that "exemplary" schools

identified by ASCA provided minimum individual counseling and made deliberate attempts to meet institutional goals through group work.

Consultation and coordination were additional functions recommended as best practice. Indeed, consultation (an indirect method of providing direct services to students through direct work with teachers, administrators, parents, and the school community) were to replace the costly method of counseling individuals (Umansky & Holloway, 1984). Unfortunately, most counselors did not adopt this function as readily as expected. Umansky & Holloway (1984) believed that many counselors might have been confused as to what consultation was, might have lacked training in consulting, or might have relied on consulting models that were weak. Coordination, another important function recommended by ASCA, also received low priority in the school setting. A study by Kameen, Robinson, and Rotter (1985) revealed that although the majority of school counselors were involved in some kind of coordination activity, most counselors lacked the coordination functions of a comprehensive program. Counselors often maintained educational records, coordinated testing and placement of students, and disseminated career, personal, and academic information, yet they felt the need to spend more time coordinating needs assessment, public relations, a guidance committee, program procedures, and teacher/parent in-services (Kameen, Robinson, & Rotter, 1985).

Mixed results were found in the review of the literature investigating the changing role of the counselor leading into the 1990's (Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, & Williams, 1989b). Positive results, where counselor functions closely related to those recommended by ASCA, were found in counselors working in the 419 "excellent" schools identified by the US Department of Education (Miller, 1988). Miller (1988) surveyed counselors on eight major functions: career assistance, coordination, counseling, consultation, educational planning, organization, assessment, and discipline. Counselors at all levels saw coordination, counseling, and consultation as important to the counseling role. Differences in importance were found among the three grade levels (Miller, 1988). High school counselors rated career assistance as more important than middle and elementary school counselors. Coordination was found to be important to middle and high school counselors, and counseling, consulting, and professional development, on the other hand, were rated most important by elementary counselors (Miller, 1988). Ibrahim, Helms, and Thompson (1983) also found positive results by investigating counselor role perception in parents, administrators, counselors, and members of the business

community. These groups generally agreed that the functions of the school counselor should be those recommended by ASCA. Parents perceived the role of the counselor to be in assisting with course selection, as an ombudsman, and with career education. Business members believed the counselor should work toward providing career counseling and placement for the non-college bound student, and all groups surveyed agreed that counselors should have a closer counselor-student relationship, where the counselor is caring, encouraging, and positive toward the student (Ibrahim, Helms, & Thompson, 1983). Support for counselors led these researchers to believe that counselors had finally gained respect and recognition in the school system.

Discouraging results, however, were found in studies that focused on the actual versus ideal functions of the school counselor. Hutchinson, Barrick, and Groves (1986) reported that significant congruency between actual and ideal functions existed if counselors performed activities recommended by ASCA. Yet, discrepancies were found in counselors wishing to spend less time in record keeping, scheduling, testing, and non-counseling duties. These results are consistent with those found in the previously mentioned study by Kameen, Robinson, and Rotter (1985) and in a study by Morse and Russell (1988). Morse and Russell (1988) studied 130 elementary school counselors with varied years of experience and work sites (urban and rural). Counselors' responses were congruent when identifying the least important actual and ideal tasks: serving as disciplinarian and substitute teacher, serving as lunchroom/playground supervisor, assisting administrators in supervising teachers, and evaluating the guidance program by following the progress of students throughout the years (Morse & Russell, 1988). On the most important tasks, however, major discrepancies were seen in the actual versus ideal role of the elementary school counselor. Consultation and extensive group work was seen as the ideal role of the counselor, compared to the highly individualized attention that counselors were given to students in their actual role.

### The 1990's

The counselor's role in the school setting has been defined, discussed, refined, and revised in abundance. Past decades have shown slow but positive transformation of the identity in the school counselor to ultimately meet, in more efficient and effective ways, the needs of all school-aged children. It has been suggested that less role confusion can be achieved when counselors and principals negotiate contracts or are in agreement regarding the duties and expectations of the counselor (Bonebrake & Borgers, 1984; Moore, 1997; Podemski & Childres,

1987). It has also been suggested that counselors are more effective when they reduce the amount of time spent on traditional and non-counseling duties (ACA, 1999a; Blum & Fisher, 1993; Carroll, 1993; Ford & Lee, 1996; Gibson, 1990; Ginter, Scalise, & Presse, 1990; Kaplan, 1995; Partin, 1993; Schmidt, 1984). Others, such as the Education Trust, an independent, non-profit organization aiming to make schools and colleges work for all students, particularly minorities, began initiatives to transform the role of the counselor and provide new training models in counselor-education programs (Education Trust, Inc., 1999). Multicultural counseling became a significant force in the education and practice of school counselors. The Education Trust (1999) suggested that the present role of the counselor (e.g., mental health provider, one-to-one and small group work, ancillary support, record keeper, work in isolation, little or no accountability, and loosely defined responsibility) be changed to that of a leader, planner and developer, a person who is an integral part of the education team, who focuses on academic counseling, particularly that of low-income and minority students, is an agent for change, and is accountable for students' success. The Education Trust (1999) supports brief counseling with students, groups, and families, and counseling functions such as coordination and consultation.

Realities of the 1980's affected the counselor of the 1990's: 1) budget cuts seriously reduced programs and staff in the helping professions; 2) educational reform shifted from personal development to academic achievement, discipline, order, and security; and 3) counseling practices were questioned on their relevance (Stewart & Avis, 1984). Additionally, several issues of role definition filtrated into the last decade of the millennium and affected program delivery: prevention versus remediation, labels used to describe the profession (counseling versus guidance), the future of elementary school guidance programs, the paper chase, greater use of technology, emphasis on family and group work, a shift toward career education, and adequate implementation and evaluation of comprehensive counseling programs (Schmidt, 1984; Wilson & Rotter, 1982). Change and consistency in the counselor's role and functions continued to be demanded. The following three major topic areas in the literature study the role of the counselor in the 1990's.

Developmental school guidance and counseling programs. Several authors noted that traditional models of school counseling were antiquated and ineffective, and that comprehensive, developmental models were better suited to benefit the development of the whole child and his or her immediate environment (Baker, 1996; Hackney, 1990; Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997;

Paisley & Borders, 1995; Sink & McDonald, 1998). With this in mind, Virginia adopted a developmental guidance and counseling model that provided role definition and practical guidelines for the school counselor (Neukrug, Barr, Hoffman, & Kaplan, 1993). This model has been in existence for more than a decade; it stresses assessment, evaluation, and re-evaluation of current school counseling programs to better and more clearly define the school counselor's role.

Attempts continued in the 1990's at defining the role and functions of the school counselor. For example, under the umbrella of "developmental school guidance and counseling programs," emphasis was placed on the importance of unifying the profession into providing more personal, social, career, and educational skills to students and less clerical and crisis-mode tasks (Sink & McDonald, 1998). In a study conducted in elementary schools in Fairfax County, Virginia, Blum and Fisher (1993) found that agreement between counselors and principals, regarding counseling goals for the students and counseling program greatest needs, improved the school environment and the personal development of the students. Counselors and principals identified similar student needs, including "develop positive self-concepts," "help students become self-directive," "help students develop interpersonal skills," "assist students in understanding themselves," "develop decision-making skills," and "organize and direct counselor program" (Blum & Fisher, 1993, p. 32). Counselors and principals also agreed that seven of the top 10 needs were met very well. Lapan, Gysbers, and Sun (1997) also studied the positive results of guidance programs by collecting opinions of students in 236 Missouri schools. Statistically significant relationships were found between fully implemented comprehensive guidance and counseling programs and students' higher grades. Students believed that having a well-implemented program helped them achieve better academic progress and preparation for the future. In sum, the type of counseling approach studied by Blum and Fisher (1993) and Lapan, Gysbers, and Sun (1997) has yielded positive results regarding career information, school climate, student development, higher grades, and adequate student preparation for post-secondary work.

Emphasis was also placed on guidance curriculum, developmental programming, family life, group counseling, community activity, and de-emphasizing administrative and non-guidance activities (Hackney, 1990). Kaplan (1994) suggested that the role of the counselor should be the same as that of the administrator: To enhance and advance student learning and achievement.

Moreover, Kaplan (1994) believed that counselors need to move from an ancillary to a central role if they are to survive in the school setting.

Overall agreement seems to indicate that developmental models of school guidance and counseling are to be adopted (ASCA, 1990; Gysbers, Hughey, Starr, & Lapan, 1992; Hackney, 1990; Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997; Miller, 1988; Neukrug, Barr, Hoffman, & Kaplan, 1993; Stanciak, 1995; Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, & Williams, 1989a). Indeed, the number of states recommending this comprehensive approach has grown to 41 (Sink & McDonald, 1998). Yet, recent literature also appears to agree that school counselors continue to spend a large amount of time performing non-counseling, administrative activities particularly at the high-school level (ACA, 1999b; Schmitt, 1999c). Partin's study (1993) revealed that high school counselors in Ohio schools spent only 16% of their time providing counseling services for personal and social needs. A closer look at school counseling programs revealed that counselors, although under the umbrella of developmental programs: 1) did not have control over their own profession (administrators and principals often defined the counselor's role); 2) were in no-(wo)man's land (administrators mostly thought of teachers); and 3) suffered the consequences of controversial and inappropriate role definition (Paisley & Borders, 1995). As editor of the journal The School Counselor, Baker (1996) noted that in reading several manuscripts, counselors who did not engage in counseling services feared insufficient time, accusations of moving in the domain of psychotherapy, and isolations from teachers and administrators if they were to engage in individual and group counseling activities. He warned readers not to define developmental guidance and counseling too narrowly only to include primary prevention. Baker (1996) considered individual counseling, small group counseling, and consultation secondary prevention strategies that fall well under the developmental models of school counseling.

Brott and Myers (1999), concerned by the discrepancy between school counselor preparation and the realities of the school counselor's work environment, formulated a grounded theory revealing that counselors' personal guidelines determined the school-counseling program. As a result, diverse programs and services continue to be offered to students (Brott & Myers, 1999).

School counselor functions according to school counselors. One of the obvious ways to understand and learn about the current functions of a school counselor is to interview a school counselor. This targeted population possesses a tremendous realm of information that has

assisted researchers and practicing professionals define best practices for the school-counseling field. Key studies are reviewed below.

In 1989, Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, and Williams (1989a) studied how junior and high school counselors' perceptions of their own functions compared to those recommended by the American School Counselor Association. Although small differences existed between the responses of the two groups, significant differences prevailed between the counselors' functions and those in the professional guidelines. Results showed that developmental needs of students were rarely assessed and little was done to implement developmental guidance into the curriculum (Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, & Williams, 1989a). While Tennyson et al. (1989a) focused on the relationship between functions and national mandates, other studies focused on the relationships and discrepancies in functions at different grade levels. The following two studies illustrate this point.

Hardesty and Dillard (1994) empirically tested the differences among elementary, middle, and high school counselors. Unlike the findings of Tennyson et al. (1989a), significant differences were found among grade levels, with elementary counselors spending more time in consultation and coordination activities and less time doing administrative work. For instance, the top five priorities for elementary, middle, and high school counselors were, in the respective order, 1) consulting with faculty, relationship counseling, and discussing college/trade school; 2) drug counseling, student scheduling, and discussing scholarships; 3) abuse counseling, suicide prevention, and financial aid counseling; 4) consulting with community agencies, rape counseling, and career counseling; and 5) family relations counseling, completing paperwork, and student scheduling (Hardesty & Dillard, 1994). The results clarified the already-perceived differences among the school levels and supported the need to further develop the role of the school counselor.

Coll and Freeman (1997) were also interested in counseling functions, but most importantly, in role conflict among elementary school counselors. Their findings suggested that elementary school counselors shared a higher level of role overload than middle and high school counselors, and that elementary school counselors who saw duties as "not necessary" may be agreeing to perform non-counseling duties (e.g., lunchroom duty, take attendance, bus duty) in fear of being fired. Some counselors and administrators were found to remain very comfortable with the role definition of the past and continued to practice traditional functions. This reluctance

to change added to the constant threat in role identity. Researchers indicated that as society changes, higher demands are being placed on the elementary school counselor. The last three studies mentioned (Coll & Freeman, 1997; Hardesty & Dillard, 1994; Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, & Williams, 1989a) are significant because they identify role conflict among counselors, gaps between actual functions and national or state mandates, and the need for frequent evaluation of the role of the school counselor.

Additional studies supporting the significance and purpose of this investigation focused on change and the differences between real and ideal counseling roles. Ballard (1995) reproduced a 1992 study of school counselors in different regions of the United States, Louisiana, and Oregon. The researcher found that the original model supported by the 1992 study (involving counseling, consultation, classroom guidance, and coordination as the major roles of the counselor) had changed in 1995. Ballard (1995) found a new model emerging in Oregon with three major functions: college and career counseling, crisis intervention counseling, and developmental counseling. Crow (1997), also studying schools in Oregon, found inconsistencies between “is” and “should be” functions. Primarily, rural counselors in Oregon believed that system priorities (“is”) did not emphasize counseling functions as they “should be.” Counselors believed that they should be spending more time in all major areas of counseling and guidance (Crow, 1997). Counselors in Connecticut, for instance, felt short of performing three of the four basic elements of developmental counseling models: consultation, counseling, and coordination (Carroll, 1997). And studies conducted in Buffalo, New York (Graham, 1997) and in Montana (McCroskey, 1997) indicated that counselors felt that counselor-education training programs added to the discrepancy between realistic job and idealist counselor-role expectations. Counselors in Buffalo believed that day-to-day duties influenced greatly their actual functions, and that those day-to-day activities (primarily administrative) were not emphasized in their counselor training (Graham, 1997). McCroskey (1997) concluded that, since 90% of the counselors surveyed had trained in Montana’s counselor-education programs and more than 40% of their time was spent in individual counseling and crisis responses (as opposed to the recommended pro-active, planned group guidance, and consultation role), a dialogue needed to exist between these two groups to narrow the gap between what is being taught, what is being practiced, and what is being recommended. Almost identical results were found nearly ten years earlier by Morse and Russell (1988). These researchers encouraged counselor educators to

expand and enhance student training to more than just group theories and processes. Morse and Russell (1988) believed that detailed “how to’s” of group counseling in the school setting should be an important part of preparing the counselor of the future.

Perceptions of the school counselor according to students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Administrators, teachers, parents, and certainly students have great interest in assuring that the school guidance and counseling program is adequate in meeting their needs and those of the school community. Soliciting their perceptions regarding counselor functions-what their roles and functions should be, what works well, how effective counseling services are, how counselors spend their time-is a necessary component in understanding the gestalt of the school counselor. In this last topic area, prominent research supports the overall effectiveness of comprehensive counseling and guidance programs. In addition, recommendations support active evaluation of counseling programs and of the role of the counselor.

Studies conducted in this last decade of the 1990’s found overall satisfaction regarding school counseling programs. Leading into the 1990’s, teachers, principals, and parents were already evaluating counselor functions as important and necessary (Miller, 1989; Rowe, 1989). Ginter, Scalise, and Presse (1990) reported that teachers primarily viewed the counselor in the “helper” and “consultant” role. Hughey, Gysbers, and Starr (1993) found that students rated career planning and exploration, academic concerns, and future plans as the areas in which counselors helped them the most, and in a recent study, school personnel, parents, and students expressed their overall satisfaction with each of the components and services of the comprehensive counseling and guidance program such as counseling, consultation, coordination, and group/classroom guidance (Scruggs, Wasielewski, & Ash, 1999).

Parents, teachers, administrators, and students also provided feedback on areas of improvement needed in the counselor’s role. They: 1) wanted to hire more counselors and clerical help for counselors (Hughey, Gysbers, & Starr, 1993); 2) wished the counselor would allocate time to coordination and evaluation of the counseling program (Ginter, Scalise, & Presse, 1990); and 3) believed that the counselor could do better at communicating program goals (Gibson, 1990). More specifically, research participants wished to have more counselors available to conduct group and direct counseling services, to emphasize and improve career, work, and college preparation, to conduct in-services and increase counseling awareness, and to do less non-counseling tasks (Scruggs, Wasielewski, & Ash, 1999). The counselor of the future,

according to Welch and McCarroll (1993), is one who shifts from one-to-one counseling to consultation, from a close system to a community approach, from a “line and staff” model to one that recognizes family and group counseling.

It appears that recommendations for school counselors are consistent when reviewing studies concerning counseling programs (the first topic area), counselors’ perceptions and opinions (the second topic area), and the opinions of those directly affected by the school counselor (the third topic area). Changes proposed and adopted in the 1990’s made an impact in the role definition of the school counselor. Comparable changes are necessary to continue to provide effective counseling programs in the new millennium (Hackney, 1990; Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, & Williams, 1989a, 1989b).

#### Possible Variables Affecting Counselor Time Allocation

As seen throughout this literature review, studies have focused on the effectiveness of counseling programs and the desired role and functions of the school counselor. Survey research inquiring counselor’s self-perception and the perceptions of others prevailed in determining best practices. Survey research is also the methodology used in this study to explore school counselors’ best estimation of time allocated to the recommended counseling activities. Of farther interest were the possible variables that may affect the way in which school counselors allocate their time to the major counseling functions. Grade level, gender, level of education, years of experience as a counselor and as a teacher, student-to-counselor ratio, desire to change the actual allocation of time, and preparedness to perform counseling activities were analyzed for their relatedness to counselor time allocation. It was the assumption of this researcher that the aforementioned factors may influence the way in which counselors spend their time, although a review of the literature yielded limited and mixed results when addressing these topics.

Research studying the functions of counselors employed in elementary, middle, and high school settings revealed significant differences in the functions they performed (Coll & Freeman, 1997; Hardesty & Dillard, 1994). As previously mentioned in this literature review, Hardesty & Dillard (1994) found that counseling functions were prioritized differently according to grade level, and that the amount of time spent on these functions varied accordingly. Counselors were given a questionnaire to prioritize, in a Likert-type scale, the amount of time spent on 17 counseling activities. Results indicated that consultation with faculty, drug counseling, abuse

counseling, consultation with community agencies, counseling families, coordination, and testing services were the first priorities of elementary school counselors. Relationship counseling, student scheduling, suicide prevention, rape counseling, completing paperwork, testing services, and family relations counseling were the top priorities of middle school counselors. And discussing college/trade school and scholarships, financial aid counseling, career counseling, student scheduling, completing paperwork, and rape counseling were the priorities of high school counselors (Hardesty & Dillard, 1994). The researchers concluded that higher levels of “coordination” and “consultation” were found at the elementary school level, and that elementary school counselors appeared to have more interactions with parents, families, and teachers. Middle and high school counselors, on the contrary, appeared to work more on administrative tasks, vocational, and post high-school educational activities than elementary school counselors.

Coll and Freeman (1997) also found differences among the grade levels but in terms of role conflict and overload. Responding to a questionnaire identifying work situations in the areas of structural, overload, and incongruency conflict, elementary school counselors reported higher levels of resource and structural conflict than middle and high school counselors (e.g., working on unnecessary things and being asked to do things that should be done differently). These results were also true for areas of overload and incongruency conflict. Elementary school counselors scored higher stress levels when asked to “buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment” and when they received incompatible requests from two or more people (Coll & Freeman, 1997). Studies as early as the one conducted by Conklin and Nakoneshny (1973) revealed that students in middle and high school settings sought counselors for educational and vocational concerns, and that empathy and personal counseling was sought by first and sixth grade elementary school students. Conklin and Nakoneshny (1973) concluded that students might seek more personal help in earlier years and at times of transition.

Miller (1989) and Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, and Williams (1989a) also found significant differences among the grade levels. Studying the perceptions of teachers, principals, and parent groups, Miller (1989) found that fostering healthy physical, social, and emotional awareness of self and others, decision-making skills, and friendship and relations counseling were important priorities of elementary school counselors. By collecting responses from middle and high school counselors, Tennyson et al. (1989a) reported that the emphasis at the secondary

level was placed on educational and vocational guidance. Secondary counselors did not report developmental guidance activities as “very important” although counselors agreed that it is an important part of counseling students.

The variables level of education, gender, and years of experience have not been fully studied nor have been related to school counseling programs or counselor time allocation. Numerous studies regarding gender (e.g., congruency between counselor and counselee gender, level of attractiveness to the counselor according to counselor’s gender, and client’s preference for a counselor according to client’s gender) have been cited throughout the literature (Berstein, Hofmann, & Wade, 1987; Blier, Atkinson, & Geer, 1987; Nelson, Nazario, & Andreoli-Mathie, 1996; Thompson, 1991). Yet research studying the effect of gender and years of experience in the role of the counselor is limited and yields mixed results. Sears and Navin (1983) investigated the prevalence of stress, sources of stress, and several demographic variables affecting the stress level of 240 school counselors. Cross-tabs statistic analysis reported no statistically significance between stress in the role of the counselor and the demographic variables of gender, years of experience, and grade level.

In a related field, Wise (1985) found that gender and years of experience (not grade level or number of students) influenced the way school psychologists rated stressful incidents. Wise (1985) found that: 1) females and those employed one year or less in the schools felt higher stress in risk situations to self and others; 2) males were significantly more stressed by the insufficient recognition found in the schools; and 3) those employed 11 years or more found carrying testing materials more physically stressful than those employed two or three years. In studying the effectiveness of direct and indirect interventions of school psychologists, Keith (1992) collected the perceptions of school psychologists and teachers and analyzed the relationship between number of hours allocated to each activity and activity effectiveness. Gender and years of experience were not found to be statistically significant in influencing allocation of time and effectiveness rates.

Additional studies that addressed these variables provided a typical “profile” of the school counselor. Peaslee (1991) reviewed the literature and reported demographic information suggesting the “average” elementary school counselor’s characteristic to be:

1. In 1967, 78% of counselors were female, had 10 years of teaching experience and one year of counseling experience.

2. In 1975, 80% of counselors were female, had 13 years of teaching experience, and 4 years of counseling experience.

3. In 1979, 72% of counselors were female with 8 years of counseling experience.

Additional review of the literature indicated that in 1988, 62% of school counselors were female and had an average of 8 years of counseling experience (Morse & Russell, 1988). In 1989, the counselor profile in Nevada public schools was: 1) 62% female; 2) an average of 9 years of counseling experience; 3) 89% had previous experience in teaching; 4) counselor-to-student ratios were between 1:300 and 1:600; and 5) 40% of the time was spent in crisis intervention, 17% in assessment and career exploration, 15% in classroom guidance, 9% working in parent and community support, and 19% in non-guidance duties (Nevada Department of Education, 1989). Several years later, Coll and Freeman (1997) sampled school counselors across the nation and reported a profile of the school counselors that included more female than male counselors at all grade levels (87% in elementary, 76% in middle, and 61% in high school settings) and higher average in counseling experience at the secondary level (6 years for elementary school counselors, 9 years for middle school counselors, and 12 years for high school counselors).

When addressing counselor level of preparation, studies in the literature focused on the college education the counselor must have to embark in the counseling field. No articles were found dealing with how prepared school counselors feel when performing counseling activities in their present job. Locke (1978), studying the problems of 211 beginning school counselors with less than five years of experience, found that level of competence, not training received, seemed to be a better indicator of the level at which a counselor counsels. In Locke's study (1978), counselors reported to develop competence as a result of on-the-job performance. Gerken and Landau (1979) studied the overall effectiveness of school psychologists and reported similar results. Teachers, supervisors, and administrators were asked to rate school psychologists' effectiveness in the areas of research, counseling, consultation, intervention/prevention, remedial, individual studies, dissemination of information, screening, and liaison agent. Analyses yielded strong support for the relationship between moderate years of experience and high effectiveness. Years of teaching were not rated as a favorable variable in enhancing delivery of services. In fact, results indicated that those school counselors without teaching experience were more effective in the areas of counseling, screening, research, remedial, and overall effectiveness

(Gerken & Landau, 1979). Although school psychologists (not school counselors) were studied, the results appear significant and relevant to this study.

The last variable affecting the role of the school counselor addressed in this review relates to counselor-to-student ratio. The American School Counselor Association recommends ratios where one counselor per 100 students is ideal and one counselor per 300 students is the absolute maximum (ASCA, 1993, Appendix A). The National Association of College Admission Counselors (1990) also recommends moderate counselor-to-student ratios for middle and high school settings and supports the ratios set by ASCA. The Virginia Department of Education (1997) provided guidelines for school districts that are higher than those recommended by ASCA (1:500 for elementary, 1:400 for middle, and 1:350 for high school student-to-counselor ratios). Godbold (1994) studied middle school counselors in a school district in Virginia and reported that the high student-to-counselor ratio left middle school counselors unable to meet the personal needs of all students. Six middle school counselors were interviewed, and the differences in student-to-counselor ratios and demographics of each school were analyzed. The results indicated that in 80% of the cases, counselors did not have sufficient time for counseling due to the high student-to-counselor ratio and the high number of hours allocated to testing and registration procedures (Godbold, 1994). In an earlier study, Boser, Poppen, and Thompson (1988) tested their assumption that counseling services would be more effective in schools with lower student-to-counselor ratios. They surveyed the opinions of counselors, parents, and school personnel in three sets of schools with clearly different ratios (one counselor/one school with less than 600 students; one counselor/one school with 700-1,000 students; one counselor/three-four schools with 1,000-2,000 students). Comparisons revealed that in schools with less than 600 students, 90% of the students thought their counselor knew who they were, and 92% reported to have had the counselor in their classroom. These results are stronger than those found for the other two groups, where 68% of students reported that the counselor knew them, and 79% remembered having seen the counselor in the classroom (Boser, Poppen, & Thompson, 1988). Parents also reported in favor of the counselors in systems with lower counselor-to-student ratios in the areas of awareness of who the counselor was, where he/she was located, having talked to the counselor about his/her child, and feeling comfortable talking to the counselor about his/her child. Similarly, the staff felt the greatest impact in the area of consultation. Boser, Poppen, and

Thompson (1988) concluded that counselor availability to students had great importance on the perception of counselor effectiveness.

This literature review highlighted the major topics and issues concerning the role and functions of school counselors since inception of the profession. Great progress has been made in shifting to and implementing comprehensive school guidance and counseling programs. Indeed, the effectiveness of these programs is clear. In states such as Virginia, where influential groups of traditional parents believe that counselors deflect time and attention from academic instruction and interfere with personal, private, and family life and values, it is crucial that school counselors define, clarify, unify, and better communicate the actual functions and goals of their profession (Kaplan, 1997, 1995). In 1982, Wilson and Rotter stated, “change is the challenge of the day; to rely on yesterday’s answers is to become stagnant and outdated professionally” (1982, p. 354). The role of the school counselor has been and continues to be in constant change. This study investigates the current functions of school counselors in Northern Virginia.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### Research Design

Survey research design was used to gather information from participating school counselors. According to Alreck and Settle (1995), survey design can be used to "understand or predict human behavior or condition...to enhance the body of theoretical and conceptual knowledge of the discipline" (p. 3). This researcher surveyed the perceptions of school counselors in public schools in Northern Virginia to better understand the functions of school counselors in comprehensive school counseling and guidance programs. As recommended by the American Statistical Association (1998), careful planning when conducting survey research was key to this study. Strategies included laying out clear objectives of the investigation, deciding the mode of data collection, constructing unambiguously phrased questions with clearly defined concepts, and giving close attention to the length of the survey instrument. In addition to the survey, participants were asked to report the counseling functions performed on a typical day by filling out a daily log composed of half-hour time increments. The daily log, developed by the researcher, intended to remediate self-reporting bias inherent in this survey design.

Surveys are commonly used and particularly effective in collecting descriptive, self-reported data. Advantages of this method are the potential low cost and relatively short amount of time for data collection. The cost of distribution was offset because this researcher distributed 42% of the survey packets to counselor's work site using internal mail delivery systems. The rest of the surveys were mailed to counselors' home address. Personal contacts were explored to increase the response rate.

Additional considerations of survey design are the "cosmetic" aspect of the instrument, a possible inducement to respond, the lack of interaction with the participants, and the lack of interviewer bias, since each participant is presented with exactly the same instructions and tasks. The most important threat to validity of survey design is the relatively low response rate. According to Alreck and Settle (1995), five to ten percent response rate is expected, 30% is rare. The resulting response bias is a serious problem, given that the outcome is likely to represent the perceptions of a certain group of people who responds to surveys, not of the randomly selected sample. Providing incentives for the participants to respond is often suggested

to increase the number of completed surveys, although incentives to individual participants were not offered in this study. An increase in response rate was accomplished by conducting a second distribution of the survey without the requirement of completing the daily log. Contacts were made by calling counselors on the telephone, leaving messages in voice mail systems encouraging them to participate, and by attending counseling staff meetings. The results of the survey packet distribution and collection are explained in detail in Chapter 4.

### Community Setting

A critical element for a successful survey is to be able to assert that all members of the population to be studied are represented. In this case, the population is composed of all school counselors currently working in public schools in Northern Virginia. Of particular interest are the areas of Arlington County, Alexandria City, and their adjacent neighborhoods of Fairfax County (e.g., Falls Church and Springfield) because these areas share many social and political demands affecting school counselors today. In fact, these jurisdictions share a unique historical background closely tied to that of the Nation's Capital. For example, in the late 1700's, the portion of land owned by John Alexander and parts of Fairfax County (later to become Arlington County) were ceded by Virginia to create the ten square-mile District of Columbia. In 1847, these portions of land were returned to the Commonwealth of Virginia and became known as the independent Alexandria City (in honor of its original owner John Alexander). In 1920, a 26 square-mile portion of Alexandria was renamed Arlington County (in honor of the Earl of Arlington), and these two jurisdictions have since functioned independently. Appendix F provides a summary of key demographic information characterizing Alexandria City and Arlington County today (Alexandria City, 1999; Arlington County, 1999a, 1999b).

Arlington County Public Schools (ACPS) currently employs 65 graduate-level school counselors: 26 work in 20 elementary schools, 15 in five middle schools, and 24 in four secondary schools (J. Siegel, personal communication, October 8, 1999). Counselor-to-student ratios in ACPS are lower than those recommended by the Virginia Department of Education (1997), at 1:445 (versus 1:500) in elementary schools, 1:250 (versus 1:400) in middle schools, and 1:250 (versus 1:350) in high schools. Major challenges facing the school counselor in Arlington are the great variety of nationalities, languages spoken, and immigration experiences among the 18,457 public schools students (ACPS, 1998a; E. Violand-Sanchez, personal

communication, October 8, 1999). Forty-four percent of the total student-body are second-language learners, speaking 70 different foreign languages and representing 96 different countries (ACPS, 1998a). Hispanics are the largest minority (32%), followed by Blacks (17%), Asians (10%), and Native Americans (0.1%; ACPS, 1998b). Twenty-eight percent of the students speak Spanish. Bilingual counseling services are available to students and their families by English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) counselors. Although ESOL funds are limited, these licensed counselors are placed in the Arlington middle and high schools where their services seem to be more needed (E. Violand-Sanchez, personal communication, October 8, 1999).

Alexandria City Public Schools serves 11,017 children and adolescents in 12 elementary schools (12 counselors), two middle schools (six counselors), and three secondary schools (11 counselors; Alexandria City Public Schools, 1999). Although smaller than Arlington County, school counselors in Alexandria share the challenge of a pluralistic society. Black students constitute the majority of the student body (46%) in public schools, followed by Hispanics (25%), Whites (23%), and Asians (6%). Within the Black student body, nearly 50% of the students are natives of Central America and Africa (Alexandria City Public Schools, 1999). It is interesting to note that although 71% of the general population in Alexandria City is White, only 23% of the students attending public schools are White. Statistics show that public school membership by White students has consistently declined in Alexandria from 41% in 1980 to 23% in 1999 (Alexandria City, 1999). In fact, the number of Hispanic students in the District of Columbia and Alexandria public schools already exceeds that of non-Hispanic Whites, and although Alexandria, Arlington, and the District lead in the number of Hispanic-student enrollment, the percentage of Hispanics is growing in other school system as well (Mathews, 1999). For instance, Montgomery County's public school enrollment is 51% White and 15% Hispanic; Fairfax County's is 62% White and 10% Hispanic; and Prince George's County's is 15% White and 6% Hispanic (Mathews, 1999).

A full-time counselor in Alexandria City Public Schools is placed in every elementary school regardless of the number of students enrolled. Also, middle and high school counselors follow lower counselor-to-student ratios than those recommended by the Virginia Department of Education, at 1:350 in middle schools and 1:250 in high schools (M. L. Wall, personal communication, October 15, 1999). The counseling program, much like Arlington's, is

influenced by Standards of Learning (SOL) requirements. Counselors are in the process of finalizing a manual that incorporates a comprehensive, developmental counseling philosophy with students' academic, career, and personal objectives. One of the major challenges for Alexandria City Public Schools counselors is to meet the needs of all students given a large multicultural population and time constraints created by the mandatory role of coordinating the school-wide testing program (M. L. Wall, personal communication, October 15, 1999).

The Planning and Assessment Office of Arlington County Public Schools allowed this researcher to distribute the survey packet directly to school counselors at their work site. Permission was contingent upon: 1) "voluntary participation of all staff members who would be involved;" 2) "notification of principals that this research is being conducted" (Appendix G); 3) "total anonymity of the staff, schools, and the Arlington school system in any written reports;" and 4) "submission of a copy of the final written report to the Planning and Assessment Office" (K. Wills, personal communication, November 4, 1999). The Director of the Monitoring and Evaluation Services Office of Alexandria City Public Schools preferred that the survey packet not be distributed to counselors at their work site. He was concerned that this research, which he considered not to be directly related to improving SOL competencies and students' SOL test scores, would distract from the regular duties of counselors (M. Dawson, personal communication, December 14, 1999).

### Sample

In order to obtain a representative sample of school counselors working in Northern Virginia, a sample of convenience was drawn from current professional and regular members of ASCA working in Northern Virginia ( $n = 98$ ) and all counselors working for Arlington County Public Schools (not members of ASCA;  $n = 64$ ; total  $n = 162$ ). Of this total, 73 school counselors completed and returned the survey packet and were the participants of this study.

A professional member of ASCA is one who holds a masters degree (or higher) in counseling, is credentialed as a school counselor by the state, and works either as a counselor, supervisor of counselors, or as a counselor educator in a graduate program. A regular member of ASCA holds a masters degree (or equivalent) in counseling and is credentialed by the state (ASCA, 1999). A list with Arlington County counselors' name and work location was given to this researcher by the County's Director of Pupil Services to facilitate survey packet distribution.

Detailed information about the survey packet, its distribution, and data collection is outlined below.

### Instruments

In order to best answer the research questions posed in this investigation, a modified version of the survey instrument used by Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, and Williams (1989a) was utilized. It was selected because, after reviewing other instruments used more recently and in similar studies (Coll & Freeman, 1997; Hardesty & Dillard, 1994), this one appears to be more clear and direct in asking questions. It also classifies the functions of the school counselor more accurately, focuses on a comprehensive, developmental model, and appears to be applicable to all grade levels.

Tennyson et al. (1989a) developed this instrument with the assistance of a committee of professional school counselors and researchers. The survey is divided into two sections. Section 1 lists 58 counselor functions grouped into six categories: counseling (10 items), consultation (11 items), developmental/career guidance (eight items), evaluation and assessment (seven items), guidance program development, coordination, and management (eight items), and administrative support services (14 items). Within each category, participants were asked to rank, on a five-point Likert scale, "How often do you do these things?," "How important is the function for school counselors," and "Feelings about the present preparation." In Section 2, participants are asked to rank the six categories of guidance services again, but in a broad sense (e.g., counseling, consultation). The ranking criteria are the same as in Section 1. An open-ended "Comments" section culminates the survey (Appendix C).

In this study, the six broad categories used by Tennyson et al. (1989a) in grouping the typical school counseling functions were reduced to five by combining "Evaluation and Assessment" and "Guidance Program, Coordination and Management" to create "Coordination." This change seemed appropriate because the five categories reflect the developmental approach adopted by ASCA (1993). Additionally, serious considerations were given to the length of the survey. Tennyson recommended that the survey be shortened to increase the return rate (W. Tennyson, personal communication, August 3, 1999). The five categories used in this survey were:

1. Counseling--focuses on the trusting and confidential relationship between the counselor and the student in order to solve problems, help in decision-making, and discover personal meaning in learning and development.
2. Consultation--is the process in which the counselor assists others (parents, professionals, school personnel) in developing effective skills to work with students.
3. Developmental/Career Guidance activities--are typically conducted in the classroom or in small groups that address developmental issues such as career and job orientation.
4. Coordination--is a leadership process that encompasses planning and evaluation activities of the school-counseling program.
5. Administrative/support services--may include coordinating the school's master schedule, scheduling students for classes, discipline of students, and conducting bus, hallway, or playground duty. Although not defined by ASCA, this category was included in the survey given the large amount of administrative work conducted by school counselors cited in the literature (Hackney, 1990; Kameen, Robinson, & Rotter, 1985; Morse & Russell, 1988; Scruggs, Wasielewski, & Ash, 1999).

The 58 original functions were reviewed by this researcher and decreased to 47. Functions were eliminated on the basis of redundancy or not reflective of the present counselor functions. For instance, counseling functions 1 ("meeting with a student to address a developmental need") and 2 ("meeting with a student to resolve or remediate a problem") of the original survey were combined to "meet with a student individually to address a developmental need or remediate a problem." The 47 functions were given to three experienced school counselors (one at each grade level) to add, delete, re-word, or combine functions to reflect the current activities of school counselors. In turn, a comprehensive list of 25 activities (five in each of the five previously mentioned categories) was composed by these counselors. Alreck and Settle (1995) recommend a maximum of 10 different categories when using a scale to learn proportions of time. They also recommend that the number to which the data must total (100%) be very clearly stated, and that respondents be asked behaviors of the recent past. Considering that counselors would be asked to estimate their allocation of time in terms of percentages, 25 activities seemed too many. The following steps were taken to reduce this number and to complete the process of designing the survey:

1. Three school counselors were asked to review the list of 25 activities and reduce it to a number approximating 10 (the final number was 15).
2. Clarity and simplicity in the statements reflecting the activities were emphasized.
3. A response column was designed for participants to write the estimated percentage of time allocated to each of the 15 counseling activities (within the course of the school year). This information would assist in answering research questions number one and number five.
4. A 3-point frequency scale was designed to give participants three choices to indicate their desire to change the amount of time currently spent on each of the 15 activities (less time, no change, more time). This information would assist in answering research question number two.
5. A similar 3-point frequency scale was designed to assess participants' level of preparation (in terms of knowledge and skills) to perform the stated activities (unprepared, adequate preparation, well prepared). This information would assist in answering research question number three.
6. A demographic section was included to determine participants' grade level (elementary, middle, high school), highest level of education, years of experience working as a counselor, years of experience working as a teacher, foreign languages spoken, and student-to-counselor ratio in their school. This information was collected to answer research questions number four and number five.
7. A "Comments" section was included at the end of the survey.

According to Alreck and Settle (1995), several factors could still jeopardize the validity of a study:

1. Misinterpretation of a question by respondents due to ambiguous wording.
2. Response bias, such as social desirability (what is perceived to be socially acceptable), acquiescence (what is perceived to be desirable to the researcher), prestige (response enhances the image of the respondent), hostility (anger engendered by the response task), auspices (response dictated by the image or opinion of the researcher, not by the actual question), and order (the sequence of the questions asked).
3. Self-selection bias.
4. Low response rate.

Alreck and Settle (1995) state, "A measurement of any kind is valid to the degree it measures all of that and only that which it's supposed to measure. To be valid it must be free of extraneous factors that systematically push or pull the results in one particular direction" (p. 58). Tennyson et al. (1989a) determined the validity of the functions outlined in the survey instrument by extracting them from competencies required in the Minnesota licensing rule and adapted from developmental concepts listed in the 1981 ASCA role statement. The adapted functions listed in the survey for this study were also validated by using the most recently adopted ASCA role statement (1990; Appendix B), direct feedback from currently employed counselors in Northern Virginia, and by the school counseling definition provided in the Arlington County Public Schools Counselors' Handbook (1999).

The results of the study can also be invalidated if errors and mistakes are made by rushing or extreme time constraints. Taking short cuts, such as no pilot study, insufficient follow up on non-respondents, and inadequate fieldwork can also mislead the researcher and others (American Statistical Association, 1998). Validity and reliability can be threatened as well by the way data are recorded, processed, and even reported in the survey results.

In addition to the survey instrument, another instrument, the daily log, was used to compensate for the fact that the percentages of time allocated to each activity would be estimations of actual time spent. Participants were asked to complete the daily log indicating how they spent their time on any given "typical" day. They were asked to record, in half-hour increment slots, the exact activities (and for how long) on that day. The data collected from the daily logs and descriptions comparing the survey to the daily log responses are discussed in Chapter 4.

All participants received a survey packet that included a cover letter (Appendix H), an informed consent form (Appendix I), the survey instrument (Appendix C), a daily log (Appendix D), and a self-addressed, self-stamped return envelope. Participants were asked to return the signed consent form and the completed survey and daily log in the enclosed envelope.

#### Pilot Study

The advantages of conducting a pilot study are economy, speed, and simplicity (Alreck & Settle, 1995). A convenience sample of six school counselors (two elementary, two middle, and two high-school counselors) participated in the pilot study. The researcher met with the

participants in person and distributed the survey. The participants were asked to look at the cosmetic aspects of the survey (appearance, legibility, and length), content accuracy, and clarity. In addition to completing the survey, pilot-study participants were interviewed to obtain feedback regarding the relative ease (or difficulty) in assessing actual and desired time allocation of functions. The following are examples of the critical feedback provided by pilot-study participants:

1. To include a sentence that asks participants to complete the survey independently and not in consultation with colleagues.
2. To number the demographic variables.
3. To add “coordination” to the list of categories described in the survey instructions inadvertently omitted by the researcher.
4. To clarify “level of preparation” so that participants would understand that preparation meant knowledge and skills.
5. To ask for estimated percentages of time only once and use a Likert-type scale to assess desired change in time allocation and level of preparation.
6. To place the activity “test coordination” under administrative/support services and not under developmental/career guidance.
7. To have the main heading “Activities” be followed by sub-headings representing the five broad categories (consulting, consultation, developmental/career guidance, coordination, and administrative/support services) corresponding to each of the 15 counseling activities.
8. To add an “Other” category to identify activities important to the role of the participants but not included in the survey.

Participants of the pilot study did not object to recording estimated percentages of time; they felt completion would take more than the 15 minutes stated in the instructions. Additional changes to the survey involved adding a demographic variable to determine student-to-counselor ratio, substituting the word “actual” for the word “estimated” when referring to percentages of time, and using a code for each survey to correspond with a daily log code in case these documents were returned separately.

### Survey Distribution and Data Collection Procedures

The following steps were taken after the pilot study was completed:

1. Alterations were made to the survey instrument, and the survey packet (mentioned in the “Instruments” section) was prepared for distribution.
2. Approval was obtained from the Human Subjects Review Board of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Ethical, legal, and moral guidelines in conducting research with human subjects were highly regarded and closely followed.
3. A list was obtained from Arlington County Public Schools (ACPS) stating the names and work settings of all employed school counselors in that district (n = 64). An additional list (n = 98) was compiled with the names and addresses of Northern Virginia counselors (not employed by ACPS) from the American School Counselor Association 1999-2000 Membership Directory & Resource Guide (ASCA, 1999).
4. Flexible time guidelines were set: 1) initial distribution and collection occurred between December 1, 1999 and January 15, 2000; 2) follow-up distribution and collection of surveys took place between January 15 and February 10, 2000.
5. Distribution and collection of survey responses for Arlington County Public School employees were done by using their internal mail system (the researcher had a mail box at one of the elementary schools). Distribution and collection of survey responses for ASCA members were done by using the US Postal Service. Packets were mailed to members’ home address, and responses were returned to the researcher’s home address. The cost of the survey packet construction, distribution, and collection totaled \$382.
6. The 73 surveys and 53 daily logs collected by February 10, 2000 were used in data analyses.

The time-frame for this study was as follows: 1) survey design, pilot study, prospectus approval, research approval board process, and survey packet preparation completed by December 1, 1999; 2) distribution of survey packet, collection of completed surveys and daily logs, and follow-up distribution and collection completed by February 10, 2000; 3) data entry and analyses completed by February 29, 2000; and 4) data interpretation and conclusions completed by March 29, 2000. This study was presented to the dissertation committee and successfully defended on April 12, 2000.

### Data Analyses Procedures

Data were organized and analyzed by using SPSS (9.1 Version) statistical software. Six participants' "estimated percentage of time" allocated to counseling activities did not equal 100%. These responses ranged between two and 19 percentage points above 100 and were corrected by the researcher (to 100%) by distributing the exceeding amount among all activities recorded in proportion to the estimated time allocated to each activity. Three surveys were returned after analyses were completed and were not included in this study.

Edwards, Thomas, Rosenfeld, and Booth-Kewley (1997) suggest four types of statistical procedures which seem appropriate for this investigation. First, descriptive information regarding the sample is needed. This was accomplished by using proportion, mean, standard deviation, and range statistics to group and describe school counselors according to grade level, gender, level of education, years of experience as a counselor, years of experience as a teacher, and student-to-counselor ratio. Tables 1A and 1B in Chapter Four provide the results of these analyses.

Second, descriptive statistics are calculated on all responses for each survey activity and category paying particular attention to key elements and sub-groups. This type of descriptive analyses provided the appropriate information to answer research questions number one, two, three, and five.

Third, Edwards et al. (1997) recommend comparisons between sub-groups to explore whether survey responses are similar or different. For the purpose of this study, comparisons were made between the estimated percentage of time allocated to counseling activities reported in the survey instrument and the time allocation to counseling functions reported in the daily log. A paired samples *t*-test was performed to indicate if the differences among the means of pairs for each of the five broad categories were likely to be due to chance or to statistically significant differences (e.g., Pair 1: counseling activities in the survey and counseling activities in the daily log; Pair 2: consulting activities in the survey and consulting activities in the daily log). The probability level for all tests was set at .05.

And fourth, more complicated and sophisticated analyses are conducted to answer the stated research questions. In this case, regression equations (Appendix K) were used to explain why counselors allocate their time the way they do. It was the researcher's hypothesis that certain independent variables, such as gender and level of preparation, affect how counselors spend their time. Data were collected in the survey instrument that identified 11 independent

variables for study: work setting, gender, level of education, years of experience as a counselor, years of experience as a teacher, student-to-counselor ratio, desire to spend less time on an activity, desire to spend more time on an activity, feeling unprepared to perform an activity, and feeling well prepared to perform an activity. Analyses of these variables assisted in answering research question number four.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the results of analyses conducted on the data collected from the survey instrument and the daily log. It explains how data were organized and analyzed. Several sections are provided to interpret the results.

The first section of this chapter describes the survey response rate and the sample participants. Demographic information, such as work setting, gender, level of education, years of experience as a counselor, years of experience as a teacher prior to becoming a counselor, and the student-to-counselor ratio in the participant's school is outlined to better understand the characteristics of the school counselors participating in this study.

In the second section, information provided in the daily log is compared to information provided in the survey instrument. The daily log was intended to describe a "typical" day in the life of the counselor by logging, in half-hour increments, counseling and guidance activities. In the survey, this information was gathered in terms of percentages of time spent on particular activities throughout the school year. In the daily log, counselors were asked to write exactly what they did that day.

The third section pertains to the first research question posed in Chapter One: How do counselors spend their time? The mean, standard deviation, and minimum/maximum statistics are presented to better understand how counselors allocate their time to the 16 counseling activities presented in the survey (15 activities plus an "other" category). In this section, the second and third research questions are also addressed: In what way do counselors want to change their allocation of time to various counseling activities? and How do school counselors feel about their level of preparation (in term of knowledge and skills) to conduct the counseling activities identified in the survey?

Section Four defines the variables used for analyses and describes the regression equations. Abbreviations are used for the convenience of analyses and for reporting the results.

Section Five reports the results of regression analyses in answering research question number four: What variables (work setting, gender, level of education, years of working as a

counselor, years of experience working as a teacher, student-to-counselor ratio, desire to spend less or more time on a counseling activity, and level of preparation to perform a counseling activity) affect the way in which counselors allocate their time? Individual tables reporting the results of each of the 16 regressions are presented in Appendix L.

Section Six pertains to research question number five: Do differences exist between school counselors' estimated allocation of time to the various counseling activities and the Virginia mandate? A composite of means and proportions describes the amount of time allocated to counseling activities, consultation activities, and developmental/guidance activities as presented in the survey. The results of regression analysis are also included to explore possible factors affecting the extent to which counselors meet the Virginia mandate.

The last section of this chapter, Section Seven, presents the "Comments" that were included in the survey by several of the participants.

### Section One: Profile of the Sample Participants

One hundred sixty two elementary, middle, and high school counselors working in Northern Virginia were invited to participate in this study. This sample consisted of all school counselors working for Arlington County Public Schools (ACPS; n = 64) and all current regular and professional members of the American School Counselor Association (not working for ACPS; n = 98) working in Northern Virginia public schools. The survey packet was either delivered to their work setting or mailed to their home address. As a result of the initial packet distribution, 53 surveys, consent forms, and daily logs were collected. Given this relatively low response rate (32%), a second survey distribution (which excluded the daily log as part of the packet requirement) was mailed to the 101 school counselors who had not previously responded. The researcher was able to determine those who returned the survey by the signature in the consent form. Twenty additional surveys were returned, increasing the response rate to 45% (n = 73). The response rate of ASCA members was proportionate to that of ACPS participants. All surveys and daily logs returned were used in the statistical analyses of this study.

The results of descriptive analyses report that most participants are female (78%). The majority of male participants (75%) work in high school, 19% in middle school, and 6% in elementary school settings. All participants have at least a master's degree, and almost half of them (47%) have continued their education beyond that degree. Table 1A indicates the number

and percentage of participants grouped according to grade level (elementary, middle, or high school), gender, and level of education (master’s, master’s + 30, or doctorate).

Table 1B provides additional information about the participants, including statistics on years of experience as a counselor, years of experience as a teacher, the student-to-counselor ratio for all the participants, and the student-to-counselor ratio according to grade level.

Participants varied in counseling experience from 1 to 27 years, and 45 counselors (62%) had prior experience in teaching. The average participant had almost 8 years of experience working as a counselor and 6 years of prior experience working as a teacher. It is important to note that the average student-to-counselor ratios in all grade levels were lower than that mandated by Virginia (1:448 vs. 1:500 in elementary schools, 1:277 vs. 1:400 in middle schools, and 1:266 vs. 1:350 in high schools). However, maximums of 750 in elementary schools, 400 in middle schools, and 400 in high schools were also reported.

Tables 1A and 1B

Survey Responses: Characteristics of Sample Participants

Table 1A

Characteristics	n	Percentage
Elementary School	25	34 %
Middle School	17	24 %
High School	31	42 %
Male	16	22 %
Female	57	78 %
Masters Education	39	53 %
Masters + 30	30	41%
Doctorate	4	6 %
Total	73	100 %

Table 1B

Characteristics	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD
Experience as Counselor	7.7 years	1 year	27 years	6.3 years
Experience as Teacher	5.9 years	0 years	30 years	7.3 years
Students-to-Counselor Ratio (all levels)	330	100	750	112
Students-to-Counselor Ratio (elementary level)	448	330	750	90.6
Students-to-Counselor Ratio (middle school level)	277	100	400	64.3
Students-to-Counselor Ratio (high school level)	266	125	400	64.6

Additional information provided in the survey pertains to the foreign languages spoken by the participants. Twenty-four percent of the participants (18 of 73) reported speaking a language, other than English, well. The majority of these counselors speak French (n = 7) and Spanish (n = 6). Other languages spoken were Korean (n = 1), Arabic (n = 1), German (n = 1), Chinese (n = 1), and Portuguese (n = 1). Three participants reported speaking “a little Spanish.”

### Section Two: The Daily Log

In order to validate information regarding how counselors allocate their time to various counseling activities, participants were asked to select a typical workday and report, as accurately as possible, their activities on that day. All participants were given a survey and a daily log during the first distribution of the survey packet. Thirty-two percent of school counselors returned the daily log.

Table 2 describes how participants spent their “typical” day according to the five major categories described in the survey. The responses on the daily log were grouped according to these categories. For instance, if a participant wrote “individual session with a student” from 9:00-9:30 and “answering phone calls, e-mails, record-keeping” from 2:30-3:30, the first notation was recorded as .5 hours in the counseling category, and the second notation was recorded as 1 hour in the administrative/support category. The actual amount of time for each

category was added and then divided by the total number of hours worked that day, determining percentages for each category. Percentages for each category were grouped and analyzed in terms of mean, standard deviation, and minimum/maximum values. Not all participants engaged in activities for all categories during their “typical” day. When a category was missing, the researcher assumed that the participant did not engage in that activity and therefore, a value of 0 was assigned. Table 2 also reports (in parenthesis) the mean, standard deviation, and minimum/maximum statistics for the estimated percentages of time reported in the survey. Worth noting is that 73% of the participants who completed the daily log report to have worked more than the 7.5 hours typical of the school system's workday.

Table 2

Daily Log Responses According to Major Counseling Categories (Corresponding Survey Responses are Reported in Parenthesis)

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD
Counseling	27.2 % (46.0 %)	0 % (6 %)	80 % (70 %)	2.35 (1.74)
Consulting	27.5 % (16.8 %)	0 % (0 %)	61 % (31 %)	1.99 (.98)
Dev/Career Guidance	9.58 % (12.2 %)	0 % (0 %)	46 % (40 %)	1.64 (1.25)
Coordination	2.75 % (6.89 %)	0 % (0 %)	13 % (23 %)	.57 (.73)
Administrative/ Support	32.62 % (17.9 %)	0 % (0 %)	73 % (55 %)	2.14 (1.60)

Additionally, the percentages of time allocated to each of these five categories were compared to the percentages of estimated time allocated to the same categories in the survey. Survey responses were grouped so that one aggregate percentage time was reported for each of the five categories. For instance, the category “counseling” was represented by the first three functions in the survey: individual students, small groups and families, and crisis intervention and mediation. The percentages given to each of these three activities were added to create one

“counseling” category. Similar groupings were done with the other 13 activities. The categories from each individual survey response were paired with their corresponding daily log category responses. A paired-samples *t* test was used to compare the differences between the mean scores of the survey categories to the corresponding mean scores of the daily log categories. The results (see Table 3) indicate that four of the five-paired categories are statistically significant at the .05 probability level or lower: counseling, consulting, coordination, and administrative/support. These results also indicate that statistically significant differences exist among the means of these categories, and therefore the estimations of time reported on the survey are not supported by the observations reported in the daily logs. It is important to note that these results may be attributed to instrumentation bias. One instrument (the survey) measures time allocation on an annual basis, and the other instrument (the daily log) measures time allocation on a daily basis.

Table 3

Paired Samples *t* Test Statistics Comparing Daily Log Submissions to Survey Submissions

	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	<i>t</i>	Significance (2-tailed)
Pair 1 – Counseling	18.7	16.1	2.21	8.46	.000 <sup>#</sup>
Pair 2 – Consulting	-10.7	13.1	1.80	-5.95	.000 <sup>#</sup>
Pair 3 – Dev/Career Guidance	2.66	10.20	1.40	1.89	.063
Pair 4 – Coordination	4.13	7.24	.99	4.15	.000 <sup>#</sup>
Pair 5 – Adm/Support	-14.6	14.2	1.95	-7.51	.000 <sup>#</sup>

<sup>#</sup>p < .05

Five of the 53 participants who completed the daily log made comments at the bottom of the page. The overall feeling among the participants in this study was that there were no “typical” days, and that activities may vary according to the time of year. It appeared that high school counselors were conducting a large amount of college-related activities (applications, letters of recommendation), which are common for the months of January and February when the

daily logs were completed. One participant reported that she worked up to one additional hour per day in addition to her typical nine-hour workday.

### Section Three: Participant Responses to Counseling Activities

In order to answer the first research question posed in this study, survey data were gathered and analyzed using the mean, standard deviation, and minimum/maximum statistics. Particular attention was given to the estimated percentages of time reported by the participants. These percentages were analyzed for each of the 16 activities described in the survey. The results, reported on Table 4, indicate that counselors spend, by far, the greatest amount of their time conducting activities in the broad category of counseling (46%). Specifically, participants spend an average of 27% of their time working with individual students, 11% of their time working with families and in small groups, and 8% of their time providing crisis intervention and mediation. The second largest average amount of time is allocated to administrative/support and “other” activities (18%). Counselors report conducting a variety of administrative duties, including test proctoring and coordination, master and student class schedules, professional development, discipline of students, hall duty, lunch duty, bus duty, teacher substitute, and principal designee. The 14 participants (17%) who added activities in the “other” category included: tutoring, after-school activities (clubs, SCA), writing college applications and letters of recommendations, acknowledging birthdays and accomplishments, honor roll lists, record keeping, transition time between activities, picking up students from class, and cleaning up. These duties are administrative and supportive in nature, and the percentages of time allocated to them were added to the percentages reported in the administrative/support category. Worth noting in Table 4 is that “counseling individual students” was the only activity performed by all 73 participants.

Table 4

Survey Responses: Estimated Allocation of Time to Counseling Activities

Categories	Activities	Mean (%)	Min. (%)	Max. (%)	SD (%)
Counseling	Individual Students	27	6	55	12
	Small Groups and Families	11	0	55	8.9
	Crisis Intervention and Mediation	8	0	50	7.4
Consulting	with Parents, Staff, Agencies	11	0	25	6.0
	Test Result Interpretation	1	0	6	1.5
	Student Placement/SpEd Meetings	5	0	20	4.1
Dev/Career	Classroom Guidance	8	0	40	8.6
	Career, Job, Vocational	4	0	30	4.7
Coordination	Planning and Implementation	4	0	15	3.9
	Evaluation and Accountability	2	0	10	2.1
	Research	1	0	10	1.5
Adm/ Support	Standardized Test Coordination	4	0	25	5.6
	Student Scheduling	8	0	50	10
	Professional Development	2	0	10	2.4
	Discipline/Substitute/Hall Duty	2	0	20	3.8
Other		2	0	24	4.8
Total		100 %			

Additional data collected in the survey were analyzed to answer research questions number two and number three. The results are reported in Table 5. This table provides the frequency and percent of counselors desiring to spend less time, the same amount of time, or more time conducting the counseling activities stated in the survey. Table 5 also provides information on how counselors feel about their level of preparation (unprepared, adequately prepared, and well prepared) to perform these counseling activities.

Table 5

Survey Responses: Frequency of Counselors (and Percentage) Regarding Desire for Change and Preparation Level

Activities	Change to Time Allocation			Level of Preparation		
	Less Time	No Change	More Time	Unpre- pared	Ade- quate	Well Prep.
Counseling-Individual Students	1 (1%)	25 (35%)	47 (64%)	1 (1%)	15 (21%)	57 (78%)
Counseling-Small Groups and Families	1 (1%)	19 (26%)	53 (73%)	4 (5%)	26 (36%)	43 (59%)
Counseling-Crisis Intervention and Mediation	9 (12%)	46 (63%)	18 (25%)	0 (0%)	40 (55%)	33 (45%)
Consulting-with Parents, Staff, Agencies	6 (9%)	39 (53%)	28 (38%)	4 (5%)	28 (39%)	41 (56%)
Consulting-Test Result Interpretation	8 (11%)	62 (85%)	3 (4%)	14 (19%)	31 (43%)	28 (38%)
Consulting-Student Placement/SpEd Meetings	19 (26%)	53 (73%)	1 (1%)	14 (19%)	42 (58%)	17 (23%)
Dev/Career Guidance-Classroom Guidance	3 (4%)	37 (51%)	33 (45%)	3 (4%)	35 (48%)	35 (48%)
Dev/Career Guidance-Career, Job, Vocational Education	3 (4%)	34 (47%)	36 (49%)	8 (11%)	39 (53%)	26 (36%)
Coordination-Planning and Implementation	9 (12%)	36 (50%)	28 (38%)	6 (8%)	41 (56%)	26 (36%)
Coordination-Evaluation and Accountability	5 (7%)	43 (59%)	25 (34%)	13 (18%)	45 (61%)	15 (21%)
Coordination-Research	0 (0%)	45 (62%)	28 (38%)	14 (19%)	44 (60%)	15 (21%)
Adm/Support-Standardized Test Coordination	25 (34%)	46 (63%)	2 (3%)	18 (25%)	31 (42%)	24 (33%)
Adm/Support-Student Class/Master Scheduling	23 (32%)	47 (64%)	3 (4%)	14 (19%)	35 (48%)	24 (33%)
Adm/Support-Professional Development	1 (1%)	36 (50%)	36 (49%)	1 (1%)	48 (66%)	24 (33%)
Adm/Support-Discipline/ Substitute/Hall or Other Duty	22 (30%)	51 (70%)	0 (0%)	10 (14%)	48 (65%)	15 (21%)
Other	7 (10%)	65 (89%)	1 (1%)	3 (4%)	66 (91%)	4 (5%)

In response to counseling functions, the majority of the counselors would like to spend more time working with individual students (64%) and with small groups and families (73%). These results are interesting given that the results in Table 4 indicated that counselors are already spending a significant amount of time counseling individuals (27%) and small groups and

families (11%; total = 38%). This suggests the relative importance of this function in the counselor's role. Sixty-three percent, however, would like to spend the same amount of time allocated to crisis intervention and mediation activities. Of the remaining activities, the majority of participants expressed a desire to keep the same amount of time. The exception is the "developmental/career guidance" activity, where 47% of counselors wish "no change" and 49% of counselors wish more time. A split among these counselors may indicate that the participants value this activity. A similar split is also found on the activity "professional development," where counselors spend very little of their time attending to this activity (2%). The results seem to indicate that counselors want to spend more time in professional activities, but not if it adds to their already demanding schedule. Comments in the daily log and in the survey indicated that this activity is often performed after school and on personal time.

No one desired more time performing "discipline, substitute teacher, hall or other duties" activities. Seventy percent of the participants wish to keep this small percentage the same, and 30% wish to spend even less time than what they are already spending. Similar results are found on the activities "test coordination" and "student class/master scheduling." Again, although a small percentage of time is allocated to these activities, a large percentage of counselors would like to keep these numbers the same. Thirty-two percent of counselors would like to spend less time on test coordination, and 32% would like to spend less time on scheduling. This may indicate that those who are performing these activities would like to spend less time on them (some counselors reported to spend up to 25% of their time on test coordination and 50% of their time on class/master schedules).

Although participants report spending very little time conducting research activities and no participants wish to spend less time on it, 38% wish to conduct more research and 62% wish to keep this number the same. Worth noting is that the majority of participants (81%) did not respond to the "other" category. The 89% of participants who reported "no change" in this activity reflect the large number of respondents who left this activity blank. Of the participants who reported spending time performing "other" activities, half wish to spend less time and half wish to spend the same amount of time on them.

The research question, How do school counselors feel about their level of preparation to conduct the counseling functions identified in the survey? can also be answered by looking at the statistics reported in Table 5. Overall, counselors feel adequately and often well prepared to

conduct the counseling activities recommended by ASCA and presented in the survey. More specifically, the majority of participants feel well prepared to work with individual students (78%), with small groups and families (59%), and in consulting with parents, staff, and community agencies (56%). An equal 48% of counselors reported to feel adequate and well prepared to conduct classroom guidance activities. Counselors feel adequately prepared for the remainder activities.

Although the majority of participants express average and above average preparation for their counseling role, it is worth noticing that 25% of the responses indicate less than adequate preparation to perform testing activities (proctoring, coordination). In addition, 19% of counselors felt unprepared to perform test result interpretation, to attend student placement and special education meetings, to conduct research, and to perform student class/master schedule duties. Eighteen percent of the participants also reported feeling unprepared to perform evaluation and accountability activities. The relationship between participants' level of preparation and allocation of time is explored on Section Five of this chapter.

#### Section Four: Definitions of Variables

In order to explain the variance in percentage of time for each of the 15 counseling activities, regression equations were developed using 11 independent variables as predictors (middle school, high school level, gender, level of education, years of experience as a counselor, years of experience as a teacher, student-to-counselor ratio, desire to spend less time on an activity, desire to spend more time on an activity, feeling unprepared, and feeling well prepared to perform counseling activities). The dependent variables are the estimated percentage of time allocated to each of the 15 counseling activities outlined in the survey ("other" is included as the 16<sup>th</sup> activity). For instance, the dependent variable for the first activity (counseling individual students) is referred to as ATIME. The dependent variable for the second activity (counseling small groups and families) is referred to as BTIME. Appendix J provides the definitions of the 11 independent variables describing the demographic characteristics of the participants and the counseling activities. Appendix K provides the definitions of the dependent variables regressed on the constant variable (B0) and the 11 independent variables mentioned above. The variables for grade level and gender are dummy variables with values of zero and one. The following

section reports the results of the separate analyses that were performed for each of the counseling activities.

### Section Five: Results of Regression Analyses

In answering research question number four, 16 regressions were conducted where the estimate, the standard error, and the  $t$  statistic are reported for standardized regression coefficients  $B_0$ - $B_{11}$ . In other words, how do the 11 independent variables affect the way counselors allocate their time to each of the 16 activities in the survey instrument? Assuming that the equations are correct (that is, that the dependent variable is a function of the 11 independent variables), regression analyses will estimate the values of the coefficients  $B_0$  through  $B_{11}$ .

The null hypothesis states that  $B_1$ - $B_{11}$  equal 0, and therefore, the independent variables do not affect the dependent variable (time allocation). The  $t$  statistic will assist in determining how far away from zero (how many standard deviations away from the estimate) the  $B$  coefficient must be to reject the null hypothesis. For instance, by looking at the estimate of  $B_1$  in the regression equation for dependent variable  $B_{TIME}$ , the researcher is able to determine the extent to which the variable “middle school setting” ( $B_1$ ), relative to elementary school setting, affects the time allocated to counseling small groups and families ( $B_{TIME}$ ). If  $B_1$  were 0, that would indicate that middle school (versus elementary school setting) does not affect the way counselors allocate their time to counseling individual students. At the 95% confidence level with 62 degrees of freedom (73 observations minus 12 independent variables), the critical  $t$  value is  $\pm 2.0$ . Therefore,  $t$  must be greater than 2.0 or less than  $-2.0$  in order to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that a variable is statistically significant in estimating how it affects the way counselors spend their time.

Appendix L shows the results of regression analyses performed on each of the 16 dependent variables. Tables A through Z (in Appendix L) provide the results. Key statistically significant  $t$  values are explained in this section.

In the case of counseling small groups and families (Appendix L, Table B),  $B_1$  and  $B_2$  have  $t$  values equal to or greater than  $\pm 2.00$  ( $-3.5$  and  $-4.0$ , respectively). The null hypothesis is rejected in both cases, indicating that middle school setting and high school setting (versus elementary school) affect the way participants allocate time to counseling small groups and families. Moreover, given that the  $t$  statistic of middle school ( $B_1$ ) and high school ( $B_2$ )

counselors is negative, it is concluded that elementary school counselors spend more time performing this activity. The estimates for B1 and B2 (-11.5 and -12.5) show that elementary school counselors allocate an estimated 11.5% and 12.5% more time to counseling small groups and families than middle and high school counselors, respectively. Similar results can be found on Appendix L, Table G. A  $t$  value of -2.9 for B1 and -3.1 for B2 indicate that grade level affects the allocation of time to classroom guidance activities. Specifically, middle and high school counselors allocate approximately 9% less time to this activity (the estimate of B1 = -8.8; the estimate of B2 = -9.0) than elementary school counselors.

If middle and high school counselors are allocating less time than elementary school counselors to counseling families and students in small groups and in classroom guidance, are they allocating more time to other activities? A careful review of Tables A-Z (Appendix L) and Table 6 indicates that there are other statistically significant  $t$  values to reject the null hypothesis at the  $p < .05$  level and some less statistically significant values (yet important to consider in this analysis) at the  $p < .10$  that aid in understanding how middle and high school counselors spend their time. Looking at the B1 and B2 coefficients in Appendix L, Table M, the results suggest that middle and high school counselors allocate more time to working on master and student class schedules than elementary school counselors. More specifically, high school counselors allocate an estimated 7% more time to scheduling. Other not so strong, but statistically significant values worth noting are those on Tables A and C (Appendix L). The B1 and B2 coefficients of the estimate and  $t$  statistic may suggest that middle (and possibly high school) counselors allocate more time to counseling individual students and to crisis intervention and mediation than their elementary counterparts. This, however, may not be the case for male counselors. Table A in Appendix L shows B3 to have a  $t$  value of -1.7 and an estimate of -6.9. This suggests that, at a 90% confidence level, male counselors allocate approximately 7% less time to counseling individual students than do female counselors. On the other hand, Table M (Appendix L) shows a positive B3 (statistically significant at the 95% confidence level), indicating that males allocate an estimated 7% more time than females to scheduling activities. Having already said that middle and high school counselors allocate more time to scheduling (MTIME) than elementary counselors, being a male seems to independently affect the extent to which time is allocated to this activity.

A couple of statistically significant B4 (more than masters degree education) and B5 (years of counseling experience) coefficients are worth mentioning although they do not seem to affect the overall allocation of time to counseling activities. The results in Appendix L, Tables G (classroom guidance activities) and M (scheduling) suggest that counselors with higher levels of education allocate less time to classroom guidance activities and more time to scheduling students. Specifically, they appear to allocate an estimate of 3% less time to classroom guidance and almost 5% more time to scheduling students for classes. Counselors with fewer years of experience appear to allocate less time to administrative duties described under “other“ activities (Appendix L, Table Z). The estimate of B5, although statistically significant, appears too small (-.14) to make this result important. There are similar significant *t* values for the coefficients B6 (years of teaching experience) and B7 (student-to-counselor ratio) but with similar small estimates. In sum, it appears that the independent variables B4, B5, B6, and B7 do not strongly affect the extent to which counselors allocate their time to counseling activities.

The estimate of the coefficient B8 (desire to spend less time on an activity) appears to affect the way counselors allocate their time to many activities, specifically to crisis intervention and mediation (Appendix L, Table C), consultation with parents, staff, and agencies (Appendix L, Table D), participating in student placement and special education meetings (Appendix L, Table F), providing career, job, and vocational guidance (Appendix L, Table H), coordinating standardized testing (Appendix L, Table L), doing class and master scheduling (Appendix L, Table M), participating in discipline, substituting, and hall/lunch duties (Appendix L, Table O), and in attending to “other” duties such as after school activities, writing college recommendations, and record keeping (Appendix L, Table Z). B8 has strong coefficient estimates on all of these activities, is positive in substantially all cases (15 of 16), and it is statistically significant at a  $p < .05$  level in seven activities. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between the desire to spend less time on an activity (B8) and the estimated percentage of time allocated to that activity. Counselors would like to spend less time on several of the activities they now spend time on (crisis intervention, student placement meetings, career/job/vocational education, test coordination, scheduling, discipline/hall duty, and "other" activities).

This observation is supported, at least weakly, by the negative estimates for B9. B9 (the desire to spend more time on an activity) is negative in 9 of 15 variables without a great deal of

statistical significance. The results indicate that the desire to spend more time is associated with lower allocation of time. The more counselors desire to spend time on an activity, the less time they actually spend on it. The direction of causality is probably the opposite than that supposed in the regressions. It is probable that the desire to allocate time (independent variable) is affected by the actual time spent on that activity (dependent variable). Counselors who spend more time on an activity than their peers do tend to want to spend less time on it.

The coefficient B10 (feeling unprepared to perform a counseling activity) shows predominately negative results, while the variable B11 (feeling well prepared to perform an activity) is positive and statistically significant in most cases. This suggests that being well prepared to perform an activity affects the way actual time is allocated. In this case, the better prepared counselors feel, the more time they spend on that activity, particularly in counseling small groups and families (Appendix L, Table B), conducting classroom guidance (Appendix L, Table G), providing career, job, and vocational guidance (Appendix L, Table H), and conducting research (Appendix L, Table K). These results are supported by the mostly negative coefficients of B10 (although statistically weak in significance). The less prepared counselors seem to feel about an activity, the less time they allocate to that activity.

The B8 coefficient of the ZTIME variable (a desire to spend less time on administrative duties) presents additional interesting results. A big  $t$  statistic (9.3) and a large estimate (11.2) indicate that when counselors do these activities, they want to spend less time on them. The results of descriptive analysis on Table 5 showed that only 10% of counselors wish to spend less time performing “other” duties. However, those who reported an activity in this category were highly associated with those who desired to spend less time on it. Counselors who are not performing these activities are not the ones saying that they want to spend less time; the “complaining” appears to come from counselors who are actually doing them. The last coefficient worth noting in the ZTIME variable is B5. Although having a small estimate, the statistically significant  $t$  (-2.2) appears to show that counselors with fewer years of counseling experience are performing more administrative duties as stated in the “other” category.

Table 6 provides a composite of all the estimates of the standard regression coefficients compiled from Tables A-Z in Appendix L. By looking at this table, the researcher was able to compare the effects of the 11 independent variables across the 16 dependent variables and determine where each independent variable mattered. For example, middle school setting (B1)

has a high estimates for activities “counseling individual students” (ATIME), “counseling small groups and families” (BTIME), “crisis intervention and mediation” (CTIME), and “classroom guidance” (GTIME).

Table 6

Composite Results of Regression Analyses: Estimates of Coefficient Values

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11
ATIME	7.2	6.3	-6.9	-3.1	.10	.07	-.006	-.19	-5.3	10.2	2.7
BTIME	-11.5	-12.5	-.46	-2.8	-.12	.07	-.01	2.7	-2.0	-1.3	3.7
CTIME	4.5	2.6	.68	-.50	.06	-.03	.02	6.3	-1.5	---	.30
DTIME	.89	-1.3	-.21	-.81	.07	.01	-.001	4.5	-2.7	-2.3	-1.0
ETIME	.13	.72	.51	-1.0	-.01	.04	-.000	.56	-.35	.31	.04
FTIME	.81	.85	.42	.61	.06	.04	.002	3.1	2.0	-.53	-1.4
GTIME	-8.8	-9.0	-2.3	-3.1	-.16	-.02	.005	.20	-3.1	-5.2	3.5
HTIME	-.42	1.7	-.91	-1.3	.14	.06	-.01	5.6	-.10	.82	2.5
ITIME	-.02	.25	-.59	-.03	-.02	-.07	-.006	1.0	-.89	-2.1	.01
JTIME	.56	.61	.59	.03	.05	-.06	.002	.45	.02	-1.5	-.22
KTIME	.48	.63	.37	-.40	-.03	-.01	.002	---	.69	.27	1.1
LTIME	.03	.71	-1.2	.08	.14	-.09	-.001	5.4	.24	-1.5	-1.8
MTIME	5.0	7.1	7.2	4.7	-.20	-1.6	.007	5.5	5.8	-5.5	2.2
NTIME	.15	.53	.42	-1.4	-.04	.01	.000	1.9	-.47	-1.5	.47
OTIME	2.2	-1.2	.44	.35	.04	.03	-.001	3.1	---	-.56	-.01
ZTIME	1.2	1.5	1.0	.84	-.14	.02	.005	11.2	3.6	3.3	.16

Section Six: The Virginia Mandate

This section addresses research question number five as proposed in Chapter One: Do differences exist between school counselor’s estimated allocation of time to the various counseling activities and the Virginia mandate? Virginia requires counselors to spend a minimum of 60% of their time providing counseling services to students and their families. Counseling is defined by the following eight survey activities: counseling individual students, counseling small groups and families, crisis intervention and mediation, consulting with parents, staff, and agencies, test result interpretation, student placement/special education meetings,

classroom guidance, and career/job/vocational guidance. Virginia also sets standards for student-to-counselor ratios in public schools.

Table 7 provides a description of student-to-counselor ratios and includes the results of descriptive analyses conducted on the eight counseling activities. The results are compared with the Virginia mandate.

Table 7  
Comparison of Virginia Mandates to Survey Responses

	n	Mean Student-Counselor Ratio	SD	Virginia Mandate on Ratios	Proportion Meeting VA's Ratios	Mean Estimated % of Time Allocated to Activities A-H	Proportion Meeting VA's 60% Mandate
Elemen. School	25	448:1	90.6	500:1	88 % (n =22)	80.8 %	100 % (n =25)
Middle School	17	277:1	64.3	400:1	100 % (n =17)	71.2 %	82 % (n =14)
High School	31	266:1	64.6	350:1	90 % (n =28)	70.2 %	84 % (n =26)
Total	73	330:1	N/A	N/A	92 % (n =67)	73.2 %	89% (n =65)

The results described on Table 7 suggest that most elementary, middle, and high school settings not only comply with but are also lower than Virginia Department of Education's student-to-counselor ratios. In fact, all middle school counselors and the vast majority of counselors in elementary and high school settings participating in this study report to have a workload equal to or below the state requirement. In addition, elementary, middle, and high school counselors report to spend an average of 70% or more of their time providing counseling services to students. These results meet and exceed Virginia Department of Education's requirement that counselors "shall provide for a minimum of 60% of the time...devoted to...counseling activities" (Virginia Department of Education, 1997, p. 20). All elementary school counselors participating in this study meet this requirement. Eighty-two percent of middle

school and 89% of high school counselors also report high percentages of time on these activities, therefore satisfying the Virginia mandate.

Regression analysis was used to explore the possible factors affecting the way in which counselors allocate time to the counseling functions mandated in Virginia's 60% requirement. A regression formula similar to those in Appendix K was used to describe the dependent variable AHTIME (participants' estimated percentage of time in the first eight survey activities) regressed on the constant variable B0 and on the same 11 independent variables used in previous regression analyses. B8 through B11, however, are defined by the sum of responses to the first eight survey activities regarding the desire to spend less time or more time on these activities, and by the sum of counselors' feelings of being unprepared or well prepared to perform these activities.

The overall results of this regression analysis appear to indicate that there are only a couple of variables with statistically significant effects on the way counselors allocate their time to meet Virginia's 60% counseling mandate. At a  $p < .05$  level, B3 (gender) is the only statistically significant coefficient. The estimate of B3 indicates that male counselors are spending an estimated 11% less time performing this group of counseling activities. (Previous analysis estimated that male counselors spent approximately 7% more time on scheduling activities and 7% less time counseling individual students.) At a  $p < .10$  level, B2 (high school) is statistically significant, suggesting that high school counselors spend an estimated 10% less time conducting these eight survey activities. This result is congruent with that found on Table B (Appendix L), where a strong  $t$  value of  $-4.0$  indicated that high school counselors spend an estimated 12% less time conducting small group and family counseling.

It appears that the results of coefficients B8 (desire to spend less time on these activities) and B11 (feeling well prepared to perform these activities) became weaker as these counseling activities were clustered together. For instance, B8 was statistically significant when separate regressions were conducted on activities "crisis intervention and mediation," "consultation with parents, staff, and agencies," "attending student placement/special education meetings," and "providing career/job/vocational guidance." Similarly, B11 affected allocation of time when regressed on activities "counseling small groups and families," "classroom guidance," and "career/job/vocational guidance." The wish to spend less time on certain activities and feeling well prepared are factors on the extent to which counselors allocate their time among individual

activities required to meet the mandate. They are not, however, factors on whether counselors spend time on the overall activities required to meet the 60% Virginia counseling mandate.

Table 8 shows the results of the regression analysis estimating the extent to which the 11 independent variables affect the way counselors allocate their time to the group of activities required to meet the Virginia mandate.

Table 8

Dependent Variable: AHTIME-Counseling Activities

	B0	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11
Estimate	87.5	-7.1	-10	-11	-4.2	.20	.18	-.01	2.2	-1.2	-.32	.22
Standard Error	10.2	5.6	5.5	4.3	3.2	.27	.22	.02	1.5	1.0	1.7	.78
t-Statistic	8.5	-1.2	-1.9*	-2.5 <sup>#</sup>	-1.3	.76	.81	-.69	1.4	-1.2	-.19	.28
$r^2 = .319$	$n = 73$	Independent variables = 11			$df = 61$	$^{\#}p < .05$	$*p < .10$					

### Section Seven: Survey Comments

The last section of this chapter describes the comments that were written on the survey instrument. A total of 26 participants (36%) added information they believe would assist this researcher in understanding their role as a counselor. Eight comments were made by elementary school counselors (E.S.C.), five by middle school counselors (M.S.C.), and 13 by high school counselors (H.S.C.). Comments are grouped (and labeled according to grade level) to address their relevance to the topics addressed in this studied.

#### Time Allocation

Twelve of the 26 comments (46%) written by counselors are related to how they spend their time. The majority of these comments express counselors' dissatisfaction with the large amount of hours needed to perform their duties well. It appeared that these counselors spend added hours at school or at home performing additional, often non-counseling duties.

Examples of these comments follow.

1. "To do everything that is expected of me, my average day is about 11-12 hours long. My estimated percentage of time is based on a workday that is 11.5 hours." (E.S.C.)

2. "Professional development activities, coordination activities, and consulting activities are also done on my personal time." (E.S.C.)
3. "I do coordination activities outside school day." (E.S.C.)
4. "The way time is spent depends on the time of year: Spring semester we spend several weeks doing nothing but master schedule." (M.S.C.)
5. "Other duties are: college information, application, test SAT, ACT, TOFEL, write recommendations." (H.S.C.)
6. "Duties are being added without increase in pay. I spend more hours working on school issues than I get compensated. This happens because I want excellence, however, sometimes this is expected." (H.S.C.)
7. "I realize that in order to be able to spend more time in all of the areas I circled [in the survey] I would have to be 3 people. I'm not sure where to draw the line yet." (H.S.C.)
8. "In a good week, I would work 60 hours per week here at school. I do most of my consulting, coordination, administrating, tutoring, and clubs after school." (H.S.C.)
9. "The roles and tasks are endless, the time available never enough." (H.S.C.)

#### Desire to Change Current Functions and Time Allocation

Six of 26 comments (23%) expressed counselors' wish to change particular functions or the time spent on a function. The negative tone of these comments appears to indicate a strong desire for change. The following are the opinions expressed by these participants:

1. "Our program is heavy in guidance and guidance groups (not counseling groups). I would like to see less guidance and more counseling, especially individual. Parents sign their kids up for groups. We should eliminate this option as a formal procedure." (E.S.C.)
2. "Two things I am asked to do that I am uncomfortable with are lunch duty and driving students in my personal vehicle. I hate lunch duty!" (M.S.C.)
3. "I seem to spend most of my time working with individual students--but often this is in regards to schedule/career counseling. We are the only high school in our county who does not have a career counselor." (H.S.C.)
4. "Too much time is spent proctoring (Literacy Passport, AP exams). Too much time spent sitting in IEP meetings where we have little to add. More time given to career/vocational counseling would be well spent. Changing [student class] schedules borders on ridiculous." (H.S.C.)

5. "I spend most of the time with parents and students--some classroom guidance (sexual harassment, scheduling, disabilities). I would like to do more with character education and groups. Big time outlay for me is careers--interest inventories, career day, shadowing, career education units, career poster and poetry contests. [Need] changes having to make time to answer voice and e-mail." (M.S.C.)
6. "This year has been a very difficult year due to the amount of students I am responsible for (321). Last year I was only responsible for 280. I wish I could spend more time with each student." (H.S.C.)
7. "Less testing overall!!" (H.S.C.)

#### Preparation Level

Four of the participants that added comments on the survey (15%) focused on their need for adequate preparation to perform counseling duties. It appears that these counselors wished for better training in job-related areas. Their comments are:

1. "We have a separate mediation specialist and a separate career and college counselor. I think these first years (in the counseling field) are a great deal of learning hands on and not a lot of course work to prepare for 50% of the job." (H.S.C.)
2. "There are 2 areas I felt unprepared...or less prepared than I had hoped: counseling with children and giving guidance lessons. As an elementary counselor, one must use a lot of art and play techniques and what we learned were all the "talk" therapies. Also, as a non-teacher, I struggle some with developing guidance lessons." (E.S.C.)
3. "I feel that my training at [a local university] was very inadequate for individual counseling with children, small groups with children, and special school populations (special ed). Much of what I've learned I've learned on my own and from colleagues." (E.S.C.)
4. "I think I can always learn more. Other days are late and work is taken home." (E.S.C.)

#### Additional Duties

The remainder of the comments expressed by these participants (15%) helps the researcher understand the added, non-counseling duties being performed by some Northern Virginia counselors. The following four comments illustrate this point:

1. "Twenty-five percent of time is spent in administrative, scheduling students for meetings with post-secondary provider, type in letters, keeping data, etc." (H.S.C.)

2. “Other duties are: college information, applications, test SAT, ACT, TOFEL, write recommendations.” (H.S.C.)
3. “I also coordinate training programs and awareness activities (HIV/AIDS, etc.) for students.” (H.S.C.)
4. “Estimated times varies, each month/week requires different things, therefore testing in May may be 60%. But 0% at this time, and classroom guidance is high sometimes and lower at others.” (H.S.C.)

This chapter provided a detailed account of the results by conducting descriptive and regression analyses on data collected. The following chapter offers the researcher’s interpretations of these results, conclusions of the study, limitations, implications, and recommendations for future research projects.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion

#### Overall Results

The overall results of this study paint a positive picture of the school counselor. It appears that, on the whole, school counselors in Northern Virginia who participated in this study estimated to spend the recommended amount of time (or more) counseling students and families. Additionally, it appears that, for the most part, the participants in this study worked in public schools that have better student-to-counselor ratios than those recommended by the Virginia Department of Education.

The profile of the 73 participants in this study can be described as: 78% female; highly educated (all master's level, 47% beyond master's level of education); averaged 8 years of counseling experience; averaged 6 years of teaching experience; and averaged counselor-to-student ratio lower than those required by the state of Virginia (elementary school 1:448; middle school 1:277; high school 1:266). This profile is similar to that described in other studies (Carroll, 1993; Coll & Freeman, 1997; Peaslee, 1991), where females were the predominant school counselor and averaged 6 to 10 years of counseling experience. One observation on this profile is a decline in counselors' teaching experience relative to Peaslee's study (1991). The average teaching experience of a counselor in 1975 was 13 years (Peaslee, 1991), and in 1989, 89% of counselors in Nevada had been teachers prior to becoming counselors (Nevada State Department of Education, 1989). In this study, 62% of counselors had teaching experience, averaging 6 years. This decline may be related to the abolition of the requirement that counselors must have teaching experience in order to be licensed by the state; more than one-third were not classroom teachers before becoming counselors. An unsettling fact concerning the profile of school counselors in this study is that only 24% of the participants reported to speak a foreign language well enough to communicate with others. This number appears relatively small given that in Arlington County, 44% of the students are second-language learners (ACPS, 1998a). In addition, Hispanic student enrollment exceeds that of non-Hispanic Whites in other areas of Northern Virginia (Mathews, 1999).

The following discussion answers each of the research questions posed in Chapter One by interpreting the results reported in Chapter Four and by relating them to what other

researchers have found. Conclusions, limitations, and implications for future investigations complete this study.

### Allocation of Time

The participants in this study spent most of their time (75%) providing activities required in the Virginia "60% mandate." These activities included developmental, personal, career, and social guidance and counseling services to students and their families, individually, in small groups, as part of crisis intervention and mediation, and as part of consulting with parents, staff, and community agencies. These results are quite pertinent to school counselors today because of the perception that school counselors spend a disproportionately large amount of time conducting non-counseling duties that distract from implementing a comprehensive, developmental program (Hackney, 1990). Moreover, the trend of the late 1990's was (and continues to be) toward increasing state and federal funds to assure counselor availability to all students and prevent school violent acts (ACA, 1999b; Schmitt, 1999c). This study indicated that, although the participating counselors are already allocating a large amount of their time to counseling students, 69% wished to spend even more time in counseling individual students. Students received individualized attention more than any other single function specified on the survey.

The literature recommends both individual and group counseling practices. "Exemplary" schools defined by ASCA provide minimum individual counseling and meet school goals through group work (Larrabee & Terres, 1984). Moreover, Larrabee and Terres (1984) predicted that group services would be the counseling mode of the future. In this study, counselors spent the majority of their time performing individual counseling services, and 73% of them wished to spend more time on group activities. Individual counseling continues to be the predominant method of service delivery for the participants in this study. In other studies, Carroll (1993) and Furlong, Atkinson, and Janoff (1979) noted that although school counselors wished to spend more time in small group counseling, they were congruent in their desire to maintain individual counseling as actual and ideal priorities. Partin (1993) reported that school counselors in Ohio spent a large amount of their time performing individual counseling services and desired to spend even more time on this function. In this study, school counselors spent 19% of their time in group and classroom guidance activities, and 27% of their time conducting individual services. These activities characterize comprehensive guidance and counseling programs where individual, group, and classroom guidance activities focusing on prevention and remediation are

emphasized (ASCA, 1993). The participants in this study reported spending only 8% of their time in crisis intervention and mediation compared to the time spent on traditional counseling methods, such as the one in Nevada in 1989, where school counselors reported to spend 40% of their time in crisis intervention activities (Nevada State Department of education, 1989).

The combination of categories “administrative/support services” and “other” (which included examples of administrative duties) made up a significant portion of the Northern Virginia school counselor’s time (18%). All participating Northern Virginia counselors engaged in some type of administrative/support activity. A closer look at the data revealed that high school counselors spent 23% of their time, middle school counselors spent 20% of their time, and elementary counselors spent 11% of their time on administrative duties. Such results are disconcerting but not surprising, particularly as the need to advocate for school counseling services increases in an effort to reduce outbursts in school violence (ACA, 1999a, 1999b; Schmitt, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c). Studying the differences between actual and ideal time, Partin (1993) found that school counselors at all grade levels spent, on the average, 16% of their time in administrative and non-counseling functions. This percentage is similar to the 18% of time allocated to the same functions by the participants in this study, and like the participants in Partin’s (1993) study, school counselors in Northern Virginia wished to spend less time on these activities.

Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, and Williams (1989b) found that high school counselors spent a large amount of time involved in administrative duties that consisted of writing college applications and recommendations, counting credits, and scheduling. The high school counselors in this study often reported writing college recommendations, providing post-secondary guidance, and guiding students in career education. Middle and high school counselors also reported functions like “honor roll and awards lists,” “scholarship discussion,” “tutoring,” and “after-school clubs” that were not mentioned by elementary school counselors. Hardesty and Dillard (1994) found that counselors working at different grade levels prioritize their duties differently. High school and middle school counselors reported “student scheduling” and “completing paperwork” as two of their top six counseling priorities (Hardesty & Dillard, 1994). In the same study, elementary school counselors did not report student scheduling and completing paperwork as priorities; instead, they listed consultation, prevention counseling, and coordination as top activities. Gibson (1989) found that elementary counselors allocated small

amounts of time to administrative duties. Their top seven functions included individual and group counseling, working with parents, consultations with teachers, classroom guidance, testing, and assessment activities (Gibson, 1989).

The last pertinent categories in the functions of the school counselor are consulting, guidance, and coordination. Although small amounts of time were reported, all Northern Virginia school counselors participating in this study engaged in one or more of these activities. An average of 17% of their time was allocated to consultation, 12% of their time was allocated to developmental and career guidance activities, and 7% of their time was allocated to coordination activities. Low involvement in these activities has been reported for several decades and may be attributed to the lack of specific training provided in these areas. Furlong, Atkinson, and Janoff (1979) noticed that school counselors allocated very little time to evaluation and accountability. Kameen, Robinson, and Rotter (1985) reported that counselors often misjudged coordination of testing material, personal records, and career information for the coordination necessary to plan and implement a comprehensive developmental program. And Partin (1993) reported similar results in that school counselors allocated only 12% of their time to consultation and 6% of their time to coordination services. Umansky and Holloway (1984) explained that low priorities given to consultation could be attributed to counselors not understanding its true meaning, lack of training in consultation, or counselors utilizing weak models. Feeling unprepared appeared to be a variable affecting the way participants allocated percentages of time to program evaluation and accountability (planning, implementation, evaluation, and research activities were barely mentioned in the daily log). Consultation, however, was mentioned by the majority of school counselors at all levels, with middle and high school counselors reporting the largest amount of consulting done with parents and at grade level meetings. Consultation performed by elementary school counselors primarily involved teachers and parents. These results are important because they may indicate the need for counselor-education programs to emphasize the practical (“how-to”) aspect of consultation, guidance, research, and evaluation in the work setting. If practicing school counselors are not conducting these functions with regular frequency, school-counseling students are not likely to learn these activities during their internships.

The results of analysis comparing the daily log and the survey instrument indicated that the amount of time allocated to counseling activities in the daily log was significantly different than the time allocated to counseling activities in the survey. In the daily log, counselors reported

to spend less time counseling students (27% vs. 46%) and coordinating the counseling program (3% vs. 7%), and more time consulting (27% vs. 17%) and working on administrative tasks (33% vs. 18%). Daily log activities often did not involve all five major counseling categories. Counselors in all grade levels usually did not engage in coordination, research, and evaluation activities during a “typical” day but did engage in counseling, consulting, and administrative duties. Classroom guidance appeared to be a daily priority of the elementary school counselor but not of middle and high school counselors. The differences in daily log and survey results could be attributed to instrumentation bias. The daily log asked participants to report their counseling functions of one particular day, while the survey instrument requested percentages of time allocated to activities throughout the year. Estimating and recalling activities performed on a recent day would likely yield more precise and accurate responses (depicting a "slice" in the life of the counselor) than the estimation and recollection of time over a yearlong period. Additionally, it is possible that counselors spend more or less time allocated to the major counseling categories at different times of the year. For instance, program planning and evaluation are functions typically conducted at the beginning and at the end of the school year, respectively. The survey and daily log were distributed mid-year, possibly explaining why coordination activities were not emphasized. The same is true for career and college counseling. The daily logs of high school counselors may have reported a disproportionately large amount of time dedicated to college-related activities because the daily log was distributed at a time when students were preparing for college. Studies observing and reporting daily activities at different times during the school year could possibly remediate this discrepancy and provide more accurate accounts of actual time spent.

#### Change in Allocation of Time

On the average, participants responding to the survey question, “Would you like to change the amount of time currently spent on this activity?” voiced strong conviction for keeping the same amount of time allocated to the activities listed in the survey, perhaps indicating that counselors were doing what they think they should be doing. In 13 of the 16 activities, the majority of participants wished “no change.” The majority of participants wished to spend more time in the activities “counseling individual students,” “counseling small groups and families,” and “career/job/vocational education.” These results are supported by the research conducted by Partin (1993), where ideal percentages of time indicated a desire to increase the amount of time

spent in individual and group counseling activities. The congruence between the large amount of time already allocated to these activities and the wish to spend more time on them may indicate the desire of participating Northern Virginia counselors to reach all students and the dedication to counsel the whole child (meeting personal, social, career, and academic needs). On the other hand, it could be an attempt by school counselors to preserve self-esteem. Morse and Russell (1988) believed that school counselors set ideals beyond those that can be reached, and therefore maintain high esteem by keeping unattainable goals (e.g., “There is only so many hours in a day, and I can’t accomplish it all, but at least I know what should be accomplished;” p. 23).

The wish to spend more time in “career/job/vocational guidance” (although barely stronger than the wish to keep the same amount of time), came from counselors who are already performing this activity. A closer look at the data indicated that 65% of high school counselors and 58% of middle school counselors provided career guidance and would like to dedicate more time to this activity. This may be explained by the fact that this activity is highly valued in middle and high school settings, and by the strong expectation of middle and high school settings to provide career, college, and vocational education to all students.

On the average, a split was seen in the desire of counselors not to change and to increase the amount of time allocated to professional development. Responses by grade level indicated that 55% of elementary and 69% of middle school counselors wished more time for professional development activities. Equal amounts of high school counselors (48%) reported “no change” and “more time.” The comments written by participants appeared to indicate that most professional development activities occur after regular school hours, often on personal time. This may explain why 50% of the counselors would not like to change the small percentage of time dedicated to this activity. Such situations create ambivalent feeling in counselors who value continuing education but cannot allocate more time to it. On the other hand, participants reported to feel, on the average, adequately or well prepared to perform the counseling activities stated in the survey. A combination of feeling well prepared and lack of time to attend professional development activities may explain why Northern Virginia counselors participating in this study allocated only 2% of their time to this activity.

A quick glance at the results in Table 5 (Chapter Four) indicates that counselors in this study were pleased with the amount of time allocated to administrative/support activities because the majority wished “no change.” On the average, these results are true. However, a closer look

at high school counselors indicated that 50% would like to spend less time on scheduling, 49% would like to spend less time on testing, and 75% of those who reported “other” activities would like to spend less time on college preparation and other non-counseling tasks. The three participants who checked “more time” in the “other” category referred to spending more time tutoring students. Moreover, a closer look at the other two grade levels also indicated that 53% of middle school counselors would like to spend less time on scheduling, and 50% of elementary school counselors would like to spend less time on “other” duties. These results are supported by counselors in other areas of the country who desired to spend less time in non-counseling activities and more time counseling students (Ballard, 1995; Carroll, 1993; Crow, 1997; Partin, 1993). Given that on average only 2% of the time was allocated to the activity “discipline/substitute/hall duty” and 2% was allocated to “other” functions, it is understandable that the majority of counselors (64% elementary, 62% middle, and 70% high school) would like to keep the currently estimated time allocation the same. These results may indicate school system support for keeping school counselors in the role for which they are prepared.

#### Level of Preparation

Overwhelmingly, school counselors participating in this study felt adequately or well prepared to provide counseling services to students and their families. In particular, school counselors felt well prepared to counsel individual students for personal and social concerns, students in small groups, and families. These results are encouraging and add merit to Northern Virginia counselors, especially because they reported spending such large amount of time performing these activities. Perhaps when a counselor feels comfortable and well prepared to perform an activity, that activity will be performed more often. These results may speak highly of counselor education programs, which emphasize comprehensive developmental programs focusing on individual, family, and group counseling practices. Approximately half of the participants in this study felt well prepared to conduct classroom guidance, 36% felt well prepared to counsel on careers, and 21% felt well prepared to conduct research. The results of this study do not clarify whether counselors felt adequately or well prepared due to counselor program education or to experience gained on the job. The majority of Northern Virginia school counselors in this study reported feeling adequately or well prepared to perform the major counseling categories recommended by ASCA.

Interesting results were found on administrative/support activities. Although counselors in all grade levels reported feeling adequately prepared to coordinate standardized tests, schedule students for classes, discipline students, substitute for teachers or principals, or perform hall/bus/lunch duties, 32% of them wished to spend less time performing these activities. The counselors who are performing non-counseling duties (and reported to be adequately or well prepared) are the ones voicing their desire to spend less time.

#### Variables Affecting Allocation of Time

The differences in the way Northern Virginia counselors in this study allocated time to counseling activities according to work setting have been discussed in answering research question number one. In answering research question four, the results of regression analysis on the independent variable “work setting” support the findings of other studies (Coll & Freeman, 1997; Hardesty & Dillard, 1994) that found statistically significant differences in the way elementary and secondary school counselors practice. Northern Virginia middle and high school counselors in this study spent less time counseling families and small groups of students, less time conducting classroom guidance activities, and more time in scheduling than their elementary level counterparts. Middle and high school counselors also appeared to spend more time than elementary counselors working with individual students. This may be explained by the fact that secondary counselors spend a large amount of time with a large number of individual students taking care of a variety of issues, including scheduling, curriculum planning, career education, job searches, student recognition, and college-related businesses. This type of individual counseling seems to differ from the counseling that addresses on-going developmental issues of personal or social nature, typically averaging 6-8 sessions and lasting 30-45 minutes. The nature of the problem, the developmental needs of the student, and the individuality of the work setting appear to explain the differences among the three grade levels found in this study.

Gender is a variable that has not been found, in previous studies, significant in affecting allocation of time. However, gender was found to be statistically significant in affecting two activities in this study: counseling individual students and scheduling. Male counselors were found to spend approximately 7% less time in counseling individual students and approximately 7% more time in scheduling than female counselors. The results could be explained by the tendency of male and female counselees to seek female counselors when problems and concerns are of a personal, emotional matter (Nelson, Nazario, & Andreoli-Mathie, 1996). If that were the

case in the schools, then it would explain the result indicating that female counselors spend more time in the activity “counseling individuals students.” A more in-depth look at the data revealed that, although adequately prepared, 62% of participating male counselors desired to spend less time conducting student class/master scheduling activities. A split was found in their desire to spend more time counseling individuals: 50% said “more time,” 50% said “no change.” These results may also be attributed to the small number of male participants in this study ( $n = 16$ ).

Level of education, years of experience as a counselor, and prior teaching experience did not appear to significantly affect the extent to which Northern Virginia counselors in this study allocated time to counseling activities. These results are supported by previous studies where years of experience were not found to influence the effectiveness of school psychologists (Keith, 1992) nor the prevalence of stress and sources of stress affecting the school counselor role (Sears & Navin, 1983). However, two regression analyses indicated statistically significant effects between higher than master’s level of education and less time allocated to conducting classroom guidance meetings (approximately 3%), and between higher than master’s level of education and more time allocated to scheduling activities (approximately 5%). It appears that this highly educated group of Northern Virginia counselors is spending less time in the classroom and more time in their offices performing scheduling tasks.

Boser, Poppen, and Thompson (1988) found that student-to-counselor ratios had significant effect in the work of the counselors, particularly in getting to know the student and in conducting classroom guidance lessons. Student-to-counselor ratio, however, was not found to be a significant factor in the way participating school counselors allocated time to counseling activities. It is possible that an effect was not found because student-to-counselor ratios in this geographical area are lower than those recommended by the state (as seen in other studies), thus not posing an eminent problem or concern.

Regression analysis suggested that the more Northern Virginia counselors in this study wished to spend less time on an activity, the more time they spent on that activity. It may be that the direction of causality runs the other way: the more time counselors spent on an activity, the less time they wished to spend on it. This is particularly the case with the “administrative/support” activity. The counselors who wanted to reduce the amount of time spent on non-counseling tasks were those spending the most time on them. This sentiment is supported by many studies that described the actual versus ideal role of the counselor (Furlong, Atkinson,

& Janoff, 1979; Hutchinson, Barrick, & Groves, 1986; Morse & Russell, 1988), and those which emphasized and supported a reduction in non-counseling duties (Kameen, Robinson, & Rotter, 1985; Sink & McDonald, 1998).

### Virginia Counselor Mandate

On the average, participating Northern Virginia counselors allocated more than 60% of their time to direct and indirect services that counseled students and their families, thereby satisfying the Virginia mandate. However, the mandate is for individual counselors, not the average of the group. All elementary and the vast majority of middle school (82%) and high school (84%) counselors surveyed met this requirement. The variables “male” and “high school setting” had the greatest effect on the extent to which time was allocated to those activities counting toward the 60% Virginia mandate.

Northern Virginia counselors also reported compliant student-to-counselor ratios, a function of the school districts in which they worked. All middle school counselors and 90% of high school counselors reported having ratios equal to or below those required by the state of Virginia. Eighty-eight percent of elementary school counselors reported compliant student-to-counselor ratios. Although Virginia recommends one counselor per 500 students at the elementary school level, this is not a mandate since elementary school counselors are not required in the public school of Virginia. Alexandria City, for instance, places one elementary school counselor per elementary school regardless of student enrollment (M. L. Wall, personal communication, October 15, 1999). Arlington County, on the other hand, places elementary school counselors according to student enrollment, starting with one counselor per 500 students, and adding part-time counselors as enrollment increases (J. Siegel, personal communication, October 8, 1999). None of the work settings in this study met the “ideal” (1:100) student-to-counselor ratio recommended by the ASCA (1993, Appendix A). However, middle and high school settings, on average, fulfilled the “absolute maximum” (1:300) ratio recommended by ASCA (1993; Appendix A).

### Conclusion

Northern Virginia school counselors in this study allocated more than the recommended amounts of time to counseling students and their families. By conducting counseling, consulting, developmental/guidance, and coordination activities, they seemed to subscribe to the

comprehensive, developmental approach recommended by the American School Counselor Association (1993) and endorsed by many counselor-education programs. Participants worked in settings where the counselor-to-student ratios met and exceeded those required by the state of Virginia. They allocated nearly half of their time to counseling students and families (46%), 18% of their time to administrative and school support services, 17% to consulting with parents, school personnel, and community agencies, 12% to developmental and career guidance, and 7% of their time to the coordination of the school counseling program. Although these counselors were spending most of their time counseling and consulting, it was discouraging to discover that a significant amount of time was spent on non-counseling activities (18%), and only a limited amount (7%) was spent on the recommended role of “coordination.” Participants in this study expressed a high level of frustration regarding the total amount of time, including "extra" hours, needed to adequately fulfill all the functions expected of them.

Key factors affecting the extent to which this group of Northern Virginia school counselors allocated their time to counseling activities were: 1) work setting (middle and high school counselors spent less time conducting small group and family counseling and classroom guidance; high school counselors spent more time in scheduling activities); 2) gender (males spent less time counseling individuals and more time in scheduling activities); 3) desire to spend less time on an activity (e.g., in crisis intervention and mediation, student placement meetings, career/vocational education, test coordination, scheduling, and administrative duties); 4) feeling unprepared (counselors spent less time in scheduling and program evaluation and accountability); and 5) feeling well prepared to perform a counseling activity (e.g., when feeling well prepared, counselors spent more time counseling families and students in small groups, conducting classroom meetings, providing career education, and conducting research). Level of education, prior teaching experience, years of experience as a counselor, and student-to-counselor ratio were not found to have a significant effect on time allocation.

The struggle to allocate the appropriate amount of time to the major counseling activities appears to continue. Studying practical issues related to school counseling is imperative for the survival of the profession. School counselors are encouraged to voice their desire as to how time needs to be allocated to meet the needs of the whole child. A consistent, clear definition of the functions of the school counselor can serve as basis for comprehensive programs that would then be molded to fit a particular grade level setting or the communal needs of the school. Practicing

school counselors and educators need to work together in an effort to design sound training programs and professional activities that will meet the ever-changing school and community environment. Unless counselors and educators take responsibility for identifying and defining the direction of the counseling field, outsiders will impose it.

School districts and counselor education programs need to collaborate in providing counseling students opportunities to learn and practice comprehensive counseling concepts in schools that maintain low student-to-counselor ratios. Moreover, school administrators need to reduce the administrative load of counselors to allow them to spend more time counseling students. Arlington County Public Schools recently approved a motion (for the 2000-2001 school year) to eliminate the student case load of middle and high school directors of counseling so that they could spend more time on administrative duties previously attended by regular counselors (D. Ransom, personal communication, April 7, 2000). Motions like this one exemplify the necessary steps needed toward a more productive counseling work environment. In addition, school districts and counselor education programs must recognize the needs of all students by recruiting, training, and hiring minority and bilingual counselors to serve in culturally diverse communities like the one studied in this research.

#### Limitations and Implications

Practical and methodological limitations of this study need to be considered when planning for future investigations. This study was conducted in a suburban area of Virginia, primarily an area affected by strong economic, social, and political influences of the Nation's Capital. Therefore, this study may not be generalized to other areas of Virginia. The methodology requested that counselors estimate how they spent their time during the course of the school year. This estimation, although counselors' best recollection, may not be accurate. The comments in the survey and in the daily log indicated that functions might change according to the time of year. The data were collected during the months of December and January, and seasonal variations might have affected the results. In addition, the statistically significant differences found between the survey and the daily log responses indicated the uniqueness of each of the two instruments in identifying the functions of the school counselor.

Suggestions for future research would include the study of:

1. Similarities and differences among time allocation of school counselors in other school districts within the state of Virginia, and between Virginia counselors and those in other states.
2. The effectiveness of counseling programs that comply and those that do not comply with the Virginia Department of Education's required 60% counseling mandate and student-to-counselor ratios.
3. The reasons why differences exist in the amount of time allocated to counseling activities according to gender and grade level. Qualitative studies may assist in searching for additional variables (e.g., personal preference, counselor level of expectation, educational training, principal mandated duties) that may explain how and why counselors allocate time the way they do.
4. Differences in allocation of time to counseling activities according to the time of year. Yearlong studies could be conducted where counselors are asked to complete an instrument that assesses time allocation at three or four different times throughout the school year. Comparisons could then be drawn, and a more accurate knowledge of counselor functions and time allocation could be concluded.
5. The effectiveness of collaborative work among counselor education programs and school districts in meeting the theoretical and practical needs of the school counselor in an ever-changing, highly demanding society.
6. The total amount of work hours needed to conduct all the functions imposed on the school counselor. A qualitative study may assist in understanding the reasons why counselors take on the functions that they do, and how these functions are assigned within each school.
7. The implication of professional development on the allocation of time.

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