

**POST-SECONDARY PERCEPTIONS OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELOR
AND THEIR FUNCTIONS AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL**

by

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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to investigate post-secondary students' perceptions of the role and functions of their high school counselor. One hundred seventy-three students currently attending a community college in a suburban area of a large metropolitan city participated in this study. The participants were asked to complete a survey developed by the researcher. Five research questions (listed below) guided this study.

- 1) Do post-secondary students perceive that high school counselors are performing the functions outlined by the American School Counselor Association (Appendix B and C), and are there gender and ethnic differences?
- 2) How are perceptions of services rated as "very" important by post-secondary students, and are there gender and ethnic differences?
- 3) How are perceptions of services rated as "often" performed by post-secondary students, and are there gender and ethnic differences?
- 4) What are post-secondary student's perceptions of the importance with which specific counseling functions are performed as compared to perceptions of frequency?
- 5) What is the level of unmet need for counseling services perceived as "very" important by post-secondary students?

The results indicated that only two percent of high school counselors performed all functions identified on the questionnaire, however the majority of participants indicated counselors performed nearly one-third of the functions. The functions were noted as academic, career, or personal/social domain. The most important function and the most often performed function rated by participants was discussing graduation requirements and the least important as well as the least performed function was identified as assistance with relationship issues. In general, there was not a significant difference between gender and ethnicity. The percentage of participants who indicated a function was "very" important, however was "seldom" or "never" performed was above 50% for most functions.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the professional high school counselors working in public and private schools, with the hope of providing some recognition for the multiple roles these individuals have to facilitate the continued growth and development of students as they prepare for young adulthood.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Although the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has provided criteria to be followed, school systems continue to experience tremendous difficulty when attempting to define the school counselor's role, and as a result, school counselors have a difficult time understanding and interpreting what their role should be at the different levels of developmental processes (Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, & Williams, 1989a). An understanding of what the roles were in a previous decade and what the current roles are would enhance a greater understanding for the practicing school counselor.

The role of the professional counselor as outlined by ASCA and its National Standards, addresses the needs of students through a comprehensive developmental school program. According to ASCA, counselors are specialists who provide assistance to students through four primary interventions: counseling (individual and group), large group guidance, consultation, and coordination (see Appendix A and B for ASCA roles and standards). "Above all, school counselors are student advocates who work cooperatively with other individuals and organizations to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of children and youth" (ASCA, 1999).

Counselor roles and functions continue to be an ongoing discussion in the literature even though they have been in existence for more than a decade, and specifically delineated by ASCA. The role of the school counselor has been studied, examined, defined, and redefined through a multitude of past research (Brott & Myers, 1999; Coy, 1999). However, in light of the abundance of research literature regarding elementary, middle, and secondary levels, the actual role, ideal role, and perceived role of the school counselor have yet to be defined definitively by school levels in the literature (Hogan, 1998; Maag, 1994; Nagano, 1999; Robinson, 1998; Sears, 1993; Wilgus & Shelley, 1988). Moreover, the actual, ideal, and perceived roles of school counselors differ in meaning among researchers. Examples of how the role of the school counselor has been perceived in several different ways are many. For instance, Paisley and Borders (1995) acknowledged the role of school counselors as moving through several models: in the early 1900's, the vocational model started the movement and provided a focus on career development; in the 1940's, the personal growth model focused on the affective and interpersonal domains; in the 1970's, the responsive/reactive model focused on handling crisis and on crisis interventions; and finally in the 1980's, the developmental model encompassed all stages of the developmental process. Research indicates that the developmental model should be designed to reflect the unique and distinct school population for which it represents (Neukruq, Barr, Hoffman, & Kaplan, 1993).

School counselors are trained individuals with diverse talents and are sometimes viewed as short or long term therapists, capable of helping people with all issues. As social and emotional needs began to interfere with the educational process, the role and functions of the school counselor quickly changed to meet the demands of society (Lehmanowsky, 1991; Nailor, 1999). Mental health demands intensified as community programs became limited, and counselors were faced with fewer options for referrals to outside agencies (Lockhart & Keys, 1998).

Secondary School Counselors' Applications of the Role and Functions

Despite the lack of clarity or inconsistencies regarding the role and functions of school counselors, the tasks performed by secondary school counselors are consistent across the board: college selection processes and knowledge of programs available to assist with financial aid;

meeting with students to prepare schedules; adhering to the changing needs of graduation requirements; being knowledgeable of special education needs; promoting college and job fairs; writing college recommendations; administering academic and/or career inventories; and having a familiarity with a variety of services and programs offered throughout the school and community (Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001; Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989; Lehmanowsky, 1991; Lockhart & Keys, 1998; Schmidt, 1995; Wells & Ritter, 1979).

In addition, secondary school counselors deal with a number of individual student-related issues, which can also be challenging at times. These issues might include poverty, physical, and mental disabilities, the student's decision to drop out of school, physical and emotional abuse, pregnancy, lack of motivation, and behaviors deemed inappropriate by school officials. Secondary school counselors may also be responsible for developing programs helpful to the success of students within their school, conduct and participate in research studies through their professional organizations, and perform duties as assigned by the Principal and Director of Guidance and Counseling (Coy, 1999). Some communities have specific concerns indicative of only their community and may need to address these issues within the school as well as the community. This can include gang-related activities, homeless families, or other related circumstances that require a school counselor to know and understand available resources to assist with specific circumstances with specific populations. (Lehmanowsky, 1991).

Most of what has been written about the role and functions of school counselors appear to be based on the perceptions of school counselors, principals, school administrators, teachers, and parents. Few studies have been conducted on the perceptions of students, and largely the focus has been on high school students not post-secondary students (Bonebrake, & Borgers, 1984; Engen, Locing, & Sawyer, 1988; Ghilani, 2000; Hutchinson & Reagan, 1991; McMahan & Patton, 1997). It is the belief of this researcher that those who are more likely to have a greater understanding of the role and functions of the secondary school counselor would be the student population once served, and who has had ample time for critical reflection on the impact of the counselor on their lives.

Statement and Background of the Problem

The new millennium is well under way with increased pressure from legislators, parents, and administrators to define and defend the continued presence of school counselors in education (Paisley & Borders, 1995). As mentioned earlier, secondary school counselors continue to be besieged with many contradictions regarding their role in the school setting as reflected in the research literature. Moreover, the actual and ideal role and functions versus the stated role and functions of counselors are significantly different (High, 1993). In response to an attempt to define the role and functions of the secondary school counselor, many authors have acknowledged specific roles and functions for the secondary school counselor, but have neglected to create a comprehensive viewpoint that might facilitate a better understanding of the contributions the school counselors actually make to facilitate the success of students during and after high school (Fitch et al., 2001; Hogan, 1998; Maag, 1994; Sears, 1993; Wells & Ritter, 1979).

There is a major gap in the literature with post-secondary students' assessment of the role and functions of secondary school counselors. Only two research studies pertaining to the perceptions of post-secondary students regarding secondary school counselors and their role and functions were found. The first study was conducted at Brigham Young University using a sample of freshman students to determine what significant contributions parents, teachers, siblings, and counselors made during their high school years, which may have assisted with post

high school plans (Rowe, 1989). The second study surveyed undergraduate students at Ball State University and focused on comparing students' perceptions of the counseling services most needed and the counseling services actually received (Hutchinson & Bottorff, 1986). It is because of this tremendous gap in the literature that this researcher believes that further research in this area is warranted. It is the belief of this research that post-secondary students, both male and female with varied backgrounds may provide valuable insight to assist in further defining the role and functions of the secondary school counselors.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine post-secondary students' perceptions of the role and functions of secondary school counselors. A comparison to the role (see Appendix A), National Standards (see Appendix B), and functions of high school counselors (see Appendix C) defined by the ASCA will provide an avenue for the high school counselor to gain insight into understanding the needs of the population they are serving.

Major Research Question

This research will be guided by the following major research question:
How do post-secondary students perceive the roles and functions of the secondary school counselor?

The following specific sub-questions will also be answered:

1. Do post-secondary students perceive that high school counselors are performing the functions outlined by the American School Counselor Association (see Appendix B and C) and are there gender and ethnic differences?
2. How are perceptions of services rated as "very" important by post-secondary students, and are there gender and ethnic differences?
3. How are perceptions of services rated as "often" performed by post-secondary students, and are there gender and ethnic differences?
4. What are post-secondary student's perceptions of the importance with which specific counseling functions are performed as compared to perceptions of frequency?
5. What is the level of unmet need for counseling services perceived as "very" important by post-secondary students?

Significance of Study

As a result of this study, secondary counselors may have more insight into the needs of the population they serve. Further, counselors may have a better understanding of how the services provided can assist students after high school and which services or functions were perceived as most important to the student and which were perceived as least important. This study may also contribute to policy modifications, changes, or the formulation of new policies regarding the secondary counselor's role and functions. More importantly, this study will add to the limited research literature on post secondary student's perceptions of secondary school counselors.

Definition of Terms

Post-Secondary Students: For the purpose of this study, post-secondary students are identified as any student with a high school diploma or equivalent and attending a community college.

Secondary School Counselor: A school counselor working with grade levels 9 – 12 in a high school setting.

American School Counselor Association (ASCA): The national association located in Alexandria, Virginia dedicated to facilitating school counselor growth and the development of a national model for all school counselors.

National Standards: Guidelines that help school counselors, school and district administrators, faculty and staff, parents, counselor educators, state associations, businesses, communities, and policy makers provide effective school counseling programs for all students. These standards contain three components: academic, career, and personal/social.

Community College: For the purpose of this study, the community college is defined as a two-year college where students may attend once they have received their high school diploma or equivalent.

Role and Functions: Services identified as being rendered by high school counselors, which may also be contained within the three domains of personal/social, academic, and career, outlined in the American School Counselor Association's National Standards.

Assumptions and Limitations

There is an assumption that post-secondary students have had more time to mature and reflect on their high school experience, thus having the capability to provide a more accurate picture. High school students may not feel as free to state their perceptions while still attending school for fear of reprisal if negative perceptions were suggested. There is also an assumption that students may have had more than one counselor during high school, thus reflecting the opinion of their overall experience and not necessarily the experience they had with one counselor. This study will be limited to post-secondary students, and will not include high school students. It is also assumed that the students are responding honestly to the survey, as there is no way to determine whether or not their responses were, indeed, honest answers.

Summary

This chapter provided a foundation for the purpose of this research. The chapter began by discussing the continued confusion with the role and functions of counselors, followed by an examination of the research evolving from the multiple perceptions of professionals closely related to the field of school counseling. The investigation identified a significant gap in the literature pertaining to the studies conducted on post-secondary students and their perceptions of secondary school counselors. It is the intent of this study to focus on the post-secondary student population and collect their views. The third section included the stated purpose for why the research was necessary. A major research question and four sub-questions are posed for this investigation.

This study is significant to fill an important gap in knowledge and understanding from a population that is not included in the research literature – post-secondary students. To support the basis for this study, a careful review of the historical background and related literature is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR: A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There is an increasing awareness of the necessity to obtain a clearer understanding of the role and functions of school counselors and their existence in education in the United States (Clark, 1995; Cole, 1992; Coy, 1999; Hartman, 1988; Murray, 1995a; Napierkowski & Parsons, 1995; Podemski & Childers, 1987; Schmitt, 1999; Welch & McCarroll, 1993). A concentrated effort by professionals in the field of education has produced research specific for the secondary level school counselor with regard to expected functions within their school setting (Weiss, Gerstein, & Impara, 1993; Hutchinson, Barrick, & Groves 1986; Peer, 1985; Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt, & Williams, 1989a; Tennyson et al., 1989b; Miller, 1988). However, due to the many transformations in the role of the secondary counselor throughout the years, there is much confusion surrounding the duties specific to secondary counselors (Coy, Cole, Huey, & Sears, 1991; Hogan, 1998). Because of the uncertainty in the perceptions of the role and functions of secondary school counselors, and the multiple challenges facing secondary school counselors, there is a tremendous need to facilitate and acknowledge an understanding of the functions involved in a secondary setting (Sears, 1993). For example, it has been asserted that preventative roles need to be included by school counselors to adhere to the growing demand for accountability, with a recognition that implementing programs which address the needs of students and families will be an ongoing challenge (Hogan, 1998; Maag, 1994; Sears, 1993). In addition, there is great need to examine variables of the actual and ideal role in a comprehensive guidance program to ensure that counselors will be able to articulate their function in the school (Beale, 1995; Coy et al., 1991; Robinson, 1998).

Although the literature has provided somewhat of a focus for which perceptions of secondary school counselors have been discussed by teachers, administrators, parents, and high school students, there appears to be limited acknowledgement of perceptions held by post-secondary students (Gibson, 1990; Hughey, Gysbers, & Starr, 1993; Kaplan, 1995a; Leggiadro, 1991; Lehmanowsky, 1991; Rowe, 1989; Sears, 1993; Stanciak, 1995). Engen, Locing, and Sawyer (1988) contended that most statements of satisfaction or dissatisfaction regarding the school counselor reflected the personal opinions of school administrators. Antiquated role descriptions, which some counselors have inherited, continue to define their existence, allowing for little power to assume a professional identity (Hogan, 1998; Murray, 1995a; McCullough, 1993). The perceptions and opinions of individuals in leadership positions, as well as other professionals in the field of education have been disseminated to provide additional insight into the varied and multiple roles of school counselors (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002; Bonebrake & Borgers, 1984; Downing & Harrison, 1991; Ford & Lee, 1996; Gibson, 1990; Ginter, Scalise, & Presse, 1990; Hughey, Gysbers, & Starr, 1993; Kaplan, 1994; Kaplan, 1995b; Nagano, 1999; Quarto, 1999; Robinson, 1998; Rowe, 1989; Sisson & Bullis, 1992; Wilgus & Shelley, 1988). In addition, counselors and counselor educators have contributed information and supported the need to develop methods to continue to advocate for the understanding of their role and functions (Carroll, 1993; Clark, 1995; Cole, 1992; Coy, 1999; Hartman, 1988).

Confusion of roles and misperceptions among counselors should not be blamed on lack of understanding from administrators, parents, students or even counselors. The constant changing of demands in our society, as well as a policy protocol for counseling, has contributed to the historically unclear definitions and direction of school counselors (Lapan, 2001; Murray, 1995a; Nailor, 1999). Many counselors lack the necessary training and certification needed to

achieve professional standards, which further contributes to the lack of consistency school counselors witness within their profession (Hogan, 1998). Further, the historical past of school counseling has contributed to the understanding of inconsistency and identified the many roles and functions school counselors have experienced over the decades (Minkoff & Terres, 1985; Paisley & Borders, 1995; Rotter, 1990). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has provided their committed support to the continued development of national standards to ensure that steps will be taken to help define the role and functions of all school counselors through comprehensive school counselor programs (Bowers, Hatch, & Schwallie-Giddis, 2001; Clawson, 1993; Fitch et al., 2001).

One researcher identified and reflected on the importance of knowing and understanding how others with whom counselors work, such as teachers, administrators, and parents perceive the role and performance of the school counselor. Counselors may perceive they are competent in their role; however, if others do not perceive their role in the same way then the opportunity to acquire respect is minimal (Ghilani, 2000). Research throughout the literature revealed that perceptions and attitudes regarding the counselor's role from parents, teachers, administrators, and students do differ; therefore, perceptions may provide valuable feedback that can be used to enhance any school-counseling program (Graham, 1997; Hughey, et al. 1993).

Historical, Professional, and Legislative Perspectives

Reviewing the history of school counseling is essential as a reminder of how far the profession has come. In the late 1800's and prior to the 1930's, programs within schools were referred to as "guidance" programs. The word "counseling" was extremely rare, and most guidance programs were associated with vocational education (Aubrey, 1991; Coy, 1999; Paisley & Borders, 1995). Jesse B. Davis was credited with the development of the first unit within the curriculum for vocational and moral guidance in the late 1800's. Frank Parsons was considered the "Father of Guidance" after he established the Vocational Bureau in Boston in 1908 (Aubrey, 1991). Educational guidance evolved in the 1920's and was expanded on by John Brewer in the early 1930's when he introduced the concept of human development and changed the previous foundation of guidance (Aubrey, 1991).

The 1940's and 1950's gave way primarily to vocational guidance as veterans exercised their right to use the G. I. Bill and psychologists assisted with selective job placement while individuals were hospitalized in various settings through out the United States (Feingold, 1991). Although the directive approach was entrenched during this era, after World War II counseling and guidance obtained a new direction from Carl Rogers. Roger's non-directive techniques changed the perception of where the responsibility would be placed for completion of goals and direction in an individual's life (Gibson & Mitchell, 1990). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) was formed in 1952 as the role of the counselor began to exceed the vocational guidance description. ASCA became the fifth division of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA) in 1953 and they began publication of *The School Counselor*, a professional journal whose theme was to facilitate school counselors by providing a resource specific to this profession (Minkoff & Terres, 1985). Federal legislation proved to be significant in defining counselor positions as the launching of the satellite Sputnik I and the National Defense Education Act of 1958 forced the abandonment of non-directive guidance (Paisley & Borders, 1995; Minkoff & Terres, 1985). The emphasis then became redirected to preparing students for college, while students not planning to attend college, were neglected (Coy, 1999; Feingold, 1991; Minkoff & Terres, 1985). During this time, the number of school counselors

quadrupled and the ratio of students to counselors decreased as millions of dollars poured into education to train new counselors (Hayes, Dagley, & Horne, 1996).

By this decade, there was a change in the verbiage used to describe counseling programs (Aubrey, 1991). Vocational guidance witnessed the emergence of educational guidance and vocational choice went to career development. Although the Vocational Education Amendment in the 1960's created a need for counselors to refocus on the vocational needs of students (Minkoff & Terres, 1985), it should be noted that developmental guidance was not easy to trace. However, Aubrey (1991) acknowledged Robert Mathewson as a key figure in developmental guidance within the school systems whose work expanded into the 1960's and 1970's (Aubrey, 1991; Feingold, 1991). The 1960's also appeared to be a time when concerns for standards were put into place. Counselor preparation standards originated in 1964 with members of ASCA and the Association for Education and Supervision (ACES) creating the first official "Statement of Policy for Secondary School Counselors" (Gibson & Mitchell, 1990; Rotter, 1990). ASCA issued statements in an attempt to define the role and function of school counselors beginning in 1966, then again in 1974, 1981, and 1990 (Carter, 1993; Hutchinson, et al., 1986).

During the latter part of the 1960's, much transition occurred when various organizational models developed in an attempt to meet the demands of overburdened counselors. Since many counselors were functioning primarily in a crisis-oriented, reactive and clinical/therapeutic role, the need for research-based approaches, developmental guidance programs, and increased accountability/evaluation proved necessary in an effort for restructuring to begin to occur. Emphasis on developmental theory and research for two decades contributed to the beginning of comprehensive guidance programs.

In the 1970's school counselors received a positive acknowledgement of their role when they were included in funding programs to facilitate skills in career development (Sink & McDonald, 1998). Developmental guidance and counseling concepts began to emerge as did the Educational rights for handicapped individuals (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). During this time, ASCA was deemed weak in terms of acting upon proactive issues in school counseling (Minkoff & Terres, 1985). Sink & McDonald (1998) further iterated that during the 1960's and 1970's group experiences, personal, social, academic, and career skills contributed to the design of proactive and preventative programs.

In the 1980's, legislative efforts improved the viewpoint of many counselors regarding ASCA's proactive measures. This occurred when the ASCA drafted the introduction of the Elementary School Guidance and Counseling Act to recognize the importance of counseling at all levels. Movement toward licensure of counselors had become prevalent, and some states began to remove the requirement to hold a teaching certificate to become a school counselor (Clawson, 1993). The first discussion of a national credential occurred in 1992 when the National Certified School Counselor (NCSC) was put into existence. This was created as a result of efforts between the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC), ASCA, and the American Counselor Association (ACA) (Paisley & Borders, 1995). The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) has played a significant role in counselor education programs since 1981 (Schmidt, 1999). The need for consistency in counselor education programs became apparent early, although CACREP had a slow start despite persistent efforts with the establishment of a national counselor education curriculum (Hayes, et al., 1996). Even though preparation standards were formed in 1981 (Schmidt, 1999; Hayes, et al., 1996), in 1993 there were only 74 of the 343 Master's level school counseling programs approved. ASCA (1984) provided relevant insight into the proactive and

preventative nature of developmental school counseling. Continued efforts with the implementation of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs remained through the 1980's and 1990's (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

Currently, the focus is on comprehensive and developmental programs to emphasize healthy development for all students (Paisley & Borders, 1995). While comprehensive programs appear to be the new focus, some research represents concern surrounding the overall content. For example, Lapan (2001) summarized Sink and McDonald's (1998) research, which identified the possibility that many comprehensive programs may not have adequately addressed multicultural issues, integrated development theories in their curriculum, or balanced efforts between prevention and remedial issues. Some developmental theories used to create a foundation for the comprehensive guidance programs may be incomplete (Lapan, 2001), and the emphasis on developmental may be lacking in some counselor education programs (Neukrug, et al., 1993). Society has changed in the new millennium and views on human development may need to be refined (Lee & Sirch, 1994). Borders and Drury (1992) observed that resources were available to school counselors for the planning, development, and evaluation of comprehensive programs. However, these resources appeared to be sporadic and difficult to locate. Concern over the development of a national comprehensive guidance and counseling model, as well as the absence of such a model in the literature, has been further acknowledged by Sink and McDonald (1998).

Indeed, there appeared to be confused counselors, principals, parents, and legislators when school counseling programs were discussed (Borders & Drury, 1992). A primary reason for this confusion points to the professional literature and its absence of discussion regarding affective dimensions when reform is necessary. Guidance and counseling programs have been viewed as part of the educational mainstream, therefore being placed in the position of continuously defending their role. Since the school climate is an integral part of a successful school program, counselors have a unique opportunity to provide strong leadership roles (Childers & Fairman, 1986; Kaplan & Geoffroy, 1990).

From the past decade to the present time major attempts have been made to steer counselors in the direction of national certification, and in the development of a national comprehensive model that will meet the needs of their schools (Sink & McDonald, 1998; Clawson, 1993; Bowers, et al., 2001). ASCA (1999) developed a position statement which outlined the need for school counselors to meet state certification and licensure standards. The academic developmental standards, career developmental standards, and the personal/social developmental standards set forth by ASCA have identified the components under which students should learn (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

Whiston and Sexton (1998) noted that minimal outcome research studies have been conducted to identify and promote the school counselor. Lapan (2001) stated that policymakers have embarked on the premise that verification will be essential to ensure comprehensive programs be viewed as effective. The necessity for accountability has become prevalent through the need of a results-based framework, which would define positive outcome and enhance the counselors' professional image. A specific example cited by Lapan (2001) included peer mediation and conflict resolution programs implemented to reduce student fights. Results identified over a two-year period validated a positive outcome by decreasing the physical fights within the school.

Deck and Cecil (1990) observed the lack of research conducted by school counselors and the necessity to document their effectiveness. Counselors lacked the understanding of

research, and perceived the process as illogical and not part of their role (Deck & Cecil, 1990). Lapan (2001) alluded to the need for counselors to be reflective and investigative practitioners, engaged in critical evaluation of their results-based programs to identify strengths and weaknesses. In June 2001, the historic challenge began with a summit meeting in Tucson, Arizona with college educators, state department consultants, school counselors, guidance coordinators, and ASCA leaders. The meeting marked the beginning of the movement toward a national model to provide a framework for accountability to assist counselors with the process of reflecting how positive change has occurred because of what the school counselor does. This framework is being developed for state and school districts (Bowers, et al., 2001).

Administrator's Perceptions of School Counselors

Perceptions of administrators and counselors are not always interpreted the same way; therefore, it is valuable to understand how administrators view the counselors' role. Some factors that may contribute to the different perceptions among principals are the topics of confidentiality, advocacy, and discipline (Trey, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001; Studer & Allton, 1996). According to Murray (1995b), much of the conflict and misperception could be avoided if both counselor and principal would remain current on statutes, regulations proposed by the Department of Education, and policies developed by the local School Board. Elaborating on the viewpoint of the administrator, Kaplan (1995b) believed principals felt a counselor's purpose was to support and increase student learning and achievement while directly working with staff, parents, and community to identify and remove obstacles in the way of academic achievement. Understanding the perception of the administrator can prove to be effective when the values of the school are considered and the school mission is reinforced (Kaplan, 1994).

Confusion as to the primary purpose of the school counselor has forced several administrators to eliminate positions in some school districts (Ballard & Murgatroyd, 1999). Beale and McCay (2001) reminded counselors of the importance to understand what their role and function is so they may articulate their role to the potential administrator for employment purposes. These authors contended that personnel decisions and selections fall more frequently under the principal, and seemingly, Beale (1995) found that there were multiple factors involved that might influence the selection of school counselors and identified pertinent areas relevant to school counselors when seeking positions. Select questions during the interview process have allowed some administrators to determine the beliefs of the counselor as well as what the counselor may be able to contribute to the community (Kaplan & Evans, 1999). Rhyne-Winkler & Wooten (1996) recommended documentation of specific competencies through the use of a portfolio to secure employment. Developed properly, the portfolio could have a powerful impact on effectiveness of counselors and their role and functions. Some principals may not understand the role of the counselor since they have never been a counselor; therefore the perception of the counselors' role is often that of a "quasi-administrator" (Kaplan, 1994; Napierkowski & Parsons, 1995). Moreover, it is indicated that some administrators view counseling as an ancillary, rather than a central service to support the mission of learning (Kaplan, 1994; Perry, 1995).

Stone and Clark (2001) concurred with the viewpoint that counselors are viewed as peripheral to the main functions in school; however, they also assert that future school counselors could become effective leaders if an alliance with the principal were developed. Unfortunately, administrators have sometimes viewed the school counselor as unwilling to be a "team player" (Cole, 1991). Beale and McCay (2001) reflected on the viewpoint that counselors can play a key role in the success of the student. As such, school counselors should pay particular attention to meeting the needs of students by providing services within the

personal/social, career, and educational domains. The articulation of this role would include an acknowledgement of how school counselors could contribute to curriculum development; the knowledge of special education procedures and interventions; mediation skills; knowledge of how the discipline process works; the ability to work with diverse family situations; and the ability to collaborate (Kaplan, 1994).

The discipline process has been and continues to be a challenge for many school counselors. Some principals perceive school counselors as being “handicapped” when working with student behavior that has been deemed inappropriate. This viewpoint was produced from the recognition that counselors are typically trained to provide “unconditional positive regard”, which in essence places counselors in a contradicting position of judging the inappropriate behavior of the student. (Kaplan, 1994). Further studies indicate that administrators are making great stride in understanding what counselors do. Fitch et al. (2001) discussed the overall positive awareness level of future administrators regarding the school counselors’ role, and Robinson (1998) determined that many counselors and principals perceived essential elements in the guidance curriculum the same way, thus avoiding the need for the counselor to defend the curriculum which has already been established and found beneficial.

Role definitions and expectations tend to be understood better when articulated clearly. A written contract, as suggested by Podemski and Childers (1982), or a review of the ASCA role statement with administration as recommended by Beale (2001), might facilitate a mutual understanding between counselor and principal. Bonebrake and Borgers (1984) expressed the importance of documented, visible, and well-defined programs to assist others with the understanding of the counselor’s role (see Appendix A for Role Statement, 1999).

Parent Perceptions of School Counselors

Many parents view the school counselor as a main source of assistance, with knowledge in multiple areas (Whiston, 1991). The perceptions of parents regarding a school counseling program can be a powerful tool in initiating change as described by Brown (1989). Parents, especially single parents, have the desire to improve their communication and parenting skills; therefore, there is a need for school counselors to offer a variety of groups to promote parent participation (Edwards & Foster, 1995; Sears, 1993).

Helms and Ibrahim (1983) identified the need to clarify parent perceptions in an effort to solidify the school counselor’s identity. In an attempt to identify parent perceptions of the school counselor, Helms and Ibrahim (1985) conducted a study to determine the viewpoint of several of ASCA’s noted counselor functions. Personal and educational counseling and public relations were viewed as more important to the counselor than to the parent; however, there was agreement regarding the career counseling needs. Schmidt (1995) reviewed survey responses from an external study developed to determine the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents in two different southeastern school systems. This study revealed that parents of students in high schools perceived counselor helpfulness lower than that of their counterparts in the elementary and middle school levels. Further, these parents perceived the clerical tasks, paperwork, and test coordination as the least important activities for school counselors (Schmidt, 1995). According to Chapman, DeMasi, and O’Brien (1991), parents perceived college advising as significantly more important than other counselor functions.

Parents sometimes have difficulty hearing news about less than positive behavior of their children, although it is a common practice in some schools for school counselors to be the professional who contacts the parent (either by way of letter or telephone) about a child’s inappropriate behavior. Parents can perceive the counselor as not doing their job and express

intense anger toward the counselor once this less than positive information has been released (Downing & Harrison, 1991). Counselors may be able to influence parent perceptions and maintain a positive viewpoint by engaging in proactive activities such as; seeking input as to the needs of the population, listening carefully to what parents are saying, initiating a parent advisory group, and educating both parents and the public as to their role and function (Helms & Ibrahim, 1985; Schmidt, 1995; Kaplan, 1997).

Some parents want counselors removed from the school setting because they see counseling programs as a nonacademic detraction from traditional education and the guidance curriculum as a deflection from the critical time needed with academic preparation (Kaplan, 1997). These same parents perceive counselors as a threat to what is taught in the home regarding morals and values. Reflecting on the absence of religion in schools, parents have in fact considered counseling to be a practice of a form of religion known as “secular humanism” (Peterson & Poppen, 1992). Kaplan (1995a) reviewed letters submitted by parents to the Virginia State Board of Education regarding school counseling programs and practices. Forty-seven of the letters were positive and 57 were negative. Some of the primary concerns included notification and consent prior to counseling, use of mind-altering techniques, and self-esteem activities. Further, Peterson and Poppen (1992) found that parents felt strongly that guidance materials on issues related to self-esteem should be censored. They indicated a desire to have children excused from activities related to self-esteem. Parents argued that schools should teach academic subjects only, and cited evidence from the professional literature to make strong cases against the presence of counselors in schools (Kaplan, 1995a).

Teacher Perceptions of School Counselors

Quarto (1999) noted that teacher perceptions of school counselors have been neglected and virtually ignored. However, there are a few authors who have studied the perceptions of this group of professionals and suggested that most teachers perceived counselors as a positive contribution to the school’s instructional programs (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002; Gibson, 1990; Hughey et al., 1993; Quarto, 1999). Ginter, Scalise, and Presse (1990) acknowledged two important teacher perceptions of the counselor—as “helper” and “counselor”. Gibson (1990) elaborated on the positive impact of counselors and the contribution to the overall school program; and, Adams, (2000) suggested the necessity of teachers and counselors to work as a team for coordination of intervention efforts. Activities that received high marks included the areas of individual and small group planning, as well as specific areas in personal, educational, and career domains (Hughey et al., 1993). Specific strengths cited by numerous teachers were the caring attitude of the counselor and the fact that they were readily accessible, as well as the college planning time spent with the students (Hughey et al., 1993). In spite of the positive perceptions, Maag (1994) stated that teachers may still view counselors in a more traditional role. This research further elaborated on the barriers that may exist initially when counselors attempt to work collaboratively with teachers. The development of good rapport minimizes these barriers and allows for communication between the counselor and teacher, therefore creating a more positive overall perception of the role of the school counselor. Moreover, teachers may be aware of problems existing in guidance offices, but they are often reluctant to complain about counseling programs even when they perceive these programs as not functioning at high levels (Brown, 1989). In such cases, teachers should be invited to provide input and reflect on these perceptions since the potential for active support exists if they feel their needs are being met (Studer & Allton, 1996).

One concern discussed by Quarto (1999) was the perception teachers had of counselors without teaching experience. According to this study, teachers perceived counselors with teaching experience to be more effective than counselors without; although, Hayes, et al. (1996) stated that teachers becoming school counselors often build their assumptions and perceptions on programs carried over from teacher education. Baker (1996) articulated his belief that counselors did not need to be prior teachers to be effective school counselors. Indeed, research findings concluded that counselors with teaching experience were not superior to teachers without teaching experience.

The implication that counselors may feel as though they need to defend their role to teachers may impact the way teachers interact with the counselor (Quarto, 1999). Providing assistance when teachers' request help is an important part in establishing a relationship between the counselor and the teacher to improve the quality of interactions (Kareck, 1998). Another suggestion for improvement was to informally educate teachers on the individual strengths possessed by the counselor to assist with a more positive perception (Quarto, 1999). One final perception revealed by Studer and Allton (1996) pertained to the notion that teachers often times perceive counselors as part of administration, which may impede collaborative efforts.

Students' Perceptions of School Counselors

Studying the perceptions of student needs will assist in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of current school counseling programs, and may assist with the development of new programs to enhance the overall quality of student development. Feedback for the practicing school counselors, and educators and communication between parents, faculty, students, school counselors and administrators were cited as the primary strengths for studying perceptions (West, Kayser, Overton, and Saltmarsh, 1991). Awareness of student perceptions may also enable the counselor to continue to improve, and further allows for development to continue in the personal/social, academic, and career domain (West et al., 1991).

Since student satisfaction with the quality of services received from their counselor has not been reported frequently, there is limited research on the perceptions of students (Engen et al., 1988). Over the past three decades students' perceptions of school counselors has changed minimally. From the research that does exist, students often view counselors in a very general perspective that often times place them in an administrative role rather than a counseling role. On occasion, students have perceived the school counselor as the primary source of assistance when discipline issues exist. As such, students are more inclined to seek help when school related administrative situations exist rather than personal situations (Hutchinson & Reagan, 1991).

The differences in opinions or perceptions based on the gender of the student or the counselor have attributed to yet even more limited research within the literature. Nelson, Nazario, and Andreoli-Mathie (1996) analyzed data from a study conducted with undergraduate students to determine student perceptions of counselors (not specific to school counselors) based on the gender of the counselor and the nature of the presented issue. The authors alluded to the impact that gender of the counselor could have had when working with high school students in a vocational capacity. Although the concern existed, students identified no preference with regard to gender of the counselor when vocational issues were presented. However, gender preference correlated with the understanding and knowledge of both personal and social problems. Although some students view school counselors as specialists in many areas, personal issues are often not viewed as appropriate topics of conversation within the school setting (Bartholomew & Schnorr, 1994; Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989; McMahon & Patton, 1997).

In a post-secondary study conducted by Rowe (1989), freshmen disclosed their perceptions of guidance they received from their high school counselor regarding options after graduation. This study suggested that seniors who visited their high school counselor perceived their counselor primarily as a college advisor. Secondary school counselors are historically identified as helpers and experts in the area of educational and vocational opportunities (Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989). By comparison, Ghiliani (2000) conducted a study that suggested high school students perceived their high school counselors' role as encompassing much more than college advising. Moreover, student perceptions may be strongly influenced by the individual experiences they have actually had with their counselor. If their school counselor worked predominantly from an academic perspective, then the counselors' role was viewed only as academic (Wells & Ritter, 1979; Van Riper, 1971).

Counselors and Counselor Educators: What Are They Saying?

Day and Sparacio (1980) suggested both school counselors and counselor educators have voiced their dissatisfaction between the counselor's actual role and intended role. "Quasi-administrative" is a familiar term used by some administrators to describe counselor functions, and many counselors have borrowed this same description to reflect their opinion of their non-counselor duties (Hatch & Bowers, 2001). Research has revealed that counselors do have considerable conflict with what they actually do and what they believe they should do (Carroll, 1993). Counselors' perceptions of how their time was spent and how they would prefer to spend time depicted a preference for more time in group counseling, individual counseling, and professional development activities, such as seminars or training sessions. Although there is a preference for group counseling, counselors have expressed concern that they are not sufficiently trained in conducting group counseling sessions and would like more training for group work (Partin, 1993). Counselors have also suggested that assessment methods and program evaluation are desirable areas to be trained in (Carroll, 1993). Perceptions of inadequate training in assessment coexist with the acknowledgement that they generally did not interact with these tests, and further implied that the school psychologist administered most tests. Even so, more training was desired for purposes of becoming a part of a multidisciplinary team (Giordano, Schwiebert, & Brotherton, 1997). The perception that counselors contribute to developmental assessment and are capable of providing a holistic view of each student has made significant the value placed on the training school counselors receive. (Hosie & Mackey, 1985; Smith, 1995).

House and Martin (1998) elaborated on the need for school counselors to maintain the belief that they must be proactive leaders and advocates for the success of all students. Counselors may tend to feel overwhelmed when expected functions in the work place are increased, and perceptions counselors have of their role may limit their attempts to work with every student by rationalizing their efforts (Clark, 1995; Hayes, et al., 1996; Sisson and Bullis, 1992). Examples of statements used when rationalization has occurred could include the following; "with so much paper work..." or "I like group counseling but..."(Clark, 1995).

School counselors believe it is important to have an awareness level of what others perceive their role to be, thereby using surveys to accomplish this. Since students, parents, and teachers are those frequently surveyed for opinions regarding the quality of school programs, evaluations of these findings, especially the outcome of information pertaining directly to guidance related services, will facilitate the counselors understanding of how others perceive their role and functions (Schmidt, 1990). Thus, Bonebrake and Borgers (1984) urged counselor educators to collect and examine results from studies that attempt to determine what counselors do and how they are viewed.

Role Descriptions of Secondary School Counselors

The role of the secondary school counselor has been surveyed, discussed, disputed, challenged, and changed. Herbert (1985) refers to the roles and functions of secondary counselors as multi-focused. Adding to the continued confusion, are discrepancies with what the expected role and actual role should be of the secondary school counselor (Thomas, 1989). Principals, teachers, parents, and other individuals in administrative positions have disseminated information regarding their viewpoint of the secondary school counselor's role throughout the literature (Bonebrake & Borgers, 1984; Coy, et al., 1999; Fitch et al., 2001; Freeman & Coll, 1997; Gibson, 1990; Helms & Ibrahim, 1985; Herbert, 1985; Kaplan, 1995b; Miller, 1988; Podemski & Childers, 1982; Sears, 1993; Stanciak, 1995; Welch & McCarroll, 1993).

Various authors have described the role of the secondary school counselor in many ways. Portrayals include: "ill-defined" (Maag's, 1994); "clearly defined" (Stanciak, 1995); and "antiquated" (Hogan, 1998). These portrayals suggest a need to define a universal role. Murray (1995) acknowledged the vague definition of the word "role" with the continued confusion of the actual role. The discussion contained throughout the literature supported the notion that school counselors are often inundated with multiple ranges of responsibilities that do not correlate with what school counselors are trained to do. Indeed, lack of a clearly defined job role may be a major source of stress for some counselors (Kendrick, Chandler, & Hatcher, 1994). In the 1980's more research was conducted addressing counselor roles and functions as compared to recent decades (Herbert, 1985; Helms & Ibrahim, 1985; Hosie & Mackey, 1985; Hutchinson & Bottorff, 1986; Larrabee & Terres, 1984; Miller, 1988; Peer, 1985; Thomas, 1989). Further, the ASCA established a role statement in 1997 specific to high school counselors outlining duties, responsibilities, qualifications, and beliefs, which may be viewed as a valuable asset for all high school counselors (see Appendix C).

Secondary students are in a position to make important decisions regarding their future. These decisions could include further education, career plans, preparing for marriage or developing a personal value system (Carlson & Lewis; Gibson & Mitchell, 1990). Lehmanowsky (1991) presented an overview of Lincoln High School's process of serving their students. Reintegration of a total school program as opposed to in-depth work with a small number of students provided the counselors with the opportunity to develop programs targeted to assist each student with decision-making skills that could impact their adult years. This high school utilized the concepts of the National Standards set forth by the ASCS to construct a practical working model, as well as contributing to the validation of the role of the secondary school counselor. The Lincoln school district emphasized the importance of weekly counselor meetings, proactive approaches, group guidance, and the utilization of each counselor in their area of individual expertise. In turn, this experience and expertise was brought forth as total inclusion of the comprehensive guidance model and a reflection of how standards could facilitate school counseling programs. Outcome based research is stated as a powerful tool when providing relevant information for the assessment and understanding of school counselor activities, such as the Lincoln High School project (Whiston & Sexton, 1998).

Providing students with college information is a traditional and expected function of the secondary school counselor. Grossman (1994) speculated that competition among universities has heightened and there are ways counselors could assist with offsetting disappointment during the college admission process. Some suggested efforts included; 1) Recognition of student's strengths and weaknesses when completing applications; 2) Being realistic with parents when the application is completed, although this may not be appreciated by some parents; 3) Assist parents

with grasping the information, as this is a stressful time and a tedious process; 4) Prepare recommendations as though they will be reviewed by the applicant; and 5) Contact and query the admissions office for an explanation if the student is denied.

Rowe (1989) discovered that many research articles and studies indicated educational counseling and assisting high school students with their postsecondary concerns have remained the primary focus for secondary school counselors. Hoyt and Hughey (1998) suggested that research at the community college level reflected that 70% of high school students make a decision to do something other than attend a four-year college or university. It is clearly stated that the career component continues to be a vital service high school counselors need to provide to students. To allow the secondary counselor to spend quality time with more students, Borders and Drury (1992) suggested the need for a registrar at the high school level to assist with some of the administrative duties associated with the high school counselor. High school counselors have been inundated with clerical tasks that are very time consuming. Graduation duties were cited as a potential assignment for the registrar, thus leaving more valuable time for counselors to spend with their students.

According to Hayes, et al. (1996), more than 14% of secondary counselors would retire within the next five years. This percentage has created the need to revisit the training needs of school counselors, and to provide the clarification necessary to train future counselors. The ASCA has addressed and clarified the role on several occasions and distinguished roles between elementary, middle, and secondary school counselors (ASCA, 1981, 1984, 1999). ASCA ethical statement D.3 was provided by Coy, et al. (1991) in an attempt to assist secondary counselors with an understanding of who they are and what they do. The standard reads:

The school counselor delineates and promotes the counselor's role and function in meeting the needs of those served (p.141).

Herbert (1985) specified that high school counselors will need to 1) assess local needs and resources; 2) establish priorities and clear objectives; 3) build in evaluation procedures; 4) communicate with the school staff and school community; and 5) work closely with staff members as a cohesive team (p.3).

A Relevant Literature Review for Survey Instrument Development

Preparation for this study and the design of the survey instrument (see Appendix G) began with a review of the related literature and methods of data collection in similar studies. Research in the 1970's suggested that counselors were very discouraged and confused about their role in the school setting. Students, parents, teachers, and administrators were still identifying many counselors as "advisers," with counselors contributing to this image by the functions they were undertaking. There was great difficulty when attempting to establish the role of the counselor from that of the teacher or administrator. High school students identified counselors as the individual who might help with an educational plan or school problems, but not with personal issues (Van Riper, 1971).

Wells and Ritter (1979) conducted a study in a high school setting to communicate how students viewed their school counselor. This study was conducted in a large school with approximately eight counselors serving the student population. At the time of this research, few other studies had been recognized as a significant influence to determine the nature of contact students had with their counselors. The content of the questionnaire, which was derived from Leviton's 1977 study (as cited in Wells & Ritter, 1979), consisted of fifteen modified statements regarding the types of problems students may encounter, where they go for help, and how they rated the importance of various guidance functions. Some of the functions included; choosing a

college, changing a class, conflict with a teacher, problems with a friend, financial aid questions, graduation requirements, questions about sex, deciding on a college major, personal problems, and planning a school program. These functions were then compared to eight sources of assistance a student may seek help from or have a discussion with, such as: the counselor, dean, career counselor, teacher, principal, relative or friend, parent, or other individual. Percentages were provided to describe the results of the survey and where students were most likely to go when help was needed (Wells & Ritter, 1979). The original study (Leviton, 1977) was conducted with approximately 550 students responding to “The Guidance Self-Evaluation Survey”. The content of the survey was developed through an examination of the current professional literature at the time, and was constructed to elicit responses regarding the services secondary school counselors provided. A graduate student conducting fieldwork contributed to the reliability and validity of this instrument by surveying approximately 550 students once again in a different high school. Items included in this survey were patterned from the original survey and were only revised if they did not fit the school conditions (Wells and Ritter, 1979).

Tennyson, et al (1989b) prepared a survey instrument that evaluated the roles and functions of Minnesota secondary school counselors to examine specific aspects of their positions and some of their counselor related functions in their position. Fifty-eight counselor functions were developed by translating specified counselor competencies into identifiable counselor functions that were classified under six broad categories of services, which may be found in a guidance department. A pretest conducted with ten secondary school counselors determined the need to add several items and reword others. The categories were; developmental/career guidance (8 items); consulting (11 items); counseling (10 items); evaluation and assessment (7 items); guidance program development, coordination, and management (8 items); and administrative support services (14 items). Some of the functions included; assisting students explore career information, assisting families to resolve student’s problems, helping a parent understand their child, providing groups to assist with career or work information, helping teachers individualize class instruction, and making referrals to other professionals (Tennyson et al., 1989b). The frequency of the performance of each function and the importance of each function was examined using the items on the questionnaire as dependent variables. Multivariate analysis (MANOVA) and univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the data (Tennyson, et al., 1989b). This study appeared to be one of the most comprehensive studies conducted with a sample of secondary students. A significant amount of responses, 163 from the 165 surveys sent out, were returned to the researcher. Tennyson, et al. (1989b) attributed this high rate of return to the joint sponsorship between the Minnesota Department of Education, the University of Minnesota, and the Minnesota School Counselor Association.

Hall (1998) collected data during an informal study from secondary school counselors throughout the state of Virginia to determine the areas of concern and interest at the secondary level. Primary identified areas of concern included: counselor caseloads, the role of the school counselor, standards of learning (SOL), crisis counseling, and career counseling. Returned surveys also suggested other subjects such as; the law and special education, Internet resources, alternative education, and how the law works with student records and confidentiality. Further noted was the decline in parental involvement and how this has affected the academic success of some high school students. The importance of this study signified the current concerns counselors might have with their role and function in the secondary environment, and further suggested the functions counselors might be performing (Hall, 1998). ter Maat (2000) conducted

a study with Northern Virginia school counselors on the concept of how their time was spent performing counselor functions using a modified version of a survey developed by Tennyson et al. (1989b). The 58 original items were reduced to 47 to avoid redundant mention of counselor functions. Counselors working with three different grade levels reduced the final numbers of activities to 15 through a reviewed process. ter Maat (2000) stated that the survey was selected since it was determined to be the most extensive with the comprehensive, developmental approach. The survey included functions under the areas of counseling, consulting, developmental and career guidance, coordination, standardized test coordination and administrative/support. Counselors were asked to indicate the amount of time spent on each function, and were further asked to clarify how well they felt prepared to perform the various functions. A pilot study that provided critical feedback allowed the researcher to address the survey's validity (ter Maat, 2000). This study was of importance given the functions in the survey encompassed the comprehensive guidance program and provided information relevant to the roles and functions as perceived by school counselors working in the public schools. Other notable studies in the secondary setting included Fitch et al., (2001), Hutchinson & Reagan (1989), Ibrahim, Helms, & Thompson (1983), Mustaine and Pappalardo (1996), Nagano (1999), and Schmidt (1995). With the exception of Hutchinson and Reagan (1989), these studies have not considered gender differences, and ethnic differences were non-existent in any of the aforementioned studies.

Summary

This chapter focused on providing a historical overview of significant areas within the school counseling field, and the legislative processes that may have impacted the secondary school counselor's identity. Various professional organizations that have assisted school counselors with their mission were acknowledged by their efforts and made visible based on overall impact on the school-counseling field. The perceptions of administrators, parents, teachers, students, counselors, and counselor educators were examined to provide insight into how the role and functions of school counselors described in chapter one has been perceived throughout the literature and over several decades.

Administrators acknowledged the need for school counselors to be capable of verbalizing their role and functions as well as the positive impact they might have on the overall school program when they articulate this clearly. An understanding of what parents perceive as important has contributed to the restructuring of some school counseling programs. The literature suggested that parents have impact on legislative movements and can prevent counselors from providing services when limited understanding exists regarding the role of the school counselor and the functions they perform. Teacher perceptions of school counselors without prior teaching experience were reflected as less than positive. Positive relationships could be established with teachers providing there was a clear understanding of the role and functions of the school counselor. Communication between teachers and counselors provided the opportunity for a positive relationship to be in existence. Research conducted with regard to student perceptions focused on students while still attending high school. Limited research was available and post-secondary research was almost non-existent. Secondary school counselors were provided with a voice regarding the areas of research specific to this population of professionals. Furthermore, studies pertinent to the secondary school counselor were discussed and information was disseminated in an effort to provide a foundation for the development of the survey created in chapter three, as well as the functions high school counselors engage in when working in their school setting.

Perceptions counselors have of their positions in the school systems have often intertwined with the perceptions of others discussed in this chapter. Since it is difficult to disseminate the particular perceptions within each group (parents, teachers, administrators, students, and counselors), a matrix has been created to provide an overview of the pertinent viewpoints in an effort to show the reader specific references regarding these perception (see Figure 1).

Administrators	<p>School Counselors lack knowledge of State Department statutes and regulations that would eliminate some misperceptions administrators have of counselors. (Murray, 1995b)</p> <p>A school counselors' purpose is to support and increase student learning and achievement while working directly with staff and parents to identify and remove any obstacles in the way of academic achievement. (Kaplan, 1994; Kaplan, 1995b)</p> <p>School counselors need to be able to articulate their role and functions so that administrators will not be placed in a position to eliminate or justify the need to maintain these positions in schools. (Ballard & Murgatroyd, 1999; Beale, 1995; Beale & McCay, 2001)</p> <p>When applying for positions as school counselors, counselors should be able to clearly articulate their capabilities and if necessary provide documentation such as a portfolio to prove these competencies. (Kaplan & Evans, 1999; Rhyne-Winkler & Wooten, 1996)</p> <p>School counselors are sometimes perceived as "Quasi-administrators". (Kaplan, 1994; Napierkowski & Parsons, 1995)</p> <p>School counseling is an ancillary or peripheral rather than a main function or central service to support the mission of learning. (Kaplan, 1994; Stone & Clark, 2001)</p> <p>School counselors are unwilling to be "team players." (Cole, 1991)</p> <p>School counselors are "handicapped" when working with students to change behavior. The concept of unconditional positive regard that counselors are taught is the culprit for this viewpoint. (Kaplan, 1994)</p> <p>Perceptions of counselors are usually more positive when programs are visible, well defined, and put in writing. (Beale, 2001; Bonebrake & Borgers, 1984; Podemski & Childers, 1982)</p>
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Parents	<p>Counselors are perceived as a main source of assistance whether improving communications skills or parenting skills. (Sears, 1993; Whiston, 1991)</p> <p>Career and college counseling needs are viewed as more important than personal and educational counseling. (Chapman, DeMasi, & O'Brien, 1991; Helms & Ibrahim, 1983; Helms & Ibrahim, 1985; Van Riper, 1971)</p> <p>High school counselors are perceived as less helpful in their overall role and functions compared to elementary and middle school counselors. (Schmidt, 1995)</p> <p>Guidance curriculum is not pertinent to traditional education. (Kaplan, 1995a; Kaplan, 1997)</p> <p>School counselors interfere with the morals and values that are being taught in the home. (Kaplan, 1995a; Kaplan, 1997; Peterson & Poppen, 1992)</p> <p>Counselors are sometimes perceived as disciplinarians. (Downing & Harrison, 1991)</p>
Teachers	<p>Counselors are perceived in a positive light with regard to meeting educational needs with the schools overall program. (Aluede & Imonike, 2002; Gibson, 1990; Hughey, et al., 1993; Quarto, 1999)</p> <p>Counselors are “helpers.” (Ginter, Scalise, & Presse, 1990)</p> <p>Good communication facilitates the perceptions of being supportive. (Brown, 1989; Maag, 1994; Studer & Allton, 1996; Quarto, 1999)</p> <p>School counselors are part of administration. (Studer & Allton, 1996)</p> <p>Counselors with teaching experience are perceived as more effective counselors. (Quarto, 1999)</p> <p>Counselors do not need to be prior teachers to be effective school counselors, and in fact may find their role less assuming when teaching experience is non-existent. (Baker, 1996; Hayes, et al., 1996)</p>

Students	<p>Counselors do better when working with administrative concerns as opposed to personal concerns. (Hutchinson & Reagan, 1991)</p> <p>Student perceptions are limited in the literature with minimal change over the past two decades. (Engen, et al., 1988; Hutchinson & Bottorff, 1986)</p> <p>High school students perceive some counselors as performing necessary functions or services at above average levels. (Ghiliani, 2000)</p> <p>Counselors are college advisors. (Rowe, 1989)</p>
Counselor and Counselor Educators	<p>Counselors are in conflict with themselves with regard to what they actually do and what they believe they should be doing. (Carroll, 1993)</p> <p>Counselors perceive a difference in how their time is spent and how they would actually like to spend their time. (Partin, 1993)</p> <p>Counselors feel overwhelmed by their many “expected” functions. (Clark, 1995)</p> <p>Counselors perceive their training in some areas, such as standardized testing, to be inefficient. (Schmidt, 1990)</p> <p>Counselor education programs sometimes lack the necessary resources to educate full time students studying to be school counselors. This specific training needs to be kept separate from mental health training models. (House & Martin, 1998; Hayes, et al., 1996)</p> <p>Practicing school counselors can make a positive contribution to counselor education programs. (Sisson & Bullis, 1992)</p>

Figure 1: Summary of Perceptions and Viewpoints Reviewed in the Literature

CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Overview

This research used a cross-sectional survey design, which is well suited for the descriptive and predictive goals of survey research. When comparing student perceptions to determine if they differ by gender or race/ethnicity, this study relied on descriptive statistics, summary and frequency statistics, such as the mean ratings for questions, the frequency of responses, and tests for significant differences of the category of questions (academic, career, personal-social). For example, a critical area of inquiry was: Which is more important to post-secondary school students – academic, career, or personal/social roles and functions of school counselors?

According to Reah and Parker (1997) and Heppner, Kivlighan, and Wampold (1992), the use of self-report questionnaires is the most widely used method to collect research data in the field of counseling, and is a way to obtain information regarding the beliefs, opinions, facts, perspectives, and behaviors of others (Edwards, Thomas, Rosenfield, & Booth-Kewley, 1997). Fong and Malone (1994) reviewed several articles for publication in counseling related journals and discovered that more than half used the survey research design. Consequently, survey research is an appropriate methodology for assessing counseling programs and services, and the findings from such studies has made valuable contributions to the counseling literature (Heppner et al., 1992).

The basic aim of survey research is to document the nature or frequency of a particular variable (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999). Data may be collected through the use of several methods, such as; questionnaires, mail surveys, telephone interviews, or personal interviews (Cox, 1996; Edwards et al., 1997).

There are many advantages and disadvantages to using survey research. Advantages include the ability to access areas that are difficult or impossible to measure through other means. Cost benefit is another advantage, especially if a face-to-face survey is administered. The potential cost of a mail out survey is high, with often a low response rate. Further, the rate of return for mailed surveys is approximately 30% (Edwards et al., 1997). The results of a face-to-face survey can be compiled relatively quickly depending on the sample size and methodology chosen. A well-conducted survey will provide accurate information on a wide range of issues (Edwards et al., 1997).

Disadvantages of survey research include: (1) the respondent knows he/she is being studied; therefore, the information may not be valid; (2) the willingness or ability to reply may also present a problem as some respondents may consider the information to be sensitive or intrusive; (3) the researcher can inadvertently influence a response by stressing particular words in a question; and (4) fear of reprisal may be suggested as a disadvantage if the survey is given to individuals in a situation where repercussions are a concern (Edwards et al., 1997). Another consideration is the response rate, which could be a disadvantage if the sample population is required to answer a mail survey. This disadvantage decreases when the sample population participates in face-to-face surveys. Other factors that could be disadvantageous are: the type of questions, length of questionnaire, whether or not the respondents were informed to expect the survey, the time of day the survey is distributed, and literacy levels of respondents (Cox, 1996; Edwards et al., 1997; Heppner et al., 1992).

Survey designs have been widely used to compare information gathered within groups and populations, such as students (Heppner et al., 1999). The development of surveys occurs in

stages, with each stage guiding the next to present a comprehensive method of collecting pertinent information (Cox, 1996).

Research Questions

This research answered the following major question and set of sub-questions.

How do post-secondary students perceive the role and functions of the secondary school counselor?

1. Do post-secondary students perceive that high school counselors are performing the functions outlined by the American School Counselor Association, (see Appendix B and C) and are there gender and ethnic differences?
2. How were perceptions of services rated as “very” important by post-secondary students, and are there gender and ethnic differences?
3. How are perceptions of services rated as “often” performed by post-secondary students, and are there gender and ethnic differences?
4. What are post-secondary student’s perceptions of the importance with which specific counseling functions are performed as compared to perceptions of frequency?
5. What is the level of unmet need for counseling services perceived as “very” important by post-secondary students?

The questions were posed to a group of post-secondary school students. All participants were given the same questions. Data were aggregated and analyzed for rating, frequency, and correlation of responses.

Data Collection Procedures

Following the approval from the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB), and approval from the Chair of the Psychology Department within the Community College, this researcher scheduled a time with members of the faculty in the Psychology Department to administer the surveys. All surveys were distributed and collected by this researcher during the course of one week. Prior to the administration of the survey, a discussion as to the nature and purpose of the research took place with participants in each of the seven Psychology classes. The participants who chose to participate in the study were asked to read and sign the consent form (see Appendix D). Those who chose not to participate were asked to either sit quietly in their seats or leave the room for approximately 20 minutes. To ensure that all participants were provided with the same information, the researcher developed a script, which was read prior to administration of the survey to ensure the consistency of statements made to participants. This process also eliminated misstated information regarding the intentions or purpose of the survey (see Appendix E). In the event that further clarification was needed with any of the survey questions, the researcher remained in the room while participants completed the survey. Surveys were collected and the data processed, tabulated, and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

This study is being conducted as a doctoral dissertation. It is being conducted in an attempt to find out how students who are no longer in high school feel about the services offered by their high school counselor. Please **do not** put your name on this survey. The responses to this survey will be grouped with others and will not be associated with any single individual. Thank you for taking time to complete this survey!

PART I: Please check the appropriate box for each area 1-5 below. Please select only answer for each question.

Demographic data was analyzed by using mean analyses displayed in frequency distributions.

1. Gender: Female Male

Gender was examined and reported by total number of female and male respondents in percentages. The importance of items 1-15 in part II were rated according to male and female students and answered research question 2 – *How were perceptions of importance rated by post-secondary students?* Gender studies are limited in the literature and only include research regarding career decisions based on gender, occupational inequities, and impact gender of counselor may have on comfort level of client (not school counselors).

2. What is your age? _____

The exact age was reported since comparisons were made with the students who have most recently graduated from high school to students who graduated in earlier years. Participants under the age of 40 were included in this study.

3. Race/Ethnicity: White Black, African Am., or Negro Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano Puerto Rican Cuban

Other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino_____ American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Indian Japanese

Native Hawaiian Chinese Korean Guamanian Filipino Vietnamese Other Asian race_____

Samoan Other Pacific Islander_____ Other Race (please specify)_____

Race/Ethnicity will be examined to see if the importance of services performed in Part II, items 1-15 varied among students by race/ethnicity. This question assisted in answering research question 5 – *Do post-secondary student perceptions differ by gender and race?*

4. Education: Did you attend a high school in the United States? Yes No

What year did you complete high school or receive your GED? _____

Students who did not attend high school in the United States were not examined, and this data was not be analyzed. The graduation year allowed the researcher to examine data received by a respondent who might be, for example, 21 but only recently graduated.

5. How have you spent most of your time after graduation from high school? Check all that apply Work Full time
- Work Part time Military Trade or Vocational School 4-Year College Community College Domestic Full Time
- School Full time School Part Time

A question of interest for this researcher is how time was spent directly after high school. This question was not be part of the analysis, however was included in the overall demographic profile.

PART II: On the next page you will find 15 school counselor functions listed that the American School Counselor Association believes is important and may be performed by high school counselors. Please read each function carefully. There are three columns to the right of each function. Please circle a response under each column that best reflects your opinion regarding your high school counselor. Please respond only to what is applicable to you.

This part is comprised of two parts. Part A lists fifteen items by categories derived from ASCA national standard domains: academic, career, personal/social. Part B contains measures of assessment (columns across top).

Part A: 15 Questionnaire Items

- Academic – items 1-5
- Career – items 6-10
- Personal/Social – items 7-15

This part assisted in examination of highest rated functions within each category of academic, career, and personal/social when comparing the importance of the service and the frequency of the service. This area also assisted in answering research question 3: What are post-secondary student’s perceptions of the frequency with which specific counseling functions were performed as compared to perceptions of importance?

My counselor met with me Individually or in a group and...	Did your counselor perform this service		How important was this service 1) Very 2) Somewhat 3) Not Important			How often was this service performed 1) Often 2) Seldom 3) Never		
	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
1. Helped select classes	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
2. Discussed the results of standardized tests	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
3. Discussed study habits/organizational skills	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
4. Discussed graduation requirements	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
5. Developed a graduation plan	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
6. Explored career information	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
7. Explored post high school options such as college, military or work	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
8. Provided information for financial aid or scholarships	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
9. Provided opportunities for computer-based career or college information	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
10. Advised of college fairs or job fairs	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
11. Discussed substance abuse information	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
12. Discussed relationship issues (ex: friends, boy/girl)	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
13. Discussed personal issues regarding family	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
14. Assisted with communication skills	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
15. Assisted with coping skills	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3

Part B: Measures of Assessment (Columns Across Top)

Three questions assess categories in Part A: *Did your counselor perform this service? How important was this service? How often was this service performed?* The first question was formulated to determine what functions counselors were performing as perceived by students. This assessment facilitated answering research question 1 and research question 5: *Do post-secondary students perceive that high school counselors are performing the functions outlined by the American School counselor Association? What is the level unmet need for counseling services perceived by post-secondary students?* The second question examines the importance of items 1-15 in Part A and allows for comparisons to be made by race and gender. The third question examined the frequency of the services performed in items 1-15 and allowed a comparison to be made between the importance of the service and the frequency of the service performed.

PART III

What other services do you think your counselor should have provided that are not listed above but may have been important to you?

This part was developed as an open-ended question to accommodate responses from students regarding any functions that may have been omitted in Part II A, but may be important to the post-secondary student while in high school. This section will also contribute to identifying students' perceptions of unmet needs. Data were grouped according to similar responses.

Figure 2: Rationale for survey instrument development

(SPSS). Figure 2 is a display of the survey instrument with the rationale for the development of the survey instrument.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with 25 psychology students to determine content and clarity of the survey. The following six questions were posed:

1. Is there anything on this questionnaire that is unclear?
2. Can you tell me what this questionnaire was designed to do?
3. Tell me what the hardest term on this survey is?
4. How is the wording of the questions?
5. Are there any confusing questions?
6. Is there enough space to write an answer in Part III?

Overall, respondents indicated the survey was self-explanatory, with directions that were easy to follow. There were two typographical errors found in the directions and these errors were corrected. Some respondents noted there should be more room provided to write responses in part III, therefore an additional line was added. Respondents who chose to complete the survey indicated they were finished in approximately twenty minutes.

Sampling Design

This research study used a non-probability, convenience, and purposive sample. Approximately two hundred (200) male and female students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at a Community College in a suburban area of a large metropolitan city were surveyed. An introductory psychology course provided the necessary age group for the purposes of this study as it is a course typically taken by students entering college for the first time.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using the SPSS. A matrix was created to ensure that research question was answered utilizing the appropriate statistic (see Figure 3). Prior to data analysis, frequency distributions were inspected for missing data. Where appropriate, missing data were substituted with mean values.

Frequency Distributions

Frequency distributions included:

1. Responses to each function by whether the counselor performed the service.
2. Responses by all respondents on importance of service.
3. Responses by all respondents on how often the service was performed.

Frequency distributions provide an overview of responses, and are one of the most common means of summarizing a set of data. The organization of frequency distributions allowed the data to be summarized into tables using proportional data to describe the distributions. All tables were numbered and given a descriptive title to avoid confusion when data was described.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are similar to frequency distributions in that they basically characterize the data, but can be utilized to make reference to inference in trends and comparisons. For all research questions, data are described in this manner. In some instances,

true statistical comparisons cannot be made because differences in measurement or limitations in software capabilities preclude reliable comparisons. For research question 4 in particular, findings are described rather than statistically compared. For example, overall mean scores were displayed to provide an understanding of the overall ratings participants provided for each function. This comparison provided an opportunity for the researcher to determine the potential for unmet need. Subsequently, this construct, (unmet need), was operationalized by assessing the proportion of participants who did not receive a service they felt was “very” important but was “seldom” or “never” performed. Services were organized and ranked according to percentage of unmet need in each domain of academic, career, or personal/social

ASSESSMENT AREA	Frequency Distribution	Descriptive Statistics	Chi-Square
Response to each function by whether counselor performed the service; gender and ethnic differences. RQ1	X	X	X
Response by all respondents on importance of service (operationalized as “very important” vs. “else”); gender and ethnic differences RQ2	X	X	X
Response by all respondents on how often the service was performed (operationalized as “often” vs. “else”); gender and ethnic differences. RQ3	X	X	X
Comparison and contrast of performance and nonperformance of service to importance of service. RQ4		X	
Unmet Need By Importance of Service RQ5	X	X	

*RQ: Research Question

Figure 3: Research assessment by type of data analysis.

Chi-Square Statistics

To compare and contrast performance of service (yes/no), and both gender and ethnic differences in service importance and frequency, the chi-square statistic was used. For consistency, continuous responses for importance and frequency were dichotomized as follows: 1) Importance = “very important” vs. “else”; 2) Frequency = “often” vs. “else.” This type of analysis is useful as it collapses response cells with small numbers into a more meaningful representation of the data, which is especially important given the sample size is certainly adequate for most types of analyses but not large enough to gauge trends where responses are undeniably skewed. Chi-square tests also assess differences between males and females, and White and Non-White participants (dichotomized also for reliable ethnic comparisons) on the dichotomized measures. The significance of these 2x2 comparisons are summarized in the tables included in the results section.

Open-Ended Question

The open-ended question in Part III was grouped according to the type of response provided. These comments were placed into categories of the three domains; academic, career, personal social, and one category of other in their original context.

Timeline of Research Study

The timeline to complete this research (by the end of each month) is noted as follows:

November 2002

- Completion of survey design
- Prospectus approval
- Institutional Review Board Approval
- Field testing completed

January 2003

- Distribution and collection of survey
- Data entry

March 2003

- Data interpretation
- Conclusions

April 2003

- Final Defense

Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the survey research methods used in this study and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of survey research. Discussion in the beginning of the chapter included a description of the sample as well as the setting where the research took place. Subsequently, the process by which the survey would be distributed, administered, and analyzed was presented. The chi-square was identified as the statistic for calculating data, and a brief discussion of chi-square followed to ensure the rationale for the analyses was delineated. To demonstrate the rationale for the development of the survey instrument and the type of analysis conducted, two figures were presented. Finally, timelines were provided for implementation and completion of this research. Chapter 4 will provide data analyses and findings from this research.

CHAPTER FOUR ANALYSIS AND RESULTS OF POST-SECONDARY PERCEPTIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and results of post-secondary students' perceptions of the secondary school counselor and their functions at the high school level. Subsequent to presenting the demographic profile of respondents who participated in the study, section one examines the data collected in part two of the survey pertaining to the actual perceived delivery of services. Section two continues to examine the data collected in part two of the survey and presents findings pertaining to perceptions of importance of services. Similarly, section three presents findings related to the frequency of service receipt. Section four discusses the participants' responses to research question three (frequency of services) with respect to research question two (importance of services). In section five, unmet need for counseling services is examined. Finally, section six provides an analysis of the comments obtained from participants in part three of the survey followed by a summary of the chapter.

Profile of Respondents

A convenience sample of students attending a community college in the suburban area of a large metropolitan city was selected for this study. Students from seven Introductory Psychology courses, with an average of 35 students in each class ($N = 245$) volunteered to participate in the study by completing a two-page, 21-item survey. A total of 221 surveys were collected and examined upon completion, providing a 90% cumulative return response. This number suggests that approximately 10% of the respondents were either absent the day their class was surveyed, or chose not to participate in the study. Upon further examination, 48 surveys were excluded, as participants either failed to answer all of the questions on the survey ($n = 39$) or they did not graduate from a high school in the United States ($n = 9$). A total of 173 participants represented the overall profile of the sample population (71% response rate). Using descriptive analysis, the demographic data of the participants are presented in Table 1. A summary of the participants' profiles indicated that most (61%) were female. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 38 years. The mean age was 21.2 years for females and 20.8 for males. It is important to note that the majority (86%) of the participants were 25 years of age or under, and graduated from high school or took their General Educational Development (GED) test between 1996 and 2002. Categories from the 2000 census were obtained to ensure proper grouping for race/ethnicity. Since the majority, (71%), of the participant responses indicated they were White, and there were a limited number of students in all other categories of race/ethnicity, data were regrouped by this researcher into four broader categories, with 9% representing the Asian population, 9% representing the Hispanic population, 6% representing the African American population, and 6% representing all other race/ethnicity. With regard to activities after high school, the majority (82%) of the participants enrolled in the community college upon completion of high school. Forty-six percent worked part time, while 41% worked full time.

Table 1

Summary of Demographic Profile of Participants (n=173)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	67	39
Female	106	61
Age		
18-24	148	86
25-31	18	10
32-38	7	4
Race/Ethnicity*		
White	122	71
Hispanic	15	9
Asian	16	9
African American	10	6
Other Race	10	6
Activities after High School**		
Community College	142	82
Work Part Time	80	46
Work Full Time	71	41
Four-Year College	35	20
Stay at Home Parent	10	6
Military	7	4
Trade or Vocational School	5	3
Other	7	4

Note: *Data was collapsed due to small numbers in most categories defined by Census 2000

**Participants could respond to multiple categories

Section One: Post-Secondary Student Perceptions of Services Received

Research question 1: Do post-secondary students perceive that high school counselors are performing the functions outlined by the ASCA and are there gender and ethnic differences? Participants were asked to circle either yes or no if their counselor performed any of the 15 functions listed on the survey. Examples of these functions include: help with the selection of courses, interpretation of standardized tests, career assistance, and personal issues during their high school years (see Appendix F for actual survey). A summary score was created to count the number of functions received (see Table 2). Overall, the majority (66%) of participants stated that the number of functions actually performed by their counselor ranged from three to nine. Four percent of the participants ($n = 7$) indicated that their counselor did not perform any of the functions, and nearly two percent of participants ($n = 3$) indicated their counselor performed all fifteen functions. The average amount of counselor functions performed was indicated as six.

The data were further examined to determine which domain of academic, career, or personal/social functions actually contained the largest number of “yes” responses. For the purpose of clarification regarding the three domains, it should be noted that the counselor functions have been segmented into the following: the first five functions listed on part two of

the survey are identified with the academic domain; the second five functions are identified with the career domain, and the last five functions are identified with the personal/social domain. Eighty-eight percent of participants indicated they discussed their graduation requirements with their high school counselor, and 62% said they received assistance when selecting classes. Both of these functions were contained in the academic domain, which suggested that this domain contained the most “yes” responses. The second highest rated domain was career. Sixty-one percent of the participants reported that they discussed post high school options with their school counselor. Approximately one-half (51%) of the participants stated that their counselor had informed them of existing college or job fairs. The least amount of perceived assistance appeared to be in the personal/social domain where only one-fifth (20%) of the participants stated that they had received assistance with relationship issues and less than one-quarter (21%) of the participants responded that they were assisted when help was needed with communication skills. In general, there were no significant differences noted between males and females in the academic and career domain, however significant differences were noted between males and females for specific functions in the personal social domain. Coping skills ($p < .004$), and relationship issues ($p < .008$) revealed significant levels at the .01 level. A significant difference was noted at the .05 level with personal issues ($p < .01$)(see Table 3). An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests. Since many of the ethnic categories had limited responses, the data were further regrouped into White and Non-White. There were no significant differences noted between these two groups, however a marginally ($p = .05$) significant difference was noted with substance abuse information between White participants and Non-White participants (see Table 4).

Section Two: Perceived level of Importance

Research question 2: How are perceptions of services rated as “very” important by post-secondary students, and are there gender and ethnic differences? Although participants rated each function based on not important, somewhat important, or very important, this researcher ranked the fifteen counselor functions according to the “very” important rating reported. Table 5 provides a summary of the functions rated very important, from highest to lowest. It is important to note that the functions presented in Tables 5, 6 and 7 are not presented in order of academic, career, and personal/social domains. Since the functions were rated according to importance, each function is identified by domain with an A, C, or P to signify academic, career, or personal/social, respectively. A descriptive analysis of the data revealed that most (67%)

Table 2

Summary of Frequency of Number of Counseling Functions Received

Number of Counseling Functions Received	Frequency (N=173)	Percentage
0	7	4.1
1	8	4.6
2	13	7.5
3	17	9.8
4	17	9.8
5	17	9.8
6	17	9.8
7	14	8.1
8	16	9.3
9	16	9.3
10	11	6.4
11	5	2.9
12	6	3.5
13	3	1.7
14	3	1.7
15	3	1.7

Standard Deviation = 3.5

Table 3

Proportions of Participants Indicating Receipt of Functions by Gender

Counselor Function	Overall Proportion (N = 173)	Female Proportion (N = 106)	Male Proportion (N = 67)	Chi-Square (df = 1)	<i>p</i>
Academic Domain (A)					
Graduation Requirements	.88	.88	.90	0.13	.71
Select Classes	.62	.63	.61	0.07	.79
Graduation Plan	.47	.45	.51	0.49	.48
Study Habits	.32	.27	.40	3.14	.07
Standardized Tests	.28	.27	.28	0.02	.88
Career Domain (C)					
Discuss Post H.S. Options	.61	.61	.61	0.00	.98
College/Job Fairs	.51	.56	.45	1.94	.16
Explore Career Information	.43	.42	.45	0.09	.76
Assist with Financial Aid	.40	.42	.37	0.30	.58
Computer Based Assistance	.39	.37	.43	0.72	.39
Personal/Social Domain (P)					
Coping Skills	.29	.37	.16	8.29	.004**
Personal Issues	.27	.33	.16	5.79	.01*
Substance Abuse Information	.25	.26	.24	0.13	.70
Communication Skills	.21	.23	.18	0.86	.64
Relationship Issues	.20	.27	.10	7.12	.008**

Note: Significant at * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 4

Proportions of Participants Indicating Receipt of Function by Race/Ethnicity

Counselor Functions	White Proportion (N = 122)	Non-White Proportion (N = 51)	Chi-Square (df = 1)	<i>p</i>
Academic Domain (A)				
Graduation Requirements	.89	.86	0.33	.56
Select Classes	.61	.67	0.55	.45
Graduation Plan	.51	.39	1.94	.16
Study Habits	.33	.31	0.03	.85
Standardized Tests	.25	.35	2.05	.15
Career Domain (C)				
Discuss Post H.S. Options	.65	.53	2.11	.14
College/Job Fairs	.53	.47	0.55	.45
Explore Career Information	.43	.43	0.00	.97
Assist with Financial Aid	.39	.41	0.05	.82
Computer Based Assistance	.39	.41	0.10	.74
Personal/Social Domain (P)				
Coping Skills	.28	.31	0.21	.64
Personal Issues	.24	.31	0.84	.35
Relationship Issues	.23	.16	1.15	.28
Substance Abuse Information	.21	.35	3.70	.05*
Communication Skills	.20	.25	0.52	.46

* $p < .05$

participants considered discussing graduation requirements as the most important function of the school counselor. The remaining functions that rated in the top five included discussing post high school options (55%), providing career information (51%), reviewing a graduation plan (50%) and discussing financial aid or scholarship information (50%). Assisting with graduation requirements, and developing a graduation plan are part of the academic domain, whereas the remaining three functions rated in the top five are functions contained in the career domain.

To investigate gender differences in the rating of importance, the chi-square statistic was used (see Table 6). In general, there was only one significant difference noted with a function contained in the career domain and the personal/social domain between males and females. Financial Aid ($p = .04$) reflected a significant difference at the .05 level. One significant difference was detected in the personal/social domain with relationship issues ($p = .02$), and a marginally ($.05 > p < .10$) significant difference with personal issues ($p = .06$) was noted.

Investigations of ethnic differences are reflected in Table 7. Participants rated the importance of each function with significant differences noted between the two groups in some functions, however, in general, no significant ethnic differences were detected. Non-White participants placed more importance than White participants on study habits ($p = .04$), coping skills ($p = .03$), and substance abuse issues ($p = .01$). The p value for financial aid ($p = .06$), communication skills ($p = .06$), financial aid information ($p = .06$), and standardized testing ($p = .09$) indicated a marginally ($.05 > p < .10$) significant difference.

Section Three: Frequency of Receipt of Counselor Services

Research question 3: How are perceptions of services rated as “often” by post-secondary students, and are there gender and ethnic differences? Table 8 provides a summary of the functions rated as most received to least received. It is interesting to note that most (42%) of the participants rated graduation requirements as the most frequently received function. Twenty-nine percent of the participants rated post high school options (29%) and help with selecting classes (29%) as second and third frequently received function, respectively. Relationship issues (7%) was reported as the least frequently received service.

An investigation of gender differences for service frequency in Table 9 indicated a significant difference at the .05 level with information regarding college or job fairs ($p = .04$), indicating females received this service with greater frequency than males. A marginally ($.05 < p < .10$) significant difference with financial aid assistance ($p = .07$), and communication skills ($p = .05$) was revealed. Table 10 presents comparisons between White participants and Non-White participants for frequency of service provision. Statistically significant differences at the .05 levels were reported for interpretation of standardized tests ($p = .03$), with Non-White participants indicating this service was received more often than White participants. Marginally ($.05 < p < .10$) significant differences at the .05 level was indicated for financial aid information ($p = .05$), and substance abuse information ($p = .07$).

Section Four: Comparison of the Frequency and Importance of Counseling Functions

Research question 4: What are post-secondary student’s perceptions of the importance with which specific counseling functions are performed compared to perceptions of frequency? For comparative purposes, this question’s response included a purely descriptive comparison of means between importance and frequency, which reflected that importance had a higher mean for every function as compared to the lower mean for the frequency of every function. For example, participants scored a mean of 2.22 on “help with selecting classes,” and yet the frequency with which this service was performed had a mean of 1.98 for how often the counselor

Table 5

Counseling Functions Rated as “Very” Important¹

Counselor Functions	Frequency N=173	Proportion ²
Graduation Requirements (A)	116	.67
Post High School Options (C)	95	.55
Explore Career Information (C)	88	.51
Graduation Plan (A)	87	.50
Financial Aid/Scholarship (C)	86	.50
Computer Based Career Info (C)	76	.44
College or Job Fair (C)	66	.38
Helped Select Classes (A)	64	.37
Study Habits (A)	62	.36
Coping Skills (P)	61	.35
Communication Skills (P)	60	.35
Personal Issues (P)	50	.29
Substance Abuse Issues (P)	46	.27
Standardized Tests (A)	43	.25
Relationship Issues (P)	36	.21

Note: ¹Functions are rated by participants and ranked by the researcher. Functions are not in order of academic, career, or personal/social domains. A = Academic C = Career P = Personal/Social

²Proportion identifying “very important”

Table 6

Gender Comparison of Functions Rated as “Very” Important¹

Counselor Functions ²	Male Proportion (N = 67)	Female Proportion (N = 106)	Chi-Square (df=1)	<i>p</i>
Graduation Requirements (A)	.60	.72	2.67	.10
Post High School Options (C)	.49	.58	1.41	.23
Explore Career Information (C)	.49	.52	0.11	.73
Graduation Plan (A)	.49	.51	0.04	.82
Financial Aid/Scholarship (C)	.40	.56	3.87	.04*
Computer Based Career Info (C)	.49	.41	1.25	.26
College or Job Fair (C)	.34	.41	0.67	.41
Helped Select Classes (A)	.39	.36	0.15	.69
Study Habits (A)	.40	.33	0.94	.33
Coping Skills (P)	.30	.39	1.40	.23
Communication Skills (P)	.30	.38	1.12	.28
Personal Issues (P)	.21	.34	3.41	.06
Substance Abuse Issues (P)	.22	.29	0.98	.32
Standardized Tests (A)	.22	.26	0.35	.55
Relationship Issues (P)	.12	.26	5.21	.02*

¹Rated as 1) Not important 2) Somewhat important 3) Very important

²Domains are noted as: A = Academic, C = Career, P = Personal/Social

* $p < .05$ males and females differ significantly

Table 7

Race/Ethnicity Comparison of Functions Rated as "Very" Important¹

Counselor Functions ²	White Proportion (N = 122)	Non-White Proportion (N = 51)	Chi-Square (df=1)	<i>p</i>
Graduation Requirements (A)	.68	.65	0.18	.67
Post High School Options (C)	.54	.57	0.11	.73
Explore Career Information (C)	.48	.57	1.04	.30
Graduation Plan (A)	.48	.55	0.61	.43
Financial Aid/Scholarship (C)	.45	.61	3.54	.06
Computer Based Career Info (C)	.44	.43	0.01	.89
College or Job Fair (C)	.37	.41	0.28	.59
Helped Select Classes (A)	.34	.43	1.17	.27
Study Habits (A)	.31	.47	3.95	.04*
Coping Skills (P)	.30	.47	4.41	.03*
Communication Skills (P)	.30	.45	3.46	.06
Personal Issues (P)	.26	.35	1.43	.23
Substance Abuse Issues (P)	.21	.39	5.90	.01*
Standardized Tests (A)	.21	.33	2.78	.09
Relationship Issues (P)	.18	.27	1.93	.16

¹Rated as 1) Not important 2) Somewhat important 3) Very important

²Domains noted as: A = Academic, C = Career, P = Personal/Social

**p* < .05 White and Non-White differ significantly

Table 8

Counseling Functions Rated by How Often Service was Performed¹

Counselor Functions	Frequency N=173	Proportion ²
Graduation Requirements (A)	72	.42
Post High School Options (C)	51	.29
Helped Select Classes (A)	50	.29
Graduation Plan (A)	41	.23
College or Job Fair (C)	40	.23
Computer Based Career Info (C)	38	.22
Financial Aid/Scholarship (C)	32	.19
Explore Career Information (C)	29	.17
Coping Skills (P)	28	.16
Communication Skills (P)	24	.14
Standardized Tests (A)	23	.13
Substance Abuse Issues (P)	22	.13
Study Habits (A)	21	.12
Personal Issues (P)	20	.12
Relationship Issues (P)	15	.07

¹Functions are rated by participants and ranked by the researcher. Functions are not in order of academic, career, or personal/social domains. A = Academic C = Career P = Personal/Social

²Proportion identifying “often” performed

Table 9

Gender Comparison of Functions Rated as “Often” Performed¹

Counselor Functions	Female Proportion (N=106)	Male Proportion (N=67)	Chi-Square ² (df=1)	<i>p</i>
Graduation Requirements (A)	.42	.42	0.00	.97
Post High School Options (C)	.31	.27	0.35	.54
Helped Select Classes (A)	.25	.31	0.66	.41
Graduation Plan (A)	.26	.19	1.11	.29
College or Job Fair (C)	.28	.15	4.13	.04*
Computer Based Career Info (C)	.21	.24	0.23	.62
Financial Aid/Scholarship (C)	.23	.12	3.11	.07
Explore Career Information (C)	.16	.18	0.10	.74
Coping Skills (P)	.20	.10	2.65	.10
Communication Skills (P)	.17	.07	3.76	.05
Standardized Tests (A)	.13	.13	0.00	.96
Substance Abuse Issues (P)	.14	.10	0.50	.47
Study Habits (A)	.11	.13	0.17	.67
Personal Issues (P)	.15	.05	3.34	.06
Relationship Issues (P)	.11	.04	2.42	.11

¹Functions rated as 1) Never 2) Seldom 3) Often

²Domains are noted as: A = Academic, C = Career, P = Personal/Social

* $p < .05$ males and females differ significantly

Table 10

Race/Ethnicity Comparison rated as "Often" Performed¹

Counselor Functions	White Proportion (N = 122)	Non-White Proportion (N = 51)	Chi-Square (df=1)	<i>p</i>
Graduation Requirements (A)	.42	.42	0.00	.93
Post High School Options (C)	.27	.35	1.17	.27
Helped Select Classes (A)	.28	.31	0.21	.64
Graduation Plan (A)	.25	.22	0.18	.67
College or Job Fair (C)	.23	.24	0.00	.93
Computer Based Career Info (C)	.21	.24	0.23	.62
Financial Aid/Scholarship (C)	.15	.15	3.84	.05
Explore Career Information (C)	.16	.20	0.41	.51
Coping Skills (P)	.20	.10	2.65	.10
Communication Skills (P)	.11	.22	0.11	.73
Standardized Tests (A)	.09	.22	4.29	.03*
Substance Abuse Issues (P)	.09	.20	3.09	.07
Study Habits (A)	.11	.13	0.17	.67
Personal Issues (P)	.11	.12	0.00	.95
Relationship Issues (P)	.09	.07	0.06	.80

¹Functions rated as 1) Never 2) Seldom 3) Often²Domains are noted as: A = Academic, C = Career, P = Personal/Social* $p < .05$ males and females differ significantly

performed the function. A mean score of 2.13 for the importance of study habits was higher than the mean score of 1.55 for frequency of counselor assistance. Direct statistical comparisons between importance and frequency are not presented because the difference in response categories (not important, somewhat important, very important versus never, seldom, often) precludes reliable comparisons. Still, since both importance and frequency for each function were rated from lowest level of importance (1) to highest level of importance (3), and lowest level of frequency (1) to highest level of frequency (3), the mean comparisons suggest that participants found that functions were more important than the frequency with which the services were performed (see Table 11).

Section Five: Unmet Need

Research question 5: What is the level of unmet need for counseling services perceived as “very” important by post-secondary students? Chi-Square analyses were performed to determine if the percentage found for the number of participants circling the label of “very” under the variable level of importance and the label of “never or seldom” under the variable level of frequency were significantly different.

Data reflected a significant difference for all functions except standardized tests ($p = .08$), and study habits ($p = .09$), which revealed a marginally ($.05 < p < .10$) significant difference. It is interesting to note that both functions belong to the academic domain. At least half of the fifteen functions were significant at the $p < .001$ level, and the remaining functions were significant at the $p < .01$ level. Overall, there were significant differences between the functions that were “very” important and “seldom” or “never” received. Fairly high percentages were noted for unmet need.

Section Six: Participant Comments

This section provides an overview of the comments written in part three of the survey instrument. An opportunity was provided for participants to respond by commenting on any additional areas of school counseling or on functions that may have been omitted from part two of the survey instrument. A total of 69 participants (40%) opted to include statements regarding their counselor in general terms, or in terms of the functions their counselor did or did not provide. Responses were then grouped and labeled according to the three domains of academic, career, and personal/social, as well as one additional category labeled “other responses.” This category could be further divided into: group counseling, counselor changes, counselor praises, not helpful, and other. Categories were selected based on the overall theme and content of the comments. Some comments may have fit into two or more categories; therefore, the first several words in each statement were used as a guide for placement in the appropriate category.

Nine of the 69 participants (13%) had comments directly related to the academic domain of school counseling. The majority of these comments pertained directly to counselor functions of assisting with organizational skills, interpreting test scores, developing graduating plans, study habits, and assistance with course selections. Eighteen of the 69 participants (26%) commented on various counselor functions pertaining to the career domain. The majority of these comments appeared to focus on the desire for the counselor to be more involved in providing direction when the student was planning to attend college. Functions under the career domain would include college planning, financial aid information, exploring other post high school options such as military, and work. Eleven of the 69 participants (16%) responded with comments that could be associated with a personal/social concerns. Although these responses were presented as personal or social concerns, they varied in the form of content. Consistency was not evident within the responses to identify a prevalent concern.

Table 11

Comparisons of the Importance and Frequency Mean Scores for Counselor Functions

Counselor Functions	Importance ¹ (N=173)	Frequency ² (N=173)
Academic Domain (A)		
Graduation Requirements	2.63	2.30
Graduation Plan	2.39	1.83
Help Select Classes	2.22	1.98
Study Habits/Organization	2.13	1.55
Standardized Tests	1.96	1.57
Career Domain (C)		
Explore Post H.S. Options	2.41	1.98
Explore Career Information	2.35	1.69
Financial Aid/Scholarship	2.34	1.71
Computer Based Career Assist	2.21	1.69
College/Job Fair Information	2.21	1.79
Personal/Social Domain (P)		
Communication Skills	2.04	1.44
Coping Skills	2.03	1.52
Personal Issues	1.93	1.45
Substance Abuse Assistance	1.90	1.46
Relationship Issues	1.77	1.36

Note: Functions were recoded in SPSS to reflect lowest to highest rating

¹Functions rated (1) Not important (2) Somewhat important (3) Very important

²Functions rated (1) Never (2) Seldom (3) Often

Table 12

Comparison of Importance and Frequency for Unmet Need

Counselor Functions	Very Important % N	Seldom or Never Performed % N	Chi Square	<i>p</i>	Unmet ¹ Need
Academic Domain (A)					
Study Habits	.36 (62)	.88 (51)	2.84	.09	82%
Standardized Tests	.21 (43)	.87 (36)	2.89	.08	79%
Graduation Plan	.50 (87)	.76 (53)	19.60	.000***	62%
Select class	.37 (64)	.71 (123)	18.86	.000***	52%
Graduation Requirements	.67 (116)	.58 (50)	20.27	.000***	46%
Career Domain (C)					
Explore Career Information	.51 (88)	.83 (66)	8.70	.003**	75%
Financial Aid/Scholarship	.50 (86)	.82 (61)	15.62	.000**	70%
College or Job Fairs	.38 (66)	.77 (42)	10.52	.001***	64%
Computer Based Career Info	.44 (76)	.78 (48)	17.50	.000***	63%
Post High School Options	.55 (95)	.71 (59)	7.17	.007**	62%
Personal/Social Domain (P)					
Substance Abuse Information	.27 (46)	.87 (35)	7.07	.008**	76%
Communication Skills	.35 (60)	.86 (44)	12.58	.000***	73%
Relationship Issues	.21 (36)	.91 (26)	20.95	.000***	72%
Coping Skills	.35 (64)	.84 (41)	19.14	.000***	67%
Personal Issues	.29 (50)	.88 (33)	34.63	.000***	66%

¹Percentage reporting function as “very” important (column 1) and *also* reporting function was “seldom” or “never” received (column 2)

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Thirty-one of the 69 participants (45%) provided responses that were not directly related to the three primary categories of academic, career, and personal/social. Ten of the 31 participants (32%) commented that their counselor was either not helpful or unavailable (numbers 1-10). Most of these comments regarding the absence of or the unavailability of suggested the counselor's role was at times compromised because of other duties assigned to them. Ten participants (32%) responded with comments related toward the desire to have more individual or group meetings with the counselor (numbers 11-20). The student responses indicated that the counselor to student ratio negatively affected the relationship that the students desired to have with the counselor. Three participants (09%) responded with comments regarding counselor changes (numbers 21-23). These comments appeared to reflect the desire for both the students and the counselors to maintain consistency with the counselors' role.

The remaining comments are summarized in this last paragraph to reflect the major content or overall theme of the comment. Some participants provided responses that were complimentary toward their counselor regarding positive relationships with the counselor and an enjoyment from visiting the guidance office. Participants reflected on certain personal experiences they had with their high school counselor and acknowledged these experiences as positive growth experiences. Other participant responses that were determined not to fit into any of the abovementioned areas included comments directly pertaining to the counseling support staff or the overall structure of the school. Such comments may have included the availability of someone to immediately answer questions or provide forms they may have been seeking. Others acknowledged that the guidance departments were a major source of information for regarding overall activities that may have been occurring in school. Detailed summaries of the majority of actual comments are provided in Figure 4.

Summary

This chapter has organized and displayed data according to the research questions posed in chapter one. Each section has identified the research question to be answered; the type of statistical analyses used to summarize the results for each research question, and presented the overall findings in table format. The demographic profile reflected the majority of participants were White females, age 20.5, and the majority of participants attended community college immediately upon graduation from high school.

Primary findings regarding research question one reflected that participants believed counselors were rendering an average of six functions, with most assistance occurring in the academic domain for graduation requirements. The personal/social domain was acknowledged as the domain with the least performed functions. Research question two identified that participants rated graduation requirements as the most

Academic

1. "Maybe a check-up to see how things are going academically or personally and help with them."
2. "She could have actually been in her office half the time. I needed a schedule change at the beginning of the school year and she was never in her office. I filled out a request slip to see her. Two weeks later when a schedule change was not possible she pulled me out of class to ask me what I needed."
3. "That how important the role of the SAT's and if not doing good in your SAT's may result in not making it in a good college."
4. "Took more an initiative in my schooling plan. I did not have much direction."
5. "They should have told me just drop out of high school, get your GED and go to a community college and get a head start."
6. "Tutoring."
7. "Help with being an organized person."
8. "Help set up study groups/sessions."
9. "Be Organized."

Career

1. "Assist in finding a college rather than tell me nothing more than, you could go to college if you wanted to."
2. "Further explanation of college options."
3. "Set you up with college information."
4. "Just more info on requirements for different colleges."
5. "College planning, schools I could have gotten info, helping me plan my future a little better instead of simply pushing me toward college just so she would look better."
6. "Nothing to add, but I do think it would have been beneficial to have regular (or even semi-regular) meetings with my counselor (I barely saw him) and to have been able to discuss study habits and career interests, and how to work towards a good career."
7. "Help with college applications."
8. "I think he should have told me more about college workload and counseling office would offer an orientation class for college in high school."
9. "More time for graduating students to discuss their goals individually."
10. "Been more active with college stuff."
11. "Should have helped look at more college options."
12. "More information about community college."
13. "Because my grades were good and I was never a problem in class, they never felt they needed to contact me. I wish they'd been more helpful in college info & selection."
14. "My H.S. counselor told me that unless I was definitely going to apply for a 4 year college, I should not take my SAT's because I would probably get a low score. That was extremely discouraging."
15. "She should have offered organized assemblies on several topics related to jobs/career/college/etc."
16. "More of an active role in a students decision making after high school. More caring about a student's future needs. More one on one time."

17. "Possibly pointing out other areas of careers that I might want to consider."
18. "Go over general studies with student if going to community college so you don't waste your first semester."

Personal/Social

1. "I had a terrible counselor that did not assist me with some of the most important aspects of my life: volunteering (and how it can enrich your life) opportunities; try to reach you on a personal level; coping with what to expect once you have graduated; suggest college courses in the summer to get a boost on education."
2. "Mediation between students and parents."
3. "Discuss living conditions (boarding unit) and teacher student relationships."
4. "He/she should care. He/she should work with me, instead of doing the bare minimum required by the school. Discuss any social issues."
5. Peer mediation, violence awareness and suppression."
6. "I graduated with 60 people and in my school it would have been possible to do an "individual success model or guide. Maybe that would have helped – something based on strengths/weaknesses."
7. "Substance abuse counseling."
8. "Help prepare you for the real world."
9. "My counselor never discussed certain personal issues because I didn't need help with them. However I did notice them helping others with issues."
10. "At least talked to me, be assessable, and worry about the middle-class students instead of the well off ones. They should help people out of bad judgments, and give them options and help them make good decisions."
11. "Discussions regarding issues or concerns with teachers."

Other Responses

1. "I don't feel my counselors did much help for me, so maybe just having the counselors being more active in all of the students."
2. "My counselor should have provided all of the above services and did few – most of them were very important issues that should have been covered."
3. "After my second year I stopped going to my counselor who was not supportive at all. Counselors need to give you support in all area's no matter what!"
4. "Never really talked to school counselor. Wasn't very informative. Was against military service. Should have kept his personal opinions to himself."
5. "Our counselors didn't seem to do much of anything. They also did not seem to be well informed about colleges, except their alma mater. They did not seem to care very much."
6. "It was hard to gauge because so little support was offered."
7. "Should have provided the options above in some form."
8. "My school counselor did not provide hardly any of the services. The best thing that she could have done was tried."
9. "Although ultimately it is the student's responsibility to ask for help, I was really struggling in high school and a counselor reaching out might have been helpful."

10. "As a learning disabled student with an IEP, I felt that my counselor did not even discuss the option of going to college. I was just classified as someone whom they needed to graduate. I wish that counselors cared about all students, and just not the book smart ones who are applying to Ivy League schools."
11. "Counselors should set up a few (mandatory?) meetings quite regularly throughout high school to create a comfortable relationship so the student knows he/she can be trusted. Many students have problems, but don't know their counselor so they feel shy about meeting with a stranger."
12. "Meet more regularly."
13. "They should have a weekly group session with students."
14. "Become more involved with students individually."
15. "I think high school counselors should meet with every student individually every so often, just to see how they are, and to talk to them."
16. "2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9, &10 are extremely important and should be mandatory for every student to meet at least 3 times with a counselor to discuss these things."
17. "Just really be there to talk to."
18. "Meet a lot during junior year, because I feel that year is most important."
19. "I just wished she could remember my name. I transferred to VA high school in my junior year. Remembering people (students) names at least gives the impression they care."
20. "Get to know each student."
21. "They shouldn't have kept changing my counselor. I had three in the 4-years I was in high school. That's the sort of thing they shouldn't change."
22. "The counselor should have talked to me more and should not have changed so much."
23. "Let me know when he/she was available. My counselor switched half way through my schooling. I never really got to know them."

Figure 4: Participant Comments

important function, and relationship issues as the least important function. The data collected for research question three suggested the needs of the participants had been met in this study since the frequency of how often the services were performed (Table 8) were rated with the approximate strength of the importance of services (Table 5). Significant differences were identified as unmet need for research question four. Graduation requirements were identified as the function with the lowest percentage of unmet need.

Gender differences were noted in the personal/social domain, with females regarding some functions as more important than males. Ethnic differences were noted in the area of importance placed on some functions by Non-White participants, while the frequency with which these participants received services were discovered as received more often than White participants. In general, there were no significant differences noted for either gender or ethnicity.

A summary of comments provided by participants in part three of the survey provided an overview of actual comments. Figure 4 reflected actual comments and the appropriate placement of these comments in the academic, career, or personal/social domain. Most of the comments were regrouped into other categories, as they did not pertain to the three previously mentioned domains, but did provide insight into the viewpoints of post-secondary students. Discussion of these findings will be reviewed in chapter five, and overall conclusions will be presented.

CHAPTER FIVE OVERALL RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This chapter summarizes the overall results and outcome of this study. The discussion begins with an overview of the demographic profile of the participants in this study and the overall profile of students attending the Community College in the suburban area of a large metropolitan city during the year this study was conducted. Second, the rationale for comparisons of the research used in this chapter will be noted. Next, each research question will be discussed and compared to other research studies noted in the literature. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research followed by a summary of the chapter.

Comparatively speaking, the profile of participants in this study was very similar to the overall profile of students attending the Community College during the year this study was conducted. Participants in this study were mostly White females under the age of 24, with an average age of 20.5, while most of the students attending the Community College during the time of this study were white females, with an average age of 25. Similar studies conducted in earlier literature on the role and functions of high school counselors consisted of younger students who were either freshmen enrolled in a four-year college or students currently attending high school, and ranging in age from 14 to 18 years. One study conducted with high school students also examined the variable of gender, with participants noted as mostly males (Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989). Race/ethnicity was a variable that had not been previously researched (Hutchinson & Bottorff, 1986; Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989; Rowe, 1989; Tennyson, et al., 1989). The age of the participants was an important factor for this study since it was assumed that the younger participants attending the community college would most likely be able to recollect their experiences, and provide more insight into the role and functions of their high school counselor.

Participants were asked to mark all areas that applied to them once they graduated from high school. According to the participants' responses, the majority enrolled in a community college immediately upon graduation from high school, while others worked either full time or part time. Other activities reported by the students included joining the military or attending a trade or vocational school. Less than five percent of participants indicated they took time off to pursue their dreams of training for professional sports, dancing professionally, traveling around the United States, or working full time for their Church.

Comparisons to the Literature

The overall comparisons in this study will require some clarification. Several recent studies in the 1990's and new millennium conducted on the role and functions of the high school counselor have focused primarily on the perceptions of parents, teachers, administrators, and counselors (Aluede & Imonike, 2002; Clark, 1995; Ghiliani, 2000; Hughey et al., 1993; Kaplan, 1994; Partin, 1993; Quarto, 1999; Studer & Allton, 1996; ter Maat, 2000). Since the specific population of post secondary students have not recently been reported in the literature, comparisons can be made only to less recent studies conducted in the 1970's and 1980's regarding the role and functions of the secondary school counselors. While these studies will be used for comparison, there may only be limited findings in each that would pertain to this current study, with each research question posed in chapter one (Helms & Ibrahim, 1985; Hutchinson & Bottorff, 1986; Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989; Leviton, 1977; Rowe, 1989; Van Riper, 1971; Wells & Ritter, 1979).

Receipt of Functions

Research question one: Do post-secondary students perceive that high school counselors are performing the functions outlined by the ASCA (see Appendix B and C), and are there gender and ethnic differences? According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the role and functions for the school counselor is divided into three domains: academic, career, and personal/social. The standards presented by ASCA assist school counselors in providing effective school counseling programs, and facilitate counselors with implementing strategies that contribute to student success in each of the three domains. The functions selected for this study were functions deemed important by earlier research when working with high school students or college freshmen (Hutchinson & Bottorff, 1986; Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989; Rowe, 1989; Tennyson, et al., 1989; Wells & Ritter, 1979).

Only two percent of the participants in this study indicated that all 15 functions were performed; however, the majority acknowledged that more than one-third of the 15 functions were performed. Based on the participants' responses, assistance with graduation requirements was the most received function. A closer examination of the analysis of the receipt of functions provided a better understanding of what participants in this study perceived regarding the performance of the counselor functions. By comparing the receipt of functions (most received to least received) and the importance of each function (most important to least important) participants' responses reflected that their high school counselors were providing most of the services consistent with what they deemed important. In other words, the participants acknowledged that graduation requirement was the most received function, and they also acknowledged that graduation requirement was the most important function. The majority of the remaining 15 functions either rated identically for receipt of function and importance of function, or were very closely aligned. This might indicate that school counselors were performing functions consistent with ASCA's national standards and consistent with the needs of the population they were serving. The literature identifies the importance of meeting the needs of the population that is being served, and further necessitates the development of a comprehensive guidance program (Gibson & Mitchell, 1990).

Although there was a close resemblance with regard to receipt of function and importance of function, there was still only a very small percentage of participants who indicated they received all 15 functions. One possible explanation might be that participants in this study sought assistance from other individuals such as teachers, parents, or peers. For example, the notion that counselors are not the only individuals to assist students when help is needed in the three domains of academic, career or personal/social was investigated by Wells and Ritter (1979). Student perceptions regarding their comfort level with individuals they might seek assistance from for problems or concerns that would exist while in high school were examined. School counselors were perceived as the individual who might be helpful in some areas; however, a large percentage of students indicated they sought help from teachers, parents, relatives, friends, and the principal when choosing a college, deciding on a college major, personal issues, finding a job, and planning their school program. Even though the 1979 research did not request that participants indicate how many functions were actually rendered by school counselors, the outcome was comparable since school counselors were compared to other professionals for the amount or percentage of services they did render. In this particular study (Wells & Ritter, 1979), the services rendered by the school counselor were minimal since professionals other than school counselors were assisting students with many of the functions contained in the academic, career, and personal/social domains.

Rowe, (1989) conducted the only other study determined to closely relate to the receipt of functions. This study investigated the perceptions of freshman attending Brigham Young University concerning the person from whom they acquired most of their post high school information. The high school counselor was acknowledged as the person who received minimal frequent visits from students, which compares closely to the small percentage of functions that were received by participants in this current study.

Overall, participants in this study reported that their counselor rendered more services in the academic domain. This concurs with research conducted by Tennyson et al., (1989a) which reflected that the high school counselor spends a great deal of time counting credits and scheduling classes. One might speculate that a high school counselors' primary role in the academic domain is to ensure students will graduate with the appropriate classes and amount of credits, creating the need to perform administrative tasks often associated with these two functions. When high schools do not employ a registrar to maintain school records, counselors often assume the responsibility of maintaining and updating transcripts and grades, to keep students' permanent files in order. The limited number of services received from the high school counselor in this study may be further explained by the lack of clarity that still exists regarding the role and function of the high school counselor (Ballard & Murgatroyd, 1999; Bonebrake & Borgers, 1984; Kendrick, et al., 1994; Thomas, 1989).

Participants Perceived Level of Importance

Research question two: How were perceptions of services rated as "very" important post-secondary students, and are there gender and ethnic differences? Based on the participant's responses, graduation requirements, which are contained in the academic domain rated as the most important function, followed by discussing post high school options, contained in the career domain. This was not too surprising, as many students are discovering that several States have increased the standards for obtaining a high school diploma and are further requiring proficiency exams to obtain credits. It may be possible that many counselors view this function as one of their most important tasks. The path to graduation has become a more complex path, and can indeed be cumbersome. The results in this study, which rated graduation requirements as the most important function, closely resembles the outcome in a study conducted by Hutchinson and Reagan (1989), where 89% of the high school students rated graduation requirements as one of the highest functions for which they would request help from their school counselor. Wells and Ritter (1979) also reported similar findings with graduation requirements. Although the research conducted by Wells and Ritter (1979) did not require the participants to rate functions according to importance, more than 80% of the high school students acknowledged they would seek help from their counselor if they needed assistance with graduation requirements. It would appear that graduation requirements have been a primary function for high school counselors during the past three decades.

The second most important function noted by participants in this study belonged in the career domain. The rating of importance based on student perception has changed slightly over the last several decades. Leviton (1977) reported that high school students rated career education as the most important counselor function. Nearly a decade later, Hutchinson and Bottorff's (1986) study reflected that career counseling was still rated as one of the most needed services high school counselors should provide. Research was conducted with 250 college freshmen to investigate the desired needs and the actual needs for counseling services. The majority (89%) reported that they needed career counseling. Two decades later, there was yet a further acknowledgement that career counseling continued to be an important component for secondary

counselors (Borders & Drury, 1992; Hoyt & Hughey, 1998). Many high schools may now provide a career center for students to access when seeking information pertaining to this domain. Since students have rated this function as one of the more important functions, an assumption could be made that increasing services in this domain would be very appropriate and welcomed. Additional information regarding trade schools, apprenticeships, certifications, and job opportunities might be suggested as continuous resources to maintain in career centers. High school counselors might assume that by incorporating more career information when conducting guidance lessons, students would have the opportunity to become enlightened by additional options that may exist for them if they do not choose to attend college immediately upon graduation. Discussing post high school options and career counseling (career domain) were rated as the second and third most important functions in this study. It would appear that these two functions have increased in importance since Leviton (1977) reported these functions as the least important counselor functions.

Career information (career domain), graduation plans (academic domain), and financial aid (career domain) were rated as the next three most important functions. Overall, there were more functions belonging to the career domain that were rated in the top five, although for clarification in this study, the academic domain is acknowledged as the most important since this researcher found that a function contained in the career domain was rated second to academic. As mentioned previously, the functions of the counselor are divided into three domains: academic, career, and personal/social. Counselors might speculate that the information and resources they are providing for their students are somewhat interchangeable, which would be one explanation for the slight differences in the ratings. For example, a graduation plan may indeed incorporate post high school career plans.

Based on responses of the participants in this study, the personal/social domain was viewed as the least important of the three domains. The participants considered personal issues, substance abuse issues, and relationship issues to be the least important, all of which are in the personal/social domain. With limited confidentiality between the school counselor and the student, one could hypothesize that students would not seek assistance from the school counselor when personal issues exist. Wells and Ritter (1979) found that only four percent of the participants in their study sought assistance with personal problems. Hutchinson and Bottorff (1986) reported similar findings where six percent of high school students indicated they would seek out their school counselor for help with personal concerns. Leviton (1977) and Hutchinson and Reagan (1989) conducted research, which further examined a student's reluctance to discuss personal information with their high school counselor. This research acknowledged that some students had never visited their counselor for any reason, and would therefore be reluctant to discuss their personal concerns when they did see the counselor.

Overall, the perceptions presented in this study closely resemble the ratings of functions (academic, career, personal/social) with that conducted by Hutchinson and Reagan (1989), which found that seniors perceived counselors as spending most of their time providing academic, vocational, and personal counseling in this order. These findings seem to resemble the perceptions of parents and students noted in the professional literature that high school counselors are viewed more often than not as counselors who advise students on which colleges to attend, write letters of recommendations, and guide in the appropriate direction for graduation (Tennyson et al., 1989). Previous research did support the findings in this study that the personal/social domain remains as the least utilized and least important domain for students.

Gender differences in this study were noted for functions contained only in the personal/social domain. An assumption might be made that females are more comfortable seeking assistance from high school counselors than males. Coping skills, personal issues, and relationship issues, revealed a significant difference, suggesting that females placed more importance on these functions than males. This differs from the only other gender research conducted by Hutchinson & Reagan (1989). Nearly identical percentages for functions that would be considered as part of the personal/social domain were reported for both males and females, and there were no significant differences revealed.

With regard to race/ethnicity, significant differences in this current study were reflected for assistance with financial aid or scholarships, study habits or organizational assistance, and interpretation of standardized tests. Non-White participants considered each of these functions to be more important than White participants, suggesting that perhaps counselors may want to pay particular attention to these areas when working with students who are transitioning from other countries. Previous literature did not provide research for comparisons.

Participants Perceived Level of Frequency of Services

Research question three: How are perceptions of services rated as “often” performed by post-secondary students, and are there gender and ethnic differences? Since the rated frequency of counselor functions revealed a very close rating to the importance ratings of the counselor functions, one might assume that the discussion in this section would be very close to the discussion contained in participants perception of the level of importance. One might also speculate that this provides valuable information to support how high school counselors are working with the population they serve. For the most part, this research reflected that these participants had their needs met by their counselors. For example, graduation requirements rated as highest for both the importance and the frequency, and relationship issues rated as the lowest for both. Overall, a comparison of the tables regarding the rating for importance and frequency provided a portrait of almost identical positions when this researched rank ordered the functions. This resemblance may imply that participants in this study were capable of expressing their needs to the counselor, and sought assistance with the degree for which they perceived help or needed. The role of the high school counselor may often be defined by the needs of the population they serve, therefore it is imperative for the guidelines developed by the ASCA to coincide with the expectations of high school students (see Appendix C). This research may also suggest that indeed high school counselors are pursuing the necessary avenues to ensure success of their student population.

Participants Perceived Importance and Perceived Receipt of Functions

Research question four: What are post-secondary student perceptions of the importance with which specific counseling functions were performed as compared to perceptions of frequency? For clarification and the purpose of remaining consistent with the presentation of the tables in chapter four, this research question was extended for discussion purposes in this chapter to include a reflection of how importance mean scores might compare to frequency mean scores. Functions rated under the variable of importance revealed a higher mean score than the same functions listed under the variable of frequency. The literature discussed the frequency factor when determining if high school counselors were meeting the needs of the population they served (Tennyson et al., 1989a; Tennyson et al., 1989b). One notable observation pertains to the consistency with which the importance scores related closely to the frequency scores. In other words, if there was a low mean score for the importance of the function, then there was also a low mean score for the frequency of the function, and the same was true for high mean scores

and high frequency scores. One might consider the possibility that this connection aligned closely with the concept that perhaps counselors were meeting the needs of the specific population they were working with, and that perhaps if students felt something was important they were seeking to receive services. Indeed, from a counselor's viewpoint it may appear that if a student perceived the function as important, effort was made to render this service.

According to the research literature, Tennyson, et al., (1989b) acknowledged that functions in his study with low frequency mean scores would indicate that counselors may not be functioning in accordance with the ASCA guidelines. There may be significant reasons that counselors would be unable to closely adhere to ASCA's guidelines. One rationale for the low frequency scores may be due to the increased number of students assigned to counselors, more administrative duties such as the standards of learning tests (SOL's), and less time to conduct large or small group activities. There is a growing recognition in the literature that suggests counselors do have added tasks being placed upon them, which may be a misuse of their education and limit their ability to define their role (Beale & McCay, 2001; Kaplan, 1995). Additional comments from some participants in this study suggested that they might have preferred to spend more time with their counselor either individually or in a group for functions contained in all three domains.

When gender comparisons were conducted in this study, the function defined as personal issues was indicated as differing significantly between males and females, suggesting that females perceived their use of this service as more often than their male counterparts. As previously mentioned, there is only one other study that has investigated gender differences and there were no significant differences noted (Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989).

Research conducted in this study with regard to race/ethnicity reflected a significant difference in the interpretation of standardized tests, and assistance with communication skills, indicating that Non-White participants received these services more often than White participants. For high school counselors working with multicultural populations, these findings may validate the efforts of facilitating students with limited English proficiency.

Participants Report of Unmet Need

Research question five: What is the level of unmet need for counseling services perceived as "very" important by post-secondary students? For each individual function, the number of participants indicating that they seldom or never received services was very close to the number of participants answering that it was very important to them to receive this service. The "unmet need" was identified as fairly high; however, this was not surprising due to the lower frequency scores in research question four. The high percentages for unmet need appeared to be noticeably large for each domain of academic, career, and personal/social. One plausible explanation may be that a limited number of services are available to a large population of students. Unfortunately, many schools may only employ a minimal counseling staff. When high school counselors exceed the number of students as recommended by ASCA, there are fewer opportunities to meet the needs of each student (see Appendix A and C). Unmet need is a variable that has not been previously investigated in the literature.

Study habits revealed as the function containing the highest percentage of unmet need in the academic domain; exploration of career information was the highest in the career domain; substance abuse was the highest in the personal/social domain. Standardized tests was also revealed as a fairly large percentage for unmet need, which seems to be consistent with high school counselors expressing a desire to be trained appropriately in assessment methods. Moreover, counselors have indicated an inadequacy to interpret many tests (Carroll, 1993;

Giordano, et al., 1997). Other functions in the academic domain, such as graduation requirements, may have the level of unmet need reduced if high school counselors received assistance with the administrative tasks of their role. Since many of the functions contained in the academic domain require the high school counselor to maintain records, administrative type duties may be prohibiting much of the contact between student and counselor. Borders and Drury (1992) discussed the possibility of hiring a registrar at the high schools and tasking this individual with the specific administrative duties that might pertain to the functions in this domain, therefore providing more time for counselors to spend with students. Since previous research indicated that high school counselors spend a large amount of time scheduling classes and counting credits, it would seem realistic that the unmet need would be the lowest in the academic domain (Tennyson et al., 1989a).

The career domain revealed that a large portion of the participants in this study did not have their needs met. As previously mentioned, several studies have supported the notion that this domain has been an ongoing primary source of information for students with post secondary concerns, and a very important role for the high school counselor (Borders & Drury, 1992; Hoyt & Hughey, 1998; Hutchinson & Bottorff, 1986; Leviton, 1977; Rowe, 1989). The highest portion of unmet need in the career domain for this study was the exploration of career information, which might suggest that perhaps more attention should be focused on students who might not be attending college immediately upon high school graduation. Since parents and students often hold different opinions regarding the students' life after high school, parent involvement or parent groups conducted by high school counselors that involve career exploration may decrease the level of unmet need with regard to this function (Whiston, 1991). Adhering to the same suggestion for parent involvement, the second highest unmet need function in this domain, assistance with financial aid or scholarships, could also be reduced by providing workshops or seminars that focus on financial assistance for college.

The personal/social domain reflected a higher level of unmet need than was anticipated. This was an interesting discovery since participants placed more importance on functions in the academic and career domains. According to some studies, functions contained in the personal/social domain are not often regarded as consistent functions for the high school counselor to perform. Seemingly, this might offer one explanation for such a high level of unmet need reflected in this study (Fitch, et al., 2001; Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989; Lehmanowsky, 1991; Lockhart & Keys, 1998; Schmidt, 1995; Wells & Ritter, 1979). Another explanation may be that students do in fact have a desire to speak to school counselors, but may not recognize that this is a service that is available to them. It is interesting to note that substance abuse information was the function in the personal/social domain to receive the highest indication of unmet need, since substance abuse information was not previously recognized as a function that stood apart from the other personal/social functions. Nonetheless, the rationale for the high unmet need may pertain to the school counselor's limited confidential relationship with students.

Overall Gender and Race/Ethnicity Differences

Overall, the research did not reflect significant differences with gender or ethnicity. There were, however, some functions in the personal/social domain that reflected slight differences with regard to the receipt of functions and rating of importance. Since female participants endorsed the receipt of functions more than males, and reflected significant differences in the rating of the importance, an assumption may be made that females are generally more comfortable in most aspects of personal/social discussion or assistance with their personal problems. As noted previously, research in this area is virtually nonexistent.

Ethnic differences existed throughout this study; however as with gender differences this variable has not been researched in previous literature. Non-White participants placed more importance on at least one function in each of the three domains compared to White participants, and Non-White participants also indicated they received services more frequently than White participants in at least one of the functions deemed to be more important (standardized testing). Knowledge such as this may facilitate the counselor with the ongoing task of continuing to meet the needs of the growing limited English speaking population of students.

Summary and Conclusions

The overall results of this study portray an array of perceptions from post-secondary students regarding their secondary school counselor. It would appear that for the most part, the community college students participating in this study utilized the services of the high school counselor. In addition, these students viewed the academic and career domains of counseling as the most essential during the high school years, which still resembles the perceptions of students participating in earlier studies conducted in the 1970's and 1980's. While participants in this study viewed academic and career domains as the most essential, they also revealed that many of their unmet needs were contained in the personal/social domain.

Although the participants in this study reflected they had many of their needs met, there was still an unsettling portrait of perceptions with regard to unmet need. Overall, there appeared to be an indication of a larger need for services than there was availability. Higher numbers of students assigned to counselors, and more administrative duties placed upon counselors in some school districts may have contributed to these large percentages of unmet need. Moreover, lack of definition regarding the role of the high school counselor may limit the understanding of counseling functions that need to be performed. This research supported the notion that high school counselors do indeed reflect a desire to meet the needs of the population they serve. This notion is based on the importance the participants placed on the services rendered and the extent to which the participants either sought service, or counselors sought to assist the participants. Since the primary purpose of this research was to determine what perceptions post-secondary students have of the secondary school counselor, and how closely these perceptions resemble the role and functions set forth by the ASCA, this information could be viewed as an opportunity for secondary counselors to reevaluate their comprehensive guidance programs, and perhaps research the specific needs of the population of students they serve. High school counselors may also wish to review the new National Standards Model developed by the ASCA to gain insight into how they may be able to impart information that will reflect the positive things they are already doing to ensure the success of each student.

Limitations and Implications

Limitations of this study may need to be considered when future investigations are conducted. This study was intended primarily for students who went directly from high school to the community college. Although the majority of students met these criteria, a small percentage engaged in other activities immediately upon graduation prior to attending the community college. Influences in the lives of the participants prior to attending the community college may have influenced their responses when responding to the questions in the survey. Further, this study was conducted in a community college in a suburban area of a large metropolitan city and may not be generalized to rural areas of the state or the remainder of the United States.

Suggestions for future research and further investigations may include the following:

1. Similarities and differences among community college students and their perceptions of high school counselors, including only the age group of 18 to 20, in both rural and suburban settings to determine if needs are the same.
2. Perceptions of post-secondary students attending a vocational or technical school immediately following high school graduation. Inclusion of National Standards should still be the basis for comparisons.
3. Compare current high school counselor perceptions of their role to post-secondary student perceptions of their experiences with the high school counselor. Gender and race distinctions may also be compared.
4. Differences in perceptions of post-secondary college freshman regarding the role of their high school counselor may be compared to perceptions of post-secondary labor force students. Age group should be defined within labor force, and a qualitative study may need consideration. Post-secondary community college students may also be used for comparison purposes.
5. Studies in the 1970's and 1980's regarding perceptions of current seniors attending high school may be revisited to establish current guidelines presented in position and role statements from the American School Counselor Association. Exit surveys may then be established and presented to graduating seniors to determine if needs were met. Further, comparisons using ASCA's National Model may be used to define how the student has benefited because of the role of the high school counselor.
6. Longitudinal studies may be developed to review current practices within high school guidance departments by examining the needs of high school students entering high school and the perceptions of high school students exiting high school. Unmet needs may be the basis for research. Comparisons might be further examined between race and gender.

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APPENDIX A

ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR

The professional school counselor is a certified/licensed educator trained in school counseling. Professional school counselors address the needs of students through the implementation of a comprehensive, standards-based, developmental school counseling program. They are employed in elementary, middle/junior high, and senior high schools, and in post-secondary settings. Their work is differentiated by attention to age-specific developmental stages of student growth, and the needs, tasks and student interests related to those stages. School counselors work with all students, including those who are considered at-risk and those with special needs. They are specialists in human behavior and relationships who provide assistance to students through four primary interventions: counseling (individual and group), large group guidance, consultation, and coordination.

COUNSELING is a confidential relationship which the counselor conducts with students individually and in small groups to help them resolve or cope constructively with their problems and developmental concerns.

LARGE GROUP GUIDANCE is a planned, developmental program of guidance activities designed to foster students' academic, career, and personal/social development. It is provided for all students through a collaborative effort by counselors and teachers.

CONSULTATION is a collaborative partnership in which the counselor works with parents, teachers, administrators, school psychologists, social workers, visiting teachers, medical professionals and community health personnel in order to plan and implement strategies to help students be successful in the education system.

COORDINATION is a leadership process in which the counselor helps organize, manage and evaluate the school counseling program. The counselor assists parents in obtaining needed services for their children through a referral and follow-up process and serves as liaison between the school and community agencies so that they may collaborate in efforts to help students. Professional school counselors are responsible for developing comprehensive school counseling programs that promote and enhance student learning. By providing prevention and intervention services within a comprehensive program, school counselors focus their skills, time and energies on direct services to students, staff, and families. In the delivery of direct services, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends that professional school counselors spend at least 70% of their time in direct services to students. The ASCA considers a realistic counselor-student ratio for effective program delivery to be a maximum of 1:250.

Above all, school counselors are student advocates who work cooperatively with other individuals and organizations to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of children and youth. School counselors, as members of the educational team, consult and collaborate with teachers, administrators and families to assist students to be successful. They work on behalf of students and their families to insure that all school programs facilitate the educational process and offer the opportunity for school success for each student. School

counselors are an integral part of all school efforts to insure a safe learning environment and safeguard the human rights of all members of the school community.

Professional school counselors meet the state certification/licensure standards and abide by the laws of the states in which they are employed. To assure high quality practice, school counselors are committed to continued professional growth and personal development. They are proactively involved in professional organizations which foster and promote school counseling at the local, state and national levels. They uphold the ethical and professional standards of these associations and promote the development of the school counseling profession.

Delegate Assembly, June 1999

(www.schoolcounselor.org)

APPENDIX B
AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION (ASCA) NATIONAL STANDARDS

The National Standards for School Counseling Programs facilitate student development in three board areas: academic development, career development and personal/social development. Following are the nine national standards.

Academic Development

Standard A

Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills contributing to effective learning in school and across the life span.

Standard B

Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide range of substantial post-secondary options, including college.

Standard C

Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work and to life at home and in the community.

Career Development

Standard A

Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decision.

Standard B

Students will employ strategies to achieve future career success and satisfaction.

Standard C

Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education and training and the world of work.

Personal/Social Development

Standard A

Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

Standard B

Students will make decisions, set goals and take necessary action to achieve goals.

Standard C

Students will understand safety and survival skills.

APPENDIX C ROLE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR

In our changing world:

By age 21, today's young people have faced more decisions than their grandparents faced in a lifetime.

One out of five families moves each year.

Everyone faces career decisions.

Young people face greater risks than previous generations:

Young people face critical decisions about sexuality.

Young people face increasing violence in our society and in their schools.

Some young people face hopelessness that can lead to self-destructive behaviors.

A Certified and/or Licensed Professional

Counselor qualifications include certification defined by each state after achieving specific competencies, including endorsement from a state-approved master's degree program of preparation.

The Developmental Needs of High School Students

High school is a time of decisions. Students are deciding who they are, where they fit, what they are good at and how to move forward. Socialization is the key word. During this time in high school, students are characterized by:

- Searching and evaluating their strengths, skills and abilities
- Tuning into peer acceptance and feedback
- Separating from parents/family to explore and define their independence
- Planning for the future

A Comprehensive and Developmental Program

Services provided students are connected to a comprehensive counseling model, which focuses on the needs of the students in three areas of development: academic, career and personal/social. These areas are interrelated and cannot be addressed in isolation. Comprehensive, developmental counseling services are designed for all students.

High School Counselors Believe

- Young people have dignity and worth as human beings.
- Young people need to experience significance in their school and community.
- Young people have the ability to succeed and become contributing members of our society.
- Young people need guidance and support from school, parents and community as they seek to find their place in society.
- Schools, parents and communities that communicate and collaborate provide the most effective support to young people.

High School Counselors

- Provide direct counseling services to students individually and in support groups.
- Provide education and support services to parents.
- Provide consultation services to teachers.
- Provide staff in-service.
- Facilitate referrals to community support services.
- Advise students on academic planning.
- Provide career guidance to students.
- Provide career information to parents.
- Maintain an up-to-date library of career and post-secondary school information.
- Network with post-secondary schools.
- Serve on school and community committees addressing the needs of young people.

Why High School Counselors?

High school years are full of excitement, frustration, disappointment and hope. It is a time students begin to discover what the future holds for them. With a comprehensive developmental counseling program, students can receive accurate information, concrete experiences and successful planning to take the steps necessary to become productive, contributing members of society. Together, professional school counselors, parents and the community can provide the most effective support for young people.

Adopted by the ASCA Governing Board/April 1997.

(www.schoolcounselor.org)

APPENDIX D
 VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
 INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS OF INVESTIGATIVE PROJECTS

Title of Study: Post-Secondary Perceptions of the Secondary School Counselor and their Functions at the High School Level.

Researcher: Catherine J. Stower, MA

The purpose of this study is to identify the perceptions community college students have regarding the functions high school counselors performed, and how beneficial these functions were after graduation. You are being asked to complete a survey requesting general demographic information, an acknowledgement of functions your high school counselor may have performed and how important those functions may have been to you, and any other personal comments you might have regarding the specified functions mentioned in the survey or functions not mentioned in the survey. This is a two-page, three-part survey with a completion time of approximately 15 minutes. Your honest response will help high school counselors identify areas in the school counseling process that would assist students still in high school further with their post-secondary plans. You will have no further involvement in the study, nor will you be requested to complete any additional information. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without fear of penalty, and you are free to choose not to answer any question.

There are no risks, costs, or compensation for participating in this study. Your responses will provide insight for high school counselors to facilitate the success of high school students. All information provided for this research will be treated with complete confidentiality. The researcher will collect completed surveys and only the researcher and her advisors will have access to the information. Information will be kept under lock and key until the data is ready to be analyzed. Responses will be provided by grouped form, therefore individual responses will not be associated with any single individual. Surveys will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Participants Permission

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study by completing this signed consent form and the survey. I have read and understand this Informed Consent and the conditions of the study, and hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participating in this study.

 Signature

 Date

If you have any questions regarding this study or its conduct, you may contact the researcher, Catherine Stower at (703) 368-4312, or Dissertation Chair, Dr. Madison-Colmore at (703) 538-8483.

APPENDIX E
PRE SURVEY SCRIPT

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about the interactions you may have had with your high school counselor, and your opinion of how important those interactions were to you. This study is part of a doctoral dissertation, and the results will be reported in writing upon completion of the dissertation. I am asking for volunteers to complete this survey. If you are not interested in taking part in this survey, I would ask that you sit quietly for approximately 20 minutes while those around you are completing the survey. There is a consent form on the front of every survey. Please read carefully and sign the form. When you have signed the form, please tear off the front page, raise your hand and I will collect them. Please do not put your name on the survey. The information you provide will be grouped with the responses of others and will not be associated with any single individual. No one will see how you answered the survey except for the people who analyze the results. The surveys will be stored under lock and key in a file cabinet, which is accessible only to the researcher and will be destroyed upon completion of the project.

APPENDIX F
POST-SECONDARY STUDENT SURVEY

This study is being conducted as a doctoral dissertation. It is being conducted in an attempt to find out how students who are no longer in high school feel about the services offered by their high school counselor. Please **do not** put your name on this survey. The responses to this survey will be grouped with others and will not be associated with any single individual. Thank you for taking time to complete this survey!

PART I: Please check the appropriate box for each area 1-5 below. Please select only one answer for each question.

1. Gender: Female Male
2. What is your age? _____
3. Race/Ethnicity: White Black, African Am., or Negro Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano Puerto Rican Cuban
 Other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino _____ American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Indian Japanese
 Native Hawaiian Chinese Korean Guamanian Filipino Vietnamese Other Asian race _____
 Samoan Other Pacific Islander _____ Other Race (please specify) _____
4. Education: Did you attend a high school in the United States? Yes No
What year did you complete high school or receive your GED? _____
5. How have you spent most of your time after graduation from high school? Check all that apply. Work Full Time
 Work Part Time Military Trade or Vocational School 4-Year College Community College
 Stay at home parent Other _____

PART II: On the next page you will find 15 school counselor functions listed that the American School Counselor Association believes is important and may be performed by high school counselors. Please read each function carefully. There are three columns to the right of each function. Please circle a response under each column that best reflects your opinion regarding your high school counselor.

My counselor met with me Individually or in a group and...	Did your counselor perform this service		How important was this service 1) Very 2) Somewhat 3) Not Important			How often was this service performed 1) Often 2) Seldom 3) Never		
	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
1. Helped select classes	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
2. Discussed the results of standardized tests	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
3. Discussed study habits/organizational skills	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
4. Discussed graduation requirements	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
5. Developed a graduation plan	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
6. Explored career information	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
7. Explored post high school options such as college, military or work	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
8. Provided information for financial aid or scholarships	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
9. Provided opportunities for computer-based career or college information	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
10. Advised of college fairs or job fairs	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
11. Discussed substance abuse information	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
12. Discussed relationship issues (example: friends, boy/girl)	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
13. Discussed personal issues regarding family	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
14. Assisted with communication skills	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3
15. Assisted with coping skills	YES	NO	1	2	3	1	2	3

PART III

What other services do you think your counselor should have provided that are not listed above but may have been important to you?

VITA

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ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Northern Virginia Campus
 Counselor Education and Supervision, Ph.D. 2003

School Counseling License, Virginia State Department of Education; Secondary and
 Middle School, 1999

Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, LA, Counseling, M.A. 1990

Louisiana Tech University, BAFB, LA, Psychology, B.A. 1988

COUNSELING EXPERIENCE

Secondary School Counselor 1999 – Present
 Stonewall Jackson High School
 Provide services to grades 9-12 in a school of 2400 students (caseload of 350-400) on a personal/social, academic, and career level; Conduct small groups and engage in large group classroom guidance activities; Junior class counselor responsible for disseminating junior/senior year information (to include updating junior/senior handbook); PSAT coordinator; Participate in Child Study meetings; participate in Student Support Teams (SST); Youth leadership contact/coordinator; Boys/Girls State coordinator; Governors School co-coordinator; School Counseling Leadership Team (Standards of Learning initiatives)

School Counselor Intern, Hylton High School Fall, 1998 (Sept – Jan)

School Counselor Intern, Stonewall Middle School Spring, 1999 (January – May)

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Resource Opportunity Inc., Counselor, Outpatient Services March 1992 – December 1992

Charter Forest Hospital, Volunteer Counselor November 1989 – Feb. 1992

Youth Shelters; Inner City Schools; Military Family Services; Feb 1987– Feb 1992
 Displaced Homemakers

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Instructor, Northern Virginia Community College	Jan 1995 - present
Adjunct Instructor Strayer University, Loudoun Campus	Mar 1992 – May 1997
Adjunct Instructor Louisiana Tech University	Nov 1990 – Jan 1992

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Graduate Assistant Counselor Education Doctoral Program Virginia Tech University	Sept 1998 – June 1999
Liaison Palmetto Government Benefit Administrators	Jan 1993 – May 1998
Graduate Assistant/Teaching Assistant Louisiana Tech University	Sept 1989 – Jan 1992

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- American Counseling Association (ACA) member 1989 - 1999
- American College Counseling Association (ACCA) member 1990 - 1999
- Virginia Counseling Association (VCA) – member since 1997
 - Board Member: 2002-2003
- Virginia School Counselors Association (VSCA) – member since 1997
 - Human Relations Chair: 2000-2001
 - Secondary Vice President-elect: 2001-2002
 - Secondary Vice President: 2002-2003
- Prince William Regional Counselors Association (PWRCA) – current
 - President-elect: 2001-2002
 - President: 2002-2003
- American School Counselors Association (ASCA) - current