

Job Satisfaction Among Professional Middle School Counselors in Virginia

By

Tara Yost Bane

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Counselor Education

Dr. Nancy Bodenhorn, Chair

Dr. Gerard Lawson

Dr. Penny Burge

Dr. Christina Mathai

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(Abstract)

The purpose of this study was to determine the current level of job satisfaction among professional school counselors working in Virginia public middle schools. In addition, satisfaction levels were compared with previous studies on Virginia elementary school counselors. Although job satisfaction has been widely studied in the past, few studies have focused on professional school counselors in particular. Information regarding job satisfaction is important in order to employ and retain committed school counselors and ensure that students are receiving high quality services.

Participants included 255 middle school counselors working in Virginia. Using a demographic survey and a modified version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967), the following research questions were investigated: What is the overall job satisfaction level of Virginia middle school counselors? What degree of job satisfaction is expressed by Virginia middle school counselors in regard to each of the 20 dimensions of job satisfaction as measured by the modified MSQ? What is the relationship between selected demographic variables and work setting characteristics with the overall job satisfaction of middle school counselors in Virginia? How does the level of job satisfaction of Virginia middle school counselors compare with the level of job satisfaction for Virginia elementary school counselors in 1990, 1995, and 2001? Does the current political and social climate of the public educational system affect middle school counselors' feelings regarding their jobs and performance?

Analysis determined that 92.9% of participants were satisfied with their current jobs, with social service being the area of greatest satisfaction and compensation being the area of least satisfaction. Only 7.1% of participants were dissatisfied. These findings are similar to those found in 1990, 1995, and 2001. Using a regression model, the three demographic variables of gender, licensure, and intent to remain in the position, were found to be significant predictors of overall job satisfaction. Female counselors who held a Postgraduate Professional license and intended to remain in their current position for the next five years were more satisfied than other participants. Qualitative responses indicated that middle school counselors were most affected by the current political climate in regard to standardized testing, while the social climate affected counselors in regard to the difficult challenges faced by students. The greatest impediment to the participants' preferred role was an excess of noncounseling duties, while administrators and principals provided the greatest support. Overall, the results from this study revealed that middle school counselors in Virginia were satisfied with their jobs.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Ember and our three children, Saylor, Grayson, and Teagen. I love each of you so much.

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Chapter I

Introduction

In a time with increased societal challenges (Garbarino, 1995) and violence (Zins, Travis, Brown, and Knighton, 1994), professional school counselors are in the unique position to play a leadership role in ensuring that schools are safe for all students to learn (Bemak, 2000). Few studies, however, have focused on the job satisfaction of middle school counselors and research has suggested that job satisfaction is positively related to performance (Bledsoe & Haywood, 1981; Capella & Andrew, 2004) and turnover rates and absenteeism (Martin & Schinke, 1998; Pinder, 1998). In order for school counselors to successfully implement the American School Counselor Association's National Model (ASCA) (American School Counselor Association, 2003), the profession must employ and retain dedicated school counselors (Schwallie-Giddis, ter Maat, & Pak, 2003).

This chapter provides an introduction to the study. The statement of the problem is presented, along with the rationale and significance of the research topic with respect to professional school counselors, educators, and school board personnel and principals. In addition, the purpose of the research, the definitions of significant terms, and the limitations are provided. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

Background

Virginia students are expected to achieve academic proficiency rates based upon national and state standards. These standards are set in accordance with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (United States Department of Education, 2002) and Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL). NCLB is an educational reform effort passed into law on January 8, 2002 in an attempt to close the achievement gap and ensure all

students succeed in school, regardless of gender, race, family income, or ethnicity. Under this federal legislation, states are required to demonstrate adequate yearly progress in raising the number of students who are proficient in the areas of reading and mathematics. NCLB incorporates five specific performance goals which include: (a) all students will reach proficiency in reading and math by 2013-2014; (b) all limited English proficiency students will reach minimum standards or better for competence in English, reading, and math; (c) students will be taught by highly qualified teachers by 2005-2006; (d) all students will graduate from high school; (e) and schools will be safe and drug free (United States Department of Education, 2002).

In 1995, the Virginia Board of Education adopted state expectations through SOL objectives for students in the core academic areas of math, science, English, and history/social studies. SOL assessment results are used in making decisions regarding student graduation, promotion and retention, and school accreditation (Virginia Department of Education, 2005a). As of the 2003-2004 school year, schools are fully accredited when 70% of eligible students meet the pass rates in each of the core areas, with the exception of 75% pass rates for third and fifth grades in English and 50% in third grade science and social studies. According to the Virginia School Report Card, currently 85.7% of 1, 806 Virginia schools are fully accredited with 14% (255 schools) accredited with warning (Virginia Department of Education, 2005b). For all eighth grade students in Virginia, 72% passed the reading SOL, 77% passed the writing SOL, and 78% passed the math SOL (Virginia Department of Education, n.d.).

Certainly, these standards set by federal and state legislation have increased academic expectations and pressures for all students in school today. Despite the rise in

academic standards, however, students are faced with a vast array of other difficult challenges both old and new. Issues such as poor academic achievement, poverty, substance abuse, physical and sexual abuse, divorce, suicide, violence, and the threat to homeland security are just to name a few. Even a decade ago, Zins et al. (1994) found that because of a rise in violent behaviors at school, many students did not feel their academic environments were safe. In 2002, students 12-18 years of age were victims of approximately 1.8 million nonfatal crimes while at school and 1.5 million crimes away from school (DeVoe et al., 2004). The following year, 45% of students in grades 9 through 12 reported drinking at least one alcoholic drink within the previous year, and 22% of students reported using marijuana during the last month, while 29% of students in the same grades reported that someone had offered, given, or sold them an illegal drug on school property within the previous year (DeVoe et al., 2004). Garbarino (1995) reported that 14 to 15 million children were living in a socially and psychologically toxic environment in which the mere act of living in our society is dangerous to their health and well-being. According to Garbarino, the quality of social life has deteriorated over the past 30 to 40 years and this deterioration is due to the changing nature of the economy, the rising dependence of families on the community for support, and the "...increasing nastiness of the culture in which children live" (p. X). In addition to these alarming statistics, approximately 43% of children are born with some form of a learning or developmental difficulty that tends to evolve into multiple barriers over time (U.S. Department of Education, 1993).

Gysbers and Henderson (1994) and Sandhu (2000) noted that such challenges are having a considerable impact on the academic, career, and social/personal development

of children and adolescents. Professional school counselors, however, are in the unique position to help with these challenges and provide academic and personal services to the entire student population. According to Bemak (2000), professional school counselors have the "...potential to play a leadership role in successfully bringing into the 21st century schools that are safe and conducive to learning for all students" (p. 323).

Borders and Drury (1992) reviewed 30 years of literature involving comprehensive school counseling programs and concluded that school counseling interventions have a considerable impact on the educational and personal growth of students. Furthermore, the authors claimed that counseling, classroom guidance, and consultation activities contribute directly to student success in and out of the classroom.

Unfortunately, Gysbers, Lapan, Blair, Starr, and Wilmes (1999) noted the continuing lack of attention given to the work of school counselors despite educational reform movements. In fact, Gysbers et al. stated that many of these reform movements beginning in the 1980's neglected the field of guidance and counseling altogether, giving little to no attention to the educational contributions provided by school counselors. In the past, the school counselor's role has primarily involved crisis-oriented and reactive counseling duties, combined with an overwhelming variety of clerical and administrative responsibilities. As a result, the public has typically viewed the role of school counselors as one not contributing to the academic learning process of students (Sink & MacDonald, 1998).

This mind set, fortunately, is beginning to shift. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the current role of professional school counselors is to work in conjunction with the school's mission in support of the overall academic

achievement for each student (ASCA, 2004). With the development of The National Model for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2003), ASCA created a unified approach for professional school counselors to follow as they create, implement, manage, and evaluate their comprehensive counseling programs for the purpose of fostering student success (Hatch & Bowers, 2002). Despite this progress, however, school counselors are still expected to fulfill a variety of non-counseling and administrative duties. In a direct response to the Virginia state mandated SOL assessments, DeMato (2001) noted an increase in stress and pressure for school counselors correlated with more non-counseling testing responsibilities and a difficulty in scheduling counseling sessions due to teacher resistance in allowing students to miss class time. DeMato also suggested that the rise in school violence is contributing to an increased involvement in discipline referrals and therapeutic issues beyond the role of a school counselor. Bemak (2000) stated, “many schools still define school counselors as positions rather than programs, emphasizing maintenance and administrative tasks, and accentuate a clinical rather than educational focus” (p. 324). When role conflict occurs for school counselors, Corey (1986) suggested even the counselor’s best efforts can be hindered and ultimately ineffective. In addition to a decrease in counselor effectiveness, research has also linked role conflict to decreased job satisfaction for counselors working within an educational environment (Duffus, 1996; Thompson & Powers, 1983; Violanti, 2003).

Job satisfaction is an important area of study for all members of the work force. Of importance to an employer, job satisfaction has been found to influence job performance and productivity (Bledsoe & Haywood, 1981), and turnover rates and absenteeism (Martin & Schinke, 1998; Pinder, 1998). Porwoll (1980) claimed that

dissatisfaction with work is a major determinant of employee absenteeism. As a result, high turnover rates and frequent employee absences may potentially affect the overall gains of a business, as substitute pay and training costs for new workers add additional expenses. Studies have also indicated that job satisfaction can influence an employee's physical and mental health (Portugal, 1976), personal adjustment (Crites, 1969), self-esteem (Greenhaus, 1971), and general life satisfaction (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969). Each factor may potentially affect an individual at home, as well as on the job. Brown, Hohenshil, and Brown (1998) suggested that the job satisfaction of human service employees is important in order to ensure the highest quality services for the clients and students with whom they work. Similarly, Olson and Dilley (1988) noted the link between a counselor's mental health and the quality of work they deliver to others.

Statement of the Problem

Past research has linked job satisfaction to a variety of obstacles for both employer and employees in many occupational settings. Despite these negative correlations, however, only limited research is available on the satisfaction of helping professionals and even fewer studies focus on professional school counselors in particular. School counselors have a responsibility to provide support for each student's overall academic achievement, yet studies provide evidence that counselors working within school systems struggle with administrative policies and practices (DeMato, 2001; Kirk, 1990; Morgan, 1978; Murray, 1995), stress and burnout (Kendrick, Chandler, & Hatcher, 1994; Olson & Dilley, 1988), role conflict (Coll & Freeman, 1997; DeMato & Curcio, 2004; Hardesty & Dillard, 1994; Thompson & Powers, 1983), and a lack of supervision (Crutchfield & Borders, 1997). In order to ensure that students receive high

quality services from their school counselors, research is needed to clarify if professional school counselors are satisfied with their jobs. Presently, the job satisfaction of Virginia's professional school counselors working in a public middle school setting is unknown.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Information on the job satisfaction of practicing school counselors may have implications for many professionals. This section will discuss specific implications for school counselors, principals, school board personnel, and college educators.

Professional School Counselors

Of this list of individuals noted above, school counselors should be front and center, taking an active role in their own career satisfaction. Based on the existing limited research on job satisfaction among school counselors, practitioners should become advocates for themselves in the areas of supervision (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Murray, 1995) and role clarity (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Bryant & Constantine, 2006; DeMato, 2001). DeMato and Curcio (2004) recommended that school counselors collaborate with other faculty members within the same school in order to clarify roles. "By becoming more proactive in defining their roles, counselors can reduce their stress levels and enhance their job" (DeMato & Curcio, 2004, p. 243). In addition, if supervision is not readily available to school counselors, they may need to actively seek support from coworkers or community agents on their own. Counselors also need to take a proactive role in the development of their responsibilities both on local and state levels and push for a comprehensive counseling program meeting the standards of ASCA's National Model for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2004).

School Board Personnel and Principals

Faculty at the school board office and on site principals may also benefit from information about the level of job satisfaction among school counselors. For example, if research continues to correlate role confusion with lowered levels of job satisfaction for counselors, administrators may want to explore, reevaluate, and clearly define requirements for counseling and guidance programs. According to Bemak (2000), “the job description for school counselors must be redefined to align effectively with national and state educational objectives” (p. 323) in order to help reduce the achievement gap between students. A study conducted by Ponec and Brock (2000) revealed several components necessary in the building of an effective relationship between elementary school counselors and their principals, including a clearly defined counselor role, mutual trust and clear communication, and continual maintenance of support strategies (Ponec & Brock, 2000). Administrators may also want to devote further efforts in providing more resources, staffing, and compensation for school counselors (Kirk, 1990).

Educators

Training programs and counselor educators may also find information on practicing school counselors’ satisfaction useful in preparing counseling students to enter the work force. Although counselor roles are clearly identified in the ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2004), educators should prepare students for the possible resistance they may encounter by county policies or local school administration while trying to adhere to these guidelines. Napierkowski and Parsons (1995) noted, “it is sad that there has been very little attention paid to teaching counselors how to implement these desired programs within resistant realities experienced by many

school counselors” (p. 365). If studies continue to document role confusion as an obstacle for school counselors, educators may want to emphasize techniques for students to implement in the future when trying to determine employment responsibilities. In addition, counselor educators may also want to focus on stress reduction techniques in their curriculums to help counselors in training cope with future stressful situations that may arise due to a lack of appropriate clinical supervision or inconsistent role demands.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to research the level of job satisfaction for professional school counselors practicing in public middle schools located throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the overall level of job satisfaction for middle school counselors working in Virginia?
2. What degree of satisfaction do Virginia middle school counselors express for each of the 20 job satisfaction dimensions as measured by the modified Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967)?
3. What is the relationship between the overall job satisfaction of Virginia middle school counselors and selected work environment and demographic variables?
4. How does the level of job satisfaction for Virginia middle school counselors compare to the job satisfaction levels for Virginia elementary school counselors in 1990, 1995, and 2001?

5. Does the current political and social climate of the public educational system affect middle school counselors' feelings regarding their jobs and performance?

Definition of Terms

The operational definitions used in this study will be as follows:

1. *Job Satisfaction*: "...a function of the correspondence between an individual's needs and the reinforcer system of the job" (Weiss, Dawis, Lofquist, & England, 1966, p. 4).
2. *Middle School Counselors*: those individuals serving students primarily in grades six through eight who are employed as middle school counselors in Virginia public middle schools.
3. *Correspondence*: when an individual's abilities meet the ability requirements of the job and the work environment meets the individual's needs (Weiss et al. 1966).
4. *Work Adjustment*: "...how well an individual's abilities correspond to the ability requirements in work, and how well his needs correspond to the reinforcers available in the work environment" (Weiss et al., 1967, p. V).
5. *Clinical Supervision*: An evaluative intervention extending over time and provided by a senior member of the profession to a junior member of the profession for the purpose of gate keeping, as well as enhancing and monitoring the professional functioning of the junior member (Benard & Goodyear, 1998).

6. *Role Conflict*: A feeling of being pulled and pushed in multiple directions from a variety of authorities (Coll & Freeman, 1997).

Limitations of Study

The intent of this study is to examine the job satisfaction of middle school counselors in Virginia. The sample for this investigation consists of school counselors who are employed full-time by a Virginia public middle school as identified by the Virginia Department of Education. Therefore, results may not apply to populations working in a private school setting, an elementary or high school, or to counselors working in middle schools outside of Virginia. Comparisons made between the job satisfaction levels of Virginia middle and elementary school counselors may also be affected by differing work environments. In addition, all participants in the studies by Kirk (1990), Murray (1995) and DeMato (2001) were also members of Virginia School Counselors Association (VSCA) and research has suggested that membership in professional organizations is positively related to job satisfaction (Levinson, Fetchkan, & Hohenshil, 1988). Although participants in all four studies had over a month to complete and return surveys, the time of year during which the research took place may have also affected results due to testing schedules and other school activities. The current study was conducted during January and February, while the surveys in 2001 were mailed in May and the surveys in 1990 and 1995 were distributed through February and March. In addition, both the Individual Information Form (IIF) and the MSQ are self-reported instruments. According to Stemple (2004), the use of self-reporting instruments produces generally low response rates and an inability for the researcher to probe respondents for more information and clarify potential questions that may arise as participants complete

the surveys. Lastly, non-respondents were not contacted for follow-up information upon completion of the survey, which may have resulted in the presence of nonresponse bias.

Summary

This study is designed to examine the job satisfaction of middle school counselors working within the Commonwealth of Virginia. In addition, the level of middle school counselors' job satisfaction will be compared with the job satisfaction of elementary school counselors as determined by three previous studies in Virginia (Kirk, 1990; Murray, 1995; DeMato, 2001). Chapter one included the research questions used to guide this study, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study for professional school counselors, school board personnel, and educators. In addition, limitations have been addressed and operational definitions have been stated.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

This chapter summarizes the salient literature on the topic of school counselor job satisfaction. An historical overview of job satisfaction is presented, along with job satisfaction definitions and prominent theories. Content theories and process theories will be addressed. Determinants and measurements of job satisfaction are also included in this chapter. Information is presented on job satisfaction as it relates to a wide variety of mental health professionals and specifically to professional school counselors. Characteristics and developmental needs of middle school students that may potentially affect the job satisfaction of school counselors are discussed. Finally, studies exploring the issues of role conflict, stress and burnout, administrative policies, and the job satisfaction of elementary school counselors in Virginia are also presented.

Historical Overview of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction studies in the United States date back to the early 1900's. Industrial psychologists at this time were primarily interested in the influences of environmental changes on worker productivity versus the personal welfare of employees (Gruneburg, 1979). Fredrick Taylor (1911) successfully designed one of the first studies to improve employee productivity by altering the physical environment at the Bethlehem steelworks. After implementing monetary incentives and prescribed periods of work and rest, participants improved productivity by 400 percent. Another significant milestone in job satisfaction research began in the 1920's as Elton Mayo led the famous Hawthorne studies at the Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). Although these studies were originally designed to examine the effect of

the physical environment on productivity, as in Taylor's preceding study, interest shifted to the possibility of social factors contributing to job satisfaction. For example, after studying the effects of rest pauses, hours of work, payment schedules, and temperature variances on the worker productivity of a group of girls, researchers at the Hawthorne plant postulated that observed productivity increases were due to human associations on the job. Schultz (1982) claimed that the 20,000 interviews conducted during the Hawthorne studies convinced management that their employees were not just "machines", but instead had attitudes and feelings related to jobs that could affect productivity. As a result of these studies, Gruneburg (1976) asserts, "the human relations school was born, which saw the function of the industrial psychologist as seeking to improve the happiness of the worker..." (p. X). This movement emphasized the influences of social work groups and supervisory relationships in the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of employees (Locke, 1976).

Following the Hawthorne studies, researchers continued exploring the multiple factors contributing to worker job satisfaction. Hoppock (1935) introduced the use of survey methods and attitude scales as a means for examining the multi-dimensions of job satisfaction. According to Hoppock, many factors outside of the job itself, including relationships, health, and social status, contribute to job satisfaction. Hoppock suggested the possibility of "...no such thing as job satisfaction independent of the other satisfactions in one's life" (p. 5). Researchers called attention to the relationship between job satisfaction with the mental health and general life satisfaction of workers (Gruneburg, 1979).

The Human Relations movement began to lose momentum by the 1950's as another trend in the study of job satisfaction evolved, focusing on the challenges and interest of the job itself (Locke, 1976). The emergence of the Work Itself School emphasized the need for mentally challenging work in order for employees to gain job satisfaction through growth in skills, efficacy, and responsibility (Locke, 1976). During this period, Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson, & Capwell, (1957) challenged the traditional idea that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction were on a single continuum. Instead, Herzberg (1968) claimed that job satisfaction is caused only by the intrinsic factors of the job itself, such as recognition, responsibility, and advancement, whereby job dissatisfaction is determined by extrinsic factors, such as salary, supervisory relationships, and working conditions.

Through the years, various historical schools or trends of job satisfaction have emerged. Gruneburg (1979) claimed few workers would be willing to adhere strictly to only one of these schools of thought. He goes on to maintain that, "it is generally appreciated that the physical design of jobs can affect job satisfaction, as can social relationships, payment, and supervisory systems and a myriad of other variables" (p. 8).

Definitions of Job Satisfaction

One of the hurdles in studying the influence of job satisfaction may be for researchers to first distinguish a clear and valid way of defining this theoretical construct. For example, Katz and Van Mannen (1977) stated, "there is perhaps no area in social science fraught with more ambiguity, conflicting opinion, or methodological nuance than that of work satisfaction" (p. 469). As the definition of job satisfaction tends to hold some ambiguity, Locke (1969) emphasized the need for researchers to define what they are

trying to measure, before conducting any further investigation. Locke offered the following definition:

Job satisfaction is the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values. Job dissatisfaction is the unpleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as frustrating or blocking the attainment of one's job values as entailing disvalues. Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from one's job and what one perceives it as offering or entailing. (p 316)

Hoppock (1935) suggested researchers explore any combination of environmental, psychological, or physiological factors, which may influence an individual to honestly say, "I am satisfied with my job". Gruneburg (1979) described job morale as the overall wellbeing of a group of employees, while job satisfaction involves an individual's personal and emotional reaction to the job itself. Mortimer (1979) claimed that job satisfaction can be assessed as an overall evaluation of an individual's job, or by "facet-specific satisfactions related to job components, such as satisfaction with financial rewards, resources to get the job done, interest, challenge, autonomy, relations with co-workers..." (p. 2). Overall, Kirk (1990) found that most definitions of job satisfaction tend to revolve around a central theme, whereby satisfaction is the affective reaction resulting from an individual's interaction with work. Rhodes (1993) and Spector (1997) described job satisfaction as simply the extent to which someone derives pleasure from a job. This study is based on the definition provided by the work adjustment theory, which

states that job satisfaction is “a function of the correspondence between an individual’s needs and the reinforcer system in the job” (Weiss et. al, 1966).

Theories of Job Satisfaction

Along with the many definitions of job satisfaction, a variety of job satisfaction theories also exist. Authors divide these theories into the two broad categories of content theories and process theories (Gruneburg, 1979). Content theories address specific “...needs that must be satisfied or the values that must be attained for an individual to be satisfied with his job” (Locke, 1976, p. 1307). Two influential content theories include Maslow’s Need’s Hierarchy Theory and Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory. Process theories, in contrast, attempt to specify the processes behind variables interacting with job characteristics in order to produce job satisfaction. Four significant process theories include the Equity Theory, the Reference Group Theory, the Need and Fulfillment Theory and the Work Adjustment Theory.

Content Theories

Content theories identify specific factors contributing to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Researchers often theorized that job satisfaction involves the fulfillment of an individual’s needs (Gruneburg, 1979). Maslow (1954) introduced one of the first needs theories when he proposed a five-stage hierarchy, with needs ranging from lower order to higher order. The lower order needs consist of basic physiological needs, safety and security needs, and social affection needs. The remaining higher order needs include esteem needs and self-actualization needs. Maslow proposed that an individual must first satisfy lower order needs before fulfilling higher order needs. In regard to job satisfaction, Maslow’s theory predicted that a worker must first satisfy the basic needs of

pay and security before attaining satisfaction from the job itself. In addition, employees in lower level jobs may be motivated by lower order needs, while employees in higher level jobs may have already met their basic needs and are more interested in the fulfillment of higher order needs (Gruneburg, 1979).

Based on 203 interviews with accountants and engineers, Herzberg and colleagues developed another predominant content theory, known as the two-factor or motivator-hygiene theory (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). In his attempt to explain job satisfaction, Herzberg (1968) stressed the importance of examining characteristics of the work itself and described two distinct groups of factors for exploration. The first group, referred to as motivators, correspond to Maslow's higher order needs and represent variables leading to job satisfaction when present in the occupation. Herzberg theorized that these factors, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement opportunities, and the job itself, are intrinsic and separate from variables causing job dissatisfaction. On the contrary, hygiene factors correspond to Maslow's lower order needs and lead directly to job dissatisfaction when insufficient. These factors are extrinsic to the job and include pay, status, supervision, working conditions, and security.

Herzberg (1968) theorized that the causes of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are separate and distinct. He challenged the common belief that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are opposites by claiming that the "opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction but rather *no* job satisfaction; and similarly, the opposite of job dissatisfaction is not job satisfaction, but *no* job dissatisfaction" (Herzberg, 1968, p. 56). More specifically, he claimed that the presence of motivators leads to job

satisfaction, while the absence of motivators does not lead to job dissatisfaction. Instead, the absence of motivators leads to a situation whereby the employee may not reach job satisfaction. To the same extent, in his two-factor theory, Herzberg maintained that only inadequate hygiene factors lead to job dissatisfaction, while the presence of sufficient hygiene factors does not produce job satisfaction.

Process Theories

In contrast to content theories, which aim directly to the identification of needs or values contributing to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, process theories address the interactions between differing variables as they relate to job satisfaction. Process theorists explain job satisfaction through the characteristics of the work itself, along with the needs, expectations, and values of the employee in relation to his job (Locke, 1976).

The Equity Theory, for example, postulates that job satisfaction is contingent on the discrepancy between an individual's expectations and what he or she is actually receiving from the employer or environment. According to Adams (1963), this discrepancy is not simply a matter of pure economics, but instead, is dependent on social comparisons. In other words, an individual expects to receive a certain amount of payment based on what other workers are receiving for the same job. If this salary is less than payment received by co-workers, equity theorists predict that the employee receiving less money will be dissatisfied with their job. A key notion of the equity theory suggests that employees have an idea of what is a fair reward for certain efforts made on the job (Gruneburg, 1979). Individuals compare what they are receiving to what others around them are receiving. If employees find they are not getting what is reasonable in regard to this comparison, they will become dissatisfied with their work. Equity theorists

predict that in this situation, dissatisfied employees may not work as hard, efficiently, or diligently (Gruneberg, 1979).

The reference group theory integrates the basic principals of the equity theory, stating that employees compare themselves with friends or co-workers in determining whether or not they are treated fairly at work (Gruneberg, 1979). Reference group theorists, however, focus on the importance of these outside reference groups and claim that an understanding of such groups is essential in understanding overall job satisfaction (Hulin and Blood, 1968).

Klein and Maher (1966) studied a group of college-educated managers and found them less satisfied with their salaries than those managers who did not have a college degree. In an attempt to explain this difference, researchers proposed that managers with a college degree had an expectation for higher payment because they compared themselves to a reference group consisting of other college graduates who received higher salaries. In the same respect, theorists also postulated that non-college-educated managers had expectations for lower salaries because they compared themselves to a reference group made up of other less educated employees making less money. This theory suggests that because these employees related to individuals making a lower salary, they had lower expectations and were therefore more satisfied with their jobs than those employees who compared themselves to individuals making more money. Despite questions regarding what constitutes a reference group and how these groups are chosen (Korman, 1977), Gruneberg (1979) claimed that the equity theory offers some explanation into how employees determine whether or not they are treated equitably on the job.

Instead of focusing primarily on employee expectations, need/value fulfillment theorists also study the role of what individuals value from their jobs in determining job satisfaction (Gruneburg, 1979). Vroom (1964) offered two models of need fulfillment theories. In his subtractive model, Vroom claimed that overall job satisfaction is related to the discrepancy between employee needs and the degree to which the job fulfills these needs. Vroom theorized that larger discrepancies equal less employee job satisfaction. In the same regard, he argued that greater congruence between what the employee needs and the degree to which these needs can be met through the job, results in higher job satisfaction. This model, however, does not take into account the relative importance of particular needs to an individual. Vroom's multiplicative model was designed to incorporate need importance by multiplying the perceived degree to which the job can fulfill a need with the importance of that particular need for the employee (Gruneburg, 1979).

The work adjustment theory, developed through the Work Adjustment Project conducted at the University of Minnesota, will guide this study. This theory proposes that individuals interact with their work environments and that these interactions can be used to predict work adjustment outcomes (Weiss et al., 1967). Weiss et al. claimed that employees bring specific skills to the job in order to complete certain tasks required by the environment. In exchange, individuals require compensation along with safe and comfortable working conditions. Correspondence is the extent to which these requirements are met by employees and their working environments. Work adjustment is the process of achieving and maintaining this correspondence and is defined by Weiss et al. as "...how well an individual's abilities correspond to the ability requirements in

work, and how well his needs correspond to the reinforcers available in the work environment” (p. V). The individual’s level of job satisfaction is an indication of correspondence between worker personalities and work environments.

Much of the current literature on job satisfaction relies heavily on these historic models and “...in truth, no single conceptual model can completely and accurately portray the construct” (Hagedorn, 2000, p. 6). Despite the variability in theoretical approaches, according to Hagedorn, there exists a general consensus that the construct of job satisfaction is complex and hard to understand.

Determinants of Job Satisfaction

A number of variables are frequently cited as significant determinants of job satisfaction. Fournet, Distefano, and Pryer (1969) for example, listed several personal characteristics associated with job satisfaction, which include individual differences, age, education and intelligence, gender, and occupational level. Along with the identification of personal characteristics associated with influencing job satisfaction, specific factors related to the job have also been identified as important determinants. In a review of approximately 150 studies, Herzberg et al. (1957) identified and categorized ten major job factors as having an impact on job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. These factors, listed in order from the most to least often cited variable were intrinsic aspects of the job, supervision, working conditions, wages, opportunity for advancement, security, company and management, social aspects of the job, communication, and benefits. Over the years, researchers have recognized a wide array of job factors and personal characteristics impacting job satisfaction. Determinants frequently cited throughout the literature,

include but certainly are not limited to, age, gender, salary, supervision, and advancement opportunities.

Herzberg et al. (1957) investigated the relationship between age and job satisfaction. In their analysis of 23 studies, researchers discovered a consistent trend in the shifting of job attitudes with the aging process. They described this relationship between job satisfaction and age as one having a U-shaped curve. According to Herzberg, et al., morale is high among young workers at the beginning of a career, then gradually decreases during the first few years of employment, only to increase again around age thirty and remain high until retirement. Explanations for this trend in lower satisfaction after the first few years of employment include uncertainty, worry, and lack of seniority and security. Herzberg et al. suggested the steady rise in morale later in an employee's career is due to an increase in feelings of security and seniority, broadening of interests, and a general rise in life adjustment and satisfaction. In their study of a large sample of British employees, Clark, Oswald, and Warr (1996) found strong support for this U-shaped function of job satisfaction and age in regard to overall job satisfaction, satisfaction with the job itself, and salary. Similarly, Mertler (2002) surveyed the job satisfaction and motivation of middle and high school teachers using a web-based survey and found support for the U-shaped curve. Results indicated that teachers both early and late in their careers were more satisfied with their jobs than those teachers in the middle of their careers.

Other researchers claim that job satisfaction and age are related in a positive linear fashion, in which case job satisfaction increases with age (Brush, Moch, & Pooyan, 1987; Hoppock, 1960; Hulin & Smith, 1965; Lee & Wilbur, 1985; Weaver 1980).

Hoppock conducted a twenty-seven year follow-up study on the job satisfaction of forty individuals. Of twenty-three cases, job satisfaction only decreased for two participants, while satisfaction increased for 17 respondents. These results support the notion of a positive relationship between job satisfaction and age. Lee and Wilbur investigated the relationship between age and the job satisfaction of 1707 county and state government employees. Results found an increase in participants' satisfaction with age. In addition, results indicated younger employees were less satisfied with intrinsic job factors such as challenges, creativity, variety, and responsibility, while older workers were more satisfied with extrinsic factors such as promotion, salary, and working conditions.

Still other researchers propose that job satisfaction increases with age up until a certain point, identified as a period of pre-retirement, at which time satisfaction decreases (Saleh & Otis, 1964). In their study of age and job satisfaction, Saleh and Otis surveyed two groups of male employees working in a variety of occupations with a compulsory retirement age of 65. Results in both groups supported the researchers hypothesis that the level of job satisfaction only increases until the point of pre-retirement, in which case it decreases. More specifically, this decrease begins five years prior to mandatory retirement, known as the terminal period.

As with age, researchers have found inconsistent results in their examination of the relationship between job satisfaction and gender (Spector, 1997). Some studies have found males to be more satisfied on the job than females, while other studies have found females more satisfied than males, and still additional results have failed to find any differences in gender groups at all (Gruneburg, 1979). Hoppock (1935) and Maynard (1986) for example, did not find variability in job satisfaction based on gender

differences. Spector also cited an equivalent overall job satisfaction for males and females, despite variability in working conditions and pay. Andrew, Faubion, and Palmer (2002) surveyed 315 state rehabilitation counselors from 16 different states to examine job satisfaction and extrinsic job factors. Researchers collected data using the Environment of Job Satisfaction Survey (EJSS) developed specifically for this endeavor. Results did not find a difference in overall job satisfaction between men and women, although women reported differences in job satisfaction with respect to extrinsic job factors, such as safety concerns and the importance of healthy work environments.

Alternatively, Brush et al. (1987) stated that most research typically finds males more satisfied with their jobs than females. In Mertler's (2002) study of job satisfaction, perception, and motivation among middle and high school teachers, male participants reported higher job satisfaction than female coworkers. Hulin and Smith (1964) studied the impact of gender differences on the job satisfaction of 163 females and 295 males. Results indicated that the males were more satisfied in comparison to their female coworkers. Researchers further speculated that this difference in gender alone was not the sole determinant of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Instead, Hulin and Smith suggested the interaction between gender and other factors, such as salary, job level, or advancement opportunities, influenced worker satisfaction levels. Gruneburg (1979) proposed that the differences between job satisfaction for men and women can be explained in their differences toward the orientation of the job, whereby women are less concerned with career aspects in comparison to social aspects and men are more oriented toward competitiveness.

Although salary is another variable often associated with job satisfaction, studies frequently yield conflicting results. In his investigation of the actual earnings of teachers with their satisfaction in regard to these earnings, Hoppock (1935) determined salaries did not influence overall job satisfaction. According to the two-factor theory, Herzberg (1968) claimed that because payment is a hygiene factor and extrinsic to the job itself, this variable can only produce feelings of job dissatisfaction. Gruneburg (1976), however, refuted this suggestion by maintaining that substantial evidence supports the hypothesis that salary operates as a determinant for both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. In fact, a review of the literature by Portigal (1976) suggested a distinct relationship between pay and job satisfaction. At one California community college, for example, low salaries were cited as a specific source of job dissatisfaction (Hagedorn, 2000). Hagedorn noted a significant increase in faculty satisfaction at the same community college after contract settlements led to sizable salary increases. In his development of the Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1985), Spector (1997) noted that “the correlation between level of pay and job satisfaction tends to be surprisingly small” (p. 42). Instead, he suggested that pay fairness is perhaps a more important issue, in which case individuals are rather concerned when other employees in the same position earn more.

Dating back to the early 1920’s, studies have shown a correlation between supervision and job satisfaction (Hoppock, 1935). Herzberg et al. (1957) stated, “the evidence is strong that both the attitudes and the effectiveness of employees are a direct function of the quality of supervision” (p. 196) and “the factor of supervision appears to be equally strong as a contributor to satisfaction and dissatisfaction” (p. 73). For instance, researchers conducting a study of Illinois workers who quit their jobs discovered that this

decision for job termination was influenced by supervision in approximately 40 percent of respondents (Moser, 1953).

More recently, Solly and Hohenshil (1986) looked at the job satisfaction of school psychologists working in West Virginia. Approximately 65% of psychologists reported overall job satisfaction, with supervision acting as a major source of job dissatisfaction. Further, supervision was one of two significant predictors of overall satisfaction, where satisfaction increased as the training level of the supervisor reached or exceeded the level of the supervisee and as the congruence between the workers' and supervisors' backgrounds increased. Similarly, Evans and Hohenshil (1997) examined the correlation between clinical supervision and job satisfaction of substance abuse counselors. Survey results of 505 counselors revealed that a combination of four supervision variables was a significant predictor of job satisfaction. These variables included the number of weekly supervision hours, the amount of time the supervisor had been a supervisor, the supervisor's degree level, and whether or not the supervisor was also acting as the counselor's administrator. According to Crutchfield and Borders (1997), many professional school counselors are receiving inconsistent clinical supervision. After studying southeastern school counselors, Crutchfield and Borders claimed that a lack of sufficient supervision may have adverse effects on the quality of care counselors can provide to their students because minimal support increases stress. In his study of school psychologists, Huebner (1994) found a positive correlation between supervisory support and overall well-being.

Herzberg et al. (1957) described advancement opportunities as all of the potential opportunities for betterment in the areas of organizational status, economic level, or

professional experience. These researchers further noted that opportunities for advancement are correlated more often with job dissatisfaction, rather than influencing job satisfaction. Lawler (1973) supported this distinction by claiming that promotion opportunities appear to be a major source of job dissatisfaction. Additionally, Lawler postulated that what is important is the degree to which opportunities are important to workers and why these prospects are important in the first place. Evans and Hohenshil (1997) determined a sample of over 500 substance abuse counselors most satisfied with the opportunity to help others on a modified version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss et al., 1967) and least satisfied with the opportunity for advancement. Hoppock (1935), however, studied the job satisfaction of 40 unemployed and 40 employed adults and found advancement opportunities to be a factor related to job satisfaction, versus job dissatisfaction, although distinctions were not made as to the nature of this relationship.

Mortimer (1979) stated that job satisfaction is responsive to a wide array of environmental, or external variables, and individual, or internal variables. Studies on the relationships between such variables and job satisfaction have yielded years of conflicting results. Perhaps what is more apparent throughout the literature is the likelihood that variables of job satisfaction are interrelated. Murray (1995) stated, "...none of these factors operate in a vacuum" (p. 26). For instance, Fournet et al. (1969) noted that a major difficulty in determining the importance of pay in relation to job satisfaction is that pay is confounded with variables of age, education, and occupational level. Herzberg et al. (1957) described the factor of supervision as more important to women than to men, yet wages and advancement opportunities as more important to men

than to women. In addition, the importance of wages appears to drop until the age of 40, only to then increase in importance later in life (Herzberg et al., 1957). Gruneburg (1979) noted inconsistencies in research on the influences of age on job satisfaction, finding more support for the U-shaped relationship in males than in females.

Measurement of Job Satisfaction

Throughout the years, researchers have utilized a variety of methods in an attempt to measure job satisfaction "...all of which involve, in essence, asking workers how they feel about various aspects of their jobs" (Schultz, 1982, p. 288). According to Locke, Smith, Kendall, Hulin, & Miller (1964), this variability in measurements accounts for problems and conflicting results in numerous job satisfaction studies. Some of the most widely used satisfaction instruments include rank-order studies, critical incident inquiries, interviews, and questionnaires (Kirk, 1990, Fournet et al. 1969).

During rank-order studies, participants rate job characteristics in a hierarchy based on each characteristic's importance to job satisfaction. Such studies have been criticized for failing to detect specific job satisfaction factors (Kirk, 1990). The use of sentence completion tests, however, has been described by researchers as projective and allows for the opportunity to gather information which may not have otherwise been discovered using different measurement methods (Fournet, et al., 1969; Likert, 1970; Schultz, 1982). With this technique, individuals are given phrases to complete in relation to their job. Phrases, for example, may include, "My job is ___" or "My job should be ___" (Schultz, 1982, p. 289). According to Likert, "...it is in the freedom of the answers which provides the opportunity for noting novel attitude dimensions unanticipated by the author and justifies the use of this projective technique" (p. 343). Herzberg et al. (1959)

developed the critical incident method, in which employees are asked during a personal interview to describe specific occasions when they felt exceptionally good or bad about their jobs. Large numbers of critical incidences, however, are needed in order for researchers to gain valuable information and this process requires extensive time and effort (Schultz, 1982).

By the 1970's, the most popular technique for measuring job satisfaction was the questionnaire (Schultz, 1982). In more current times, the questionnaire continues to remain the most commonly used method for measuring employee job satisfaction (Spector, 1997). Personal interviews are sometimes used in conjunction with questionnaires. This technique allows respondents the freedom to elaborate on personally important issues and as a result, employees can develop their own areas of dissatisfaction or satisfaction (Spector, 1997). Despite these advantages, however, the interview process is time consuming, expensive, and has low validity and reliability (Fournet et al., 1969; Schultz, 1982; Spector, 1997).

In contrast, researchers using questionnaires can survey large numbers of individuals with greater ease and less expense. Additionally, questionnaires increase the reliability of results and foster increased comparability between studies utilizing the same questionnaire (Murray, 1995). Spector (1997) also stated that questionnaire results are easy to standardize and quantify. Establishing validity is a major difficulty in the measurement of worker attitudes (Smith et al., 1969). Some researchers claim that using an existing questionnaire to measure job satisfaction is a particularly easy method, where reliability and validity rates are already established (Spector, 1997). Wanous and Lawler (1972), however, argued that measures of job satisfaction may not measure the construct

in the same way and this possibility raises construct and validity concerns. Other disadvantages of questionnaires include the possibility of a low return rate from respondents and a variety of respondent interpretations on items (Kirk, 1990).

Job satisfaction questionnaires are designed to measure either the overall job satisfaction of an employee or a variety of specific job satisfaction components. Hoppock (1935) stated that questions regarding job satisfaction as a whole, place the responsibility of weighing the importance of each job facet onto the respondent, whereby questions designed to measure specific aspects of the job, place this responsibility on the researcher. Hoppock also pointed out that the simple act of summing the satisfaction with various aspects of the job is not the same as the satisfaction with the job as a whole. Locke (1969) stated that although there is great controversy regarding how evaluations of specific facets of the job should be combined, overall job satisfaction is still the sum of these evaluations of elements of which the job is composed. The Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank (Hoppock, 1935) is one example of a questionnaire designed to measure overall job satisfaction. The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) (Smith, et al., 1969), the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) (Spector, 1985), and the MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) also measure various facets of the job.

Researchers have attempted to measure the construct of job satisfaction using a variety of approaches. Kirk (1990) suggested, “these differences may be due to the interrelationship between operational definitions of job satisfaction and it’s instruments” (p. 23). Wanous and Lawler (1972) reviewed numerous operational definitions of job satisfaction and concluded that although one type of measurement did not stand out above the rest, it was possible to measure job satisfaction in a valid way. Despite the type

of instrument employed, researchers and practitioners have dedicated a lot of time in the study and investigation of job satisfaction (Spector, 1985). By the 1970's, it was estimated that at least 3,350 job satisfaction articles or dissertations had been written (Locke, 1976) and by 1985, this number jumped to approximately 4,739 (Spector, 1997). Spector (1997) claimed that job satisfaction "...is the most frequently studied variable in organizational behavioral research" (p. 1). Regardless of these efforts, however, relatively little attention has been made directly to the job satisfaction of mental health professionals (Spector, 1997).

Job Satisfaction of Mental Health Professionals

Although the majority of job satisfaction studies have focused primarily on the satisfaction of individuals employed in a business or industrial setting, some studies provide insight as to the importance satisfaction plays in the field of human services.

Substance Abuse Counselors

A study conducted by Evans and Hohenshil (1997) examined the levels and sources of job satisfaction as they pertained to certified substance abuse counselors. Over 500 full-time substance-abuse counselors were surveyed by mail using a modified version of the MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) and an individual information form. Results of this research found overall satisfaction for participants, yet 76.2% of the subjects planned to leave their position in the upcoming five years, with 17.75% of counselors leaving the field entirely. Participants reported least satisfaction with advancement opportunities and most satisfaction correlated with the opportunity to help others. Results also suggested a positive relationship between the quantity of received supervision and a counselor's job satisfaction. More specifically, Evans and Hohenshil found that four of the ten clinical

supervision variables predicted 26% of the variance in job satisfaction. These variables included, the clinical supervisor's degree level, the length of time the supervisor had been a clinical supervisor, whether or not the respondent's administrative supervisor also acted as the clinical supervisor, and the number of hours per week spent with the clinical supervisor.

Psychiatric Workers

Martin and Schinke (1998) studied psychiatric workers servicing adults and social workers and caseworkers providing services to families and children (family/children workers) from seven social services organizations. Researchers utilized the MSQ (Weiss, et al., 1967), the Staff Burnout Scale for Health Professionals (Jones, 1980), and the Maslach Burnout Scale (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Results of the study indicated that job satisfaction was positively influenced by job feedback. Although participants were satisfied with the amount of praise received from supervisors, they were reportedly dissatisfied with advancement opportunities and salary levels. Specifically, 48% of psychiatric workers and 81 % of family/children workers reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with compensation. A reported 27% of all participants had high levels of job satisfaction and 15% planned to leave their jobs within one year. Researchers found salary, burnout, tenure, and job satisfaction levels to be likely correlates of probable turnover. Findings from this study, along with the conclusions found by Evans and Hohenshil (1997), suggested that although counselors report overall job satisfaction, factors contributing to dissatisfaction, such as promotion opportunities and salary, may be contributing to turnover rates in the field of counseling.

Clinical Psychologists

Walfish, Moritz, and Stenmark (1991) conducted an eight-year follow-up study on graduates from a clinical psychology doctoral program, investigating career choice satisfaction. Using surveys with a six-point Likert scale, respondents rated their satisfaction with their graduate training experience and careers as professional psychologists. Results were consistent with their initial study (Walfish, Polifka, & Stenmark, 1985), finding 89.4% of participants indicating that they would still make the same career choice in clinical psychology. Walfish, however, disclosed that half of his participants work in a private practice setting and perhaps the highest level of job satisfaction for clinical psychologists is found in this particular setting (Walfish & Coovert, 1989). While results of this longitudinal study do offer some important conclusions for job satisfaction in the field of clinical psychology, questions may arise as to whether or not such high levels of career choice satisfaction could be reproduced by psychologists or counselors working within an academic environment.

School Psychologists

Interest in the job satisfaction of school psychologists has increased over the past decade. Such research has broadened to include extensive national studies (Anderson, Hohenshil, & Brown, 1984; Brown et al., 1998) as well as to include studies on a more localized or state concentrated area (Huebner, 1994; Levinson, 1990; Levinson, 1991; Levinson et al., 1988; Solly and Hohenshil, 1986). A recent study conducted by Brown et al. investigated the satisfaction level of practicing school psychologists across the nation. Researchers collected job satisfaction data with a modified form of the MSQ. Conclusions were relatively consistent with those found by a previous study ten years

earlier (Anderson et al., 1984), finding 86% of the psychologists surveyed to be satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs, while only 14% indicated a dissatisfaction with their current occupation. The study also found that 73.2% of the subjects planned to remain at their present job for at least five years, while an impressive 91.1% intended to remain in the field of school psychology.

While a majority of findings indicate that school psychologists are overall generally satisfied with their jobs (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998; Rhodes, 1993; Solly & Hohenshil, 1986), a few specific areas of dissatisfaction consistently surface throughout the literature. Specific areas of dissatisfaction amongst school psychologists include the implementation of the school system's policies and the limited advancement opportunities for helping professionals working within a school setting (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998; Levinson, 1991; Solly & Hohenshil, 1986). Other factors that may contribute to the dissatisfaction of school psychologists include role functions (Levinson, 1990), salary, supervision, regional differences (Solly & Hohenshil, 1986), a lack of membership to a professional organization (Levinson et al., 1988), and size of the school district (Levinson, 1991).

Using a demographic data form and the MSQ, investigators studied the relationship between job satisfaction and role functioning among Pennsylvania school psychologists (Levinson, 1990). Results revealed that psychologists would prefer to spend more time in the roles of consultation, counseling, and research, than in assessment. Solly and Hohenshil (1986) surveyed practicing school psychologists in West Virginia using a modified form of the MSQ. Sixty-five percent of participants reported they were generally satisfied with their jobs, while 35.8% of respondents

experienced job dissatisfaction. Areas of dissatisfaction included salary, supervision, and school system's policies and practices. Researchers claimed the "sources of dissatisfaction suggest a basic discordance between school psychologists and the setting in which they work" (Solly & Hohenshil, 1986, p. 124). Results supported the notion that discrepancies between supervisor and worker backgrounds often leads to a variety of problems, such as unrealistic expectations placed upon the worker and conflicts in role definitions and professional ethics. Such incongruence also leads to lower levels of job performance and satisfaction. These sources of job dissatisfaction were similar to those found in a national study by Anderson et al. (1984). Overall dissatisfaction between studies, however, was twice as great in Solly and Hohenshil's sample of psychologists working within a rural school district. Investigators proposed the possibility of regional differences accounting for the higher rates, and suggested rural districts may negatively influence job satisfaction levels (Solly & Hohenshil, 1986).

In an investigation of school system policies and practices and advancement opportunities, Levinson (1991) surveyed Pennsylvania school psychologists using a modified form of the MSQ and a demographic data form. Results found that psychologists working within districts employing larger numbers of psychologists were more dissatisfied with the school system's advancement opportunities and policies and practices. In comparison with smaller districts, the researcher suggested that districts with more psychologists might also have increased bureaucracy and policies governing psychologists, along with increased competition for advancement opportunities.

Although research suggests that school psychologists may be overall satisfied with their jobs, these findings provide some insight into specific areas of dissatisfaction

for school psychologists that may also hold true for school counselors. Wiggins (1984) noted, “a review of all American Psychological Association and American Association for Counseling and Development journals, in addition to the Journal of Vocational Behavior, revealed no studies of job satisfaction of school counselors during the past 5 years” (p. 169). Literature searches using PsycINFO/PsycARTICLE/Dissertation Abstracts Online/ERIC from FirstSearch using search parameters “Job Satisfaction”, “School Counseling” between 1993-2005 indicated only nine articles or dissertations written on job satisfaction of school counselors. As a result of such limited research on the topic of school counselor job satisfaction, Wiggins noted that it is “...necessary to generalize from studies with other occupational groups in drawing references...” (p. 169).

Based on the findings of this literature review, evidence supports the importance of job satisfaction in the field of human services. Because job satisfaction research is more available for counselors working in environments outside of the school system, these studies may provide some insight as to which factors may also influence the career satisfaction of professional school counselors. Such generalizations between counselors working in a mental health setting and those working within a school, however, should be made with caution. Differing responsibilities and environments may affect results, which cannot be assumed true for counselors in all settings.

Job Satisfaction of Professional School Counselors

Despite the increase in attention dedicated to the job satisfaction of school psychologists, relatively little information is available linking job satisfaction specifically to professional school counselors (DeMato, 2001; Murray, 1995). Of the research that is

available, the majority of studies on school counselor job satisfaction has predominately investigated the satisfaction of secondary counselors, with fewer studies focusing on the satisfaction of counselors working within elementary or middle schools (Murray, 1995). Administrative policies and role conflict (DeMato, 2001; Kirk, 1990; Murray, 1995) and stress and burnout (DeMato, 2001; Murray, 1995) are factors frequently associated with school counselor job satisfaction.

Hanson (1967) conducted one of the earliest studies on overall school counselor job satisfaction. In his study of primary school counselors in the state of New York, Hanson investigated the relationship between job activities, as determined by a counselor activity inventory, and job satisfaction. Hanson predicted that such information could benefit new counselors in the evaluation of themselves and a particular position prior to starting a new job. Additionally, Hanson predicted that administrators could improve the functions of their programs and avoid turnover rates if they knew which activities caused increased or decreased levels of counselor job satisfaction. Results of his study found several activities significantly related to job satisfaction, including participation in professional organizations, implementing group guidance services to students, providing students with guidance services, and maintaining staff relationships and community agency contacts. In contrast, clerical duties, such as the maintenance of cumulative records, were negatively related to job satisfaction. Results also indicated that women were more satisfied with their jobs than men. Hanson predicted that women counselors have more interests in home and family and therefore, may be more satisfied with their positions as school counselors. On the other hand, male counselors may be more personally involved at work and less satisfied with their status. Finally, Hanson also

found a negative correlation between the number of students assigned to each counselor and job satisfaction. As the counselor/student ratio increased, job satisfaction decreased.

Using Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory (1968), Morgan (1978) studied the job satisfaction of 160 secondary school counselors in Missouri. As theorized by Herzberg, intrinsic factors associated directly with the job, such as counseling, advising, and student advocacy provided the greatest sources of participant job satisfaction, while hygiene factors led to job dissatisfaction and included working conditions and administrative policies. Advancement, status, system efficiency, personal life, and relationship with subordinates, however, were not determinants of job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction and therefore, failed to support the motivator-hygiene theory. Two years following Morgan's study, Page (1980) also applied Herzberg's two-factor theory in his investigation of 45 secondary school counselors in Connecticut. Through employee interviews, Page identified three significant motivators of achievement, recognition, and the work itself. He also found the three hygiene factors, administration and policy, working with parents, and perceptions of counselor roles, contributing to job dissatisfaction.

Wiggins (1984) studied the relationship between school counselor job satisfaction and personality and demographic variables. Job satisfaction was assessed using the Task-Hygiene Job Satisfaction Blank (THJSB) (Wiggins, 1983) and participants included 123 randomly selected counselors from Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. For the basis of his research, the researcher used Holland's (1973) structural theory of person-environment interaction, and hypothesized that differentiation and congruence would correlate significantly with job satisfaction. Differentiated respondents were

described as those individuals who had a clear and predictable idea of how they wanted to interact with the environment and typically rejected other approaches. Congruent participants had a fit between personality and environment. Based on THJSB scores, participants were divided into three groups of high, medium, and low, according to job satisfaction levels. Results revealed that counselors with high and medium levels of job satisfaction typically held jobs well suited with their personalities, while counselors expressing low levels of job satisfaction were working in incongruent environments. Such findings supported both hypotheses and therefore, also supported the Holland theory of person-environment interaction. In addition, Wiggins (1984) claimed counselors are "...quite likely to look at an occupation in terms of being able to use their preferred approaches to their work" (p. 176) and dissatisfied counselors may simply be the result of a mismatch between personality and environment. In future job satisfaction studies, Wiggins (1984) recommended researchers emphasize factors other than benefits, salary, and external working conditions.

Three years later, Morgan (1987) studied a random sample of 686 primary, middle, and secondary school counselors, who were also members of American School Counselor Association (ASCA). The researcher used the MSQ and a personal and employment data form to assess job satisfaction and demographic variables. Results of the study showed respondents moderately satisfied in their current positions, with elementary and middle school counselors reporting higher levels of satisfaction than those counselors working in a high school setting. Predictors of job satisfaction were job challenge, job expectations, and how prepared the counselor felt as a result of their

training. School counselors, however, communicated concerns regarding excessive, conflicting, and ambiguous roles.

Gade and Houdek (1993) compared the job satisfaction and functions of counselors working with one school and counselors working with split school assignments. Researchers surveyed 132 North Dakota school counselors using the Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank (Hoppock, 1935), a demographic questionnaire, and an activities and job satisfaction questionnaire. In comparison to those counselors serving a single school, participants working in more than one school appeared to spend significantly more time in classroom guidance, counseling parents, and research and evaluation activities. In addition, these counselors were less satisfied with leadership activities and their jobs in general. Specifically, 53.2% of split school counselors were overall satisfied with their jobs and 78% of counselors working within one school were satisfied with their jobs. In conclusion, researchers summarized that although budget constraints may force more counselors in the future to work between schools, such a position can be less satisfying and more time consuming for the employee.

Role Conflict

Coll and Freeman (1997) described role conflict as a feeling of being pulled and pushed in multiple directions from a variety of authorities. Ibrahim, Helms, and Thompson (1983) compared the importance of counselor functions as rated by administrators, parents, business members in the community, and school counselors. On 21 of the 37 functions under study, researchers found significant differences between rating groups. Parents and business members valued educational and occupational planning as more important than administrators and counselors, who rated counseling

services, helping parents, and public relations as more important. According to Herr (2001), the school counselor's struggle with conflicting expectations, demands, and role activities, may be due in part to the history and evolution of the comprehensive guidance program. Davis (2005) noted, "the one constant throughout the history and development of the school counselor role is that counseling responds to the trends and needs of society" (p. 17).

Guidance and counseling was first introduced in the early 1900's as vocational guidance. The primary role of the educational system at that time was to help students become productive workers. In response to this goal, the school counselor's role was to help students find jobs. By the mid-1900's, Carl Rogers and Sigmund Freud captured considerable public attention, and the notion of students receiving counseling services in addition to vocational guidance from their school counselors was introduced. During this period, the passage of the National Defense Educational Act of 1958 (NDEA) also had considerable influence over the role of school counselors. In response to the launch of Sputnik, the United States wanted to better prepare students for a competitive society and therefore, expanded provisions for the training of school counselors and an increase in school counselor positions. By the 1960's, the NDEA made federal funding available to elementary and secondary schools.

According to Gysbers and Henderson (2000), school guidance and counseling programs were traditionally organized using a position-oriented approach. With this approach, school counselors worked alone in a school building to identify and provide services to students as typically assigned by principals (Gysbers, Lapan, & Jones, 2000). By the 1970's, the idea of guidance and counseling as a comprehensive program started

to appear and the counselor's role expanded to also include collaboration with other school counselors in the district. Instead of working in isolation, counselors began to work collaboratively as part of the total education program (Hatch & Bowers, 2002). According to Gysbers and Henderson, this reorientation emerged in response to a renewed interest in vocational-career guidance and developmental guidance, concern regarding evaluation and accountability, and concern for the effectiveness of the position approach to guidance in schools. Less than three decades following their introduction, Sink and MacDonald (1998) noted that the majority of schools across the country are organizing and managing their school counseling programs using the comprehensive guidance and counseling program approach.

As counseling in the schools has evolved from vocational counseling to the comprehensive guidance and counseling program approach, the focus of how counseling in the schools is practiced and organized has changed. Gysbers et al. (2000) studied the ways in which school board policies across the nation have kept up with these changes. Their results identified seven state associations without policies in place for guidance. Of the 24 state associations who responded to the survey, Gysbers et al. found a wide variation in the policies and practices of school counselors. These researchers also stated that policies were written in such a manner as to "...marginalize guidance in the schools, thus reducing the impact guidance and counseling can have on student development" (Gysbers et al., 2000, p. 352). If school policies do not have clearly defined expectations, then this ambiguity may certainly impact the practicing school counselor's role confusion.

In 1997, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) established national standards for comprehensive school counseling programs and recommended that programs serve all students in three specific areas of development, including career planning, academic achievement, and personal and social development (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). The standards define and serve as the foundation for comprehensive school guidance and counseling programs. In addition, each of the three domains contains specific objectives for students to achieve and competencies exemplifying how these objectives will be met. Bowers, Hatch, and Schwallie-Giddis (2001) described these national standards as "...the single most legitimizing document in the history of the profession" (p. 17). Most recently, ASCA (2003) also developed the ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs to serve as a national guideline for schools as they create and implement effective comprehensive school counseling programs. The model contains the four essential elements of foundation, delivery, management, and accountability.

Despite the recent progress made toward unifying school counseling programs throughout the nation, research on the roles of school counselors suggests that job descriptions are conflicting and demanding (Coll & Freeman, 1997; DeMato & Curcio, 2004; Hardesty & Dillard, 1994; Thompson & Powers, 1983). Counselors working within school systems are often faced with a variety of expectations from administrators, teachers, and parents and at times, these demands conflict with the goals of the school counselor. In fact, a variety of the student services that school counselors would choose to perform have often been compromised due to these conflicting expectations from various groups (Coll & Freeman, 1997). Poppen and Thompson (1974) even raised the

question as to the ability of school counselors to serve students, the school system, and parents and still carry on as professionals.

Thompson and Powers (1983) attempted to determine the relationship between role ambiguity and role conflict to job satisfaction, tension, and the propensity to leave a job. Role conflict was defined as two or more role pressures occurring at the same time in such a manner that compliance with one would make it difficult to fulfill another (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Role ambiguity was defined as a partial message regarding a desired role, where information needed to carry out a job is incomplete or not available. Researchers studied 487 Arizona secondary school counselors and found a correlation between variables, suggesting that increased role conflict and role ambiguity were associated with decreased job satisfaction.

In a similar study, Duffus (1996) explored the relationships between role conflict, role ambiguity, and job satisfaction of 166 school counselors across all grade levels K-12 from an urban district. Overall, results revealed that role conflict was negatively related to job satisfaction. Duffus reported the significant relationship found between job satisfaction and role conflict for elementary school counselors was the most evident finding. Across all grade levels, there were no significant differences among role conflict, role ambiguity, job satisfaction, and demographic variables. Violanti (2003) studied the nature and extent to which school counselors were experiencing role conflict and role ambiguity in elementary and secondary school counselors in Nevada. The extent to which these variables affected the overall job satisfaction for school counselors was also examined. Results indicated a negative correlation between job satisfaction and role conflict and role ambiguity, whereby as job satisfaction increased, role conflict and

ambiguity decreased for both elementary and secondary school counselors. Based on voluntary comments made by participants, Violanti also reported that elementary school counselors had concerns regarding supervision and colleagues, while middle and high school counselors expressed concern in the areas of paperwork and clerical duties.

Role conflict for school counselors also exists between grade levels. For example, Howard (1989) conducted one of the first investigations comparing the roles of elementary and secondary school counselors. Using a counselor role questionnaire, Howard examined the relationship between how counselors believe they spend their time with how they feel they should be spending their time. Surveys were mailed to 28 schools in Texas and findings showed that counselors at the elementary and secondary levels allocated and prioritized their time differently. Although counselors at both elementary and secondary levels reported spending the majority of their time counseling students about personal concerns, the importance of other activities differed between grade levels. For example, elementary counselors rated classroom guidance as the third most important activity, while secondary counselors rated career counseling as the third most critical activity.

Hardesty and Dillard (1994), however, pointed out major flaws in Howard's study, which may have affected findings. According to researchers (Hardesty & Dillard, 1994) the most serious compromise in Howard's (1989) study was in the inclusion of middle school counselors with the elementary group and the inclusion of junior high counselors into the secondary group. Five years later, Hardesty and Dillard conducted their own investigation of roles between 369 elementary, middle, and secondary school counselors in Kentucky. School counselors were studied using a questionnaire

specifically developed by the researchers to gather information regarding counselors' activities in school. Results indicated that individual counseling activities were consistent between grade levels, yet differences occurred in regard to consultation and administrator-like activities. Elementary school counselors reported more coordination and consultation as compared to middle and secondary school counselors who reported more administrative type activities. Researchers suggested that school counselors working with higher-grade levels perform more like administrators than do counselors working within elementary schools.

Coll and Freeman (1997) also studied role conflict and self-perceptions of role conflict for elementary, middle, and secondary school counselors. Over 2, 500 participants of the study were randomly selected from a population of school counselors who were members of the American School Counselor Association. Results of their study indicated that although school counselors generally experienced some role conflict, especially in the areas of role overload and incongruency, elementary school counselors report an even higher degree of role conflict, particularly in resource and structural conflict, than their coworkers in middle and secondary schools. Specifically, elementary counselors reported higher degrees of working on unnecessary tasks and being asked to do things that should be done differently. According to the authors, this finding of resource and structural conflict implies that elementary school counselors are confronted with a variety of barriers, such as politics, authority figures, and inadequate funds that hinder the ability to complete required responsibilities. Coll and Freeman suggested the increased role conflict for elementary school counselors versus counselors working in a secondary school setting might be due to the recent emergence in elementary guidance

programs and the possibility of counselors at this level being viewed as expendable in a time of tight budget constraints.

DeMato and Curcio (2004) noted that over half of the elementary school counselors surveyed in a previous study (DeMato, 2001), felt they were providing services in areas in which they would prefer to devote less time. One participant in particular made a comment in reference to the service of counseling students on a one-to-one basis as a last priority (DeMato & Curcio, 2004). In light of these findings, Demato and Curcio concluded that "...non-guidance duties need to be re-evaluated by school administrators and reassigned to appropriate employees" (p. 243).

Stress and Burnout

Researchers have often studied the influences of stress and burnout on job satisfaction (Farber & Heifetz, 1981; Huebner & Mills, 1994; Leiter & Meechan, 1986; Pugliesi, 1999; Spector, 1997). Schultz (1982) claimed, "someone who is dissatisfied with his or her job may become ill from stress, whereas, someone else in the same job whose job satisfaction is high may show no effects of stress" (p. 442). A variety of factors are associated with causing stress and burnout in the field of school counseling. Farber and Heifetz identified several specific factors contributing to stress which include the close involvement in the lives of others, working in seclusion, an increase in bureaucracy and paperwork, increased workloads, and an inability to share concerns with coworkers due to confidentiality issues.

Pugliesi (1999) examined the consequences of emotional labor on work stress, well-being, and job satisfaction. Emotional labor was defined as the performance of an employee providing various forms of emotional management in exchange for payment

(Pugliesi, 1999). Questionnaires developed by the researcher were mailed to all employees in a mid-size public university within the United States. Findings suggested that emotional labor results in several consequences for the worker and affects job stress, job satisfaction, and general distress. Specifically, results indicated that work involving the changing of one's own feelings or the feelings of someone else, increases job stress, while decreasing job satisfaction and increasing psychological distress. In addition, Pugliesi noted a positive correlation between job demands with distress and job stress, and a negative correlation between demands and job satisfaction.

Through a survey, Olson (1986) asked counselors, teachers, parents, students, and principals in Wisconsin to rate functions of the school counselor in order of personal importance. Although findings indicated some degree of consensus between varying groups, Olson and Dilley (1988) concluded that the mere number of demands placed on school counselors from a variety of individuals was a source of stress. Olson and Dilley cited an example of how increased suicide rates among adolescents over the past decade have resulted in a need for counselors within the school to develop suicide prevention programs. In light of this added role for the school counselor, however, researchers pointed out the reality that other roles have not decreased in order to create time for counselors' involvement in new programs. In conclusion, Olson and Dilley claimed, "there is now substantial evidence to support counselor assertions that they cannot meet all of the old demands placed on them" (p. 196). They describe this inability to meet demands as a clear source of stress and as a result, "...the mental health and quality of work of counselors is adversely affected" (p. 197).

Kendrick, Chandler, and Hatcher (1994) conducted a study on school counselors with respect to stressors and job demands. Participants completed a survey developed by Kendrick et al. and included 176 counselors working at the elementary, middle, and secondary school levels in seven urban and rural North Carolina school districts. Survey questions asked for information regarding the counselor's three most significant stressors experienced during the previous year and degree of involvement in mental health related duties. Findings implied that most of the counselors felt the job demands were too great and at times were frequently involved in mental health related tasks. Additionally, researchers described the role of professional school counselors at all levels as inherently stressful. Although authors disclosed that conclusions drawn from this study should be made with caution, due to the small number of participants and the limited geographical region, Kendrick et al. suspected that similar results may be reproduced in other locations.

Research has linked stress with burnout and the combination of these two factors is associated with depleted energy levels in counselors and an increased probability of leaving the counseling occupation (Watkins, 1983). Hall, Gardner, Perl, Stickney, & Phefferbaum (1979) defined burnout as a "...failing, wearing-out, or becoming exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources" (p. 12). Spector (1997) defined burnout as a "distressed emotional/psychological state experienced on the job" (p. 65). He further described job satisfaction as an attitudinal response, in comparison to burnout, which instead is an emotional response to the job. Burnout can result in an alteration of an individual's cognitive style, such as a change from a once tolerant individual to someone who is intolerant (Watkins, 1983). According to Freudenberger

and Robbins (1979), burnout is a "...devastating and predictable condition..." which includes many painful symptoms such as loneliness, depression, and an inability to relate to friends, family members, and patients (p. 275). Other symptoms include an increase in risk-taking behaviors (Hall et al., 1979), absenteeism (Watkins, 1983), and a decrease in work productivity (Potter, 1980) In addition, an extreme loss in energy and enthusiasm (Watkins, 1983) and an increase in susceptibility to illness (Freudenberger, 1974) are physical symptoms associated with burnout. Watkins described burnout as, "...a debilitating syndrome that can have serious effects on personal functioning" (p. 306).

Despite a lack of a consistent or standard definition of burnout, researchers have noted an underlying consensus regarding three core dimensions of the burnout experience (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001), which has resulted in a multidimensional theory of burnout (Maslach, 1982). According to Maslach et al., "burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy" (p. 397). Maslach et al. also suggested that although the specific nature of the relation between job satisfaction and burnout is unclear, there is no doubt that two constructs are obviously linked. What is clear, however, is that burnout is a serious problem in the workplace and is responsible for the downsizing and reconstructing of companies, along with workers feeling "...stressed, insecure, misunderstood, undervalued and alienated" (Maslach & Leiter, 1999, p. 50).

Huebner and Mills (1994) conducted a study on the relationship between burnout levels, personality characteristics, and role expectations of school psychologists. A sample of 99 South Carolina school psychologists reported high levels of burnout and

personality variables were more significantly related to burnout than demographic variables and working conditions. Researchers also noted that high levels of burnout were associated with high levels of competitiveness and dissatisfaction with professional roles. Through a survey of 300 school counselors, Cummings and Nall (1983) studied the relationship between perceived burnout levels and counselors' perceptions of school leadership style, the job, clients, and themselves. Results indicated that school counselors associated more negative meaning to their jobs, clients, and themselves as personal burnout levels increased.

Administrative Policies and Practices

The policies and practices of the administration have tremendous influence over the work environment of professional school counselors. Morgan (1978) defined administrative practices and policies with such terminology as school management, organization and personnel communication, and lines of authority. In reference to school psychologists, Solly and Hohenshil (1986) described the dissatisfaction with school system policies and practices as a reflection of an "...inherent philosophical conflict..." (p. 124) between workers and public school systems.

Herzberg et al. (1957) claimed that above the level of immediate supervision, administrative policies encompass the relationships between the worker with all superiors in the company. The relationship between counselors and their principals is an important determinant of the overall effectiveness of the school guidance and counseling program. Ponec and Brock (2000) investigated this relationship between counselors and principals through shadowing experiences and semi-structured personal interviews. Their results suggested that effective guidance programs are based on the four important components

of consistent communication, mutual trust, support for complementary roles of each professional, and clearly defined counselor roles.

Past studies have linked administrative policies with job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among professional school counselors (DeMato, 2001; Kirk, 1990; Morgan, 1978; Murray, 1995). Findings in studies by Kirk, Murray, and DeMato on elementary school counselor job satisfaction found school policies as one out of three areas of least satisfaction. Specifically, on a modified version of the MSQ, respondents in the first two studies ranked policies and practices 18th out of 20, whereby a rating of 20 indicated an area of least satisfaction and a rating of 1 represented an area of most satisfaction. Kirk suggested this ranking may have been a result of the inability of elementary school counselors to fulfill the roles they were trained to perform due to the school system policies and practices. In DeMato's follow up study, participants ranked school system policies and practices as the 19th item out of 20.

Professional Middle School Counselors

Along with obstacles experienced by professional school counselors on any grade level, middle school counselors are faced with additional challenges of providing services to a unique population of ever-changing young adolescents. Unks (1983) noted the psychological problems of middle school level students that predispose them to act in a manner that baffles adults. McGee and Fauble-Erickson (1995) claimed that such problems are part of the natural process of maturation and can be treated, but not prevented. According to Gerler (1992), there are four specific challenges experienced by middle school students: (a) forming new and less dependent relationships with family members (b) intense peer pressures to experiment with alcohol and drugs (c) physical

changes that influence social and emotional growth and (d) developing new ideas that frequently challenge childhood beliefs and values.

Johnson and Kottman (1992) stated that there is a general consensus between authorities that educational and counseling programs should meet developmental needs of students. On the middle school level, this task is further complicated by the transitional nature of young adolescents. Professional school counselors working with students between the ages of 11 and 14 must have a thorough understanding of the distinct factors characterizing each age group and build a program accordingly (Johnson & Kottman; Kottman, 1992; McGee & Fauble-Erickson, 1995). For example, small group counseling is more beneficial for eleven-year-old students than counseling in an individual or large group setting (Johnson & Kottman, 1992). At twelve years of age, however, adolescents have an increased awareness of self and more often make comparisons between themselves and others. This age group also has a desire to plan ahead for high school. Based on such characteristics, middle school counselors should devote more time to individual counseling with twelve-year old students (Johnson & Kottman, 1992). Kottman also stressed the importance of middle school counselors developing active and interactive methods for counseling young adolescents. According to Kottman, traditional talk therapy may be too passive for students in middle school. Students of this age may be reluctant to experience or express threatening emotions (Rosenthal, 1971). Instead, Kottman suggested that middle school counselors incorporate games, stories, metaphors, and role-plays.

In addition to the challenging characteristics of the middle school student and the imperative task of implementing a developmental counseling program to address

these concerns, research on the effectiveness of middle school counseling programs is scarce (St. Clair, 1989). Based on a meta-analysis of school counseling outcome research, Whiston and Sexton (1998) revealed only 50 studies published on the outcome of school counseling programs between 1988 and 1995. Authors further noted that if school counseling activities are going to have a substantial empirical basis then researchers need to increase their interest in studying this area.

According to Wilson (1985), the majority of school counseling research is conducted at the elementary school level. Wilson explained this difference as being due to the higher pressures secondary school counselors feel to fulfill administrative roles as compared to those counselors working in elementary schools, leaving little time for additional activities which may be seen as distractions. St. Clair (1989) also pointed out the greater possibility for elementary school counselors, versus counselors working in middle or high schools, to personally create and define their own role descriptions and therefore, have the increased chance of including the role of a researcher. Whiston and Sexton (1998) supported this claim by stating that although research on counseling programs exists for all levels, more studies are available at the elementary and high school levels. In addition, these authors suggested that more studies examining interventions with middle school students would be beneficial. Whether middle school counselors simply do not view their roles as that of a researcher or whether the research process holds too many obstacles, a review of the literature "...revealed that middle school counselors have not responded to the challenge to do the research" (St. Clair, 1989, p. 220).

Virginia Professional Elementary School Counselors

Research conducted on counselors employed by Virginia elementary schools may provide some other information as to the potential job satisfaction of school counselors. During the past 17 years, three studies examined the job satisfaction of elementary school counselors in Virginia using a modified version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). Kirk (1990) discovered 82.04% of 273 counselors satisfied with their jobs, while 11.35% were very satisfied. Respondents were satisfied with all 20 scales of the modified MSQ. Seven years later, Murray (1995) found 96.3% of 488 counselors as either satisfied or very satisfied. Results determined the respondents were only dissatisfied with the amount of compensation received for the amount of work performed. Thirteen years following the original study, DeMato (2001) found 90.9% of 301 elementary counselors overall satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs. Results also indicated that participants were dissatisfied in the MSQ scale of compensation. In all three studies, six areas represented the most satisfaction. These areas included social service, ability utilization, moral values, variety, activity, and creativity (DeMato, 2001). The three least satisfying MSQ scales for each study included compensation, advancement opportunities, and policies and practices. These areas of least satisfaction were similar to those found in a previous study of school psychologists by Anderson et al. (1984).

Summary

The purpose of this second chapter was to review the literature on job satisfaction and professional school counseling. An historical overview on job satisfaction was provided along with the review of several prominent job satisfaction theories, including

both content theories and process theories. In addition, this analysis of the literature included determinants and measurements of job satisfaction. Specifically, job satisfaction as it pertains to mental health workers and professional school counselors was also examined.

This review of the literature indicates that a variety of theories, variables, and measurements are used in an attempt to explain and understand the complex construct of job satisfaction for a variety of disciplines. Despite this effort, however, relatively little information is available on the job satisfaction of professional school counselors in particular. Three studies on the job satisfaction of elementary school counselors working in Virginia found six consistent job dimensions representing most satisfaction, which included social service, ability utilization, moral values, variety, activity, and creativity and three least satisfying job dimensions of compensation, advancement opportunities, and policies and practices. Results of these studies also suggested the majority of elementary counselors in this region are overall satisfied with their positions. Research, however, has not yet determined if these findings are similar for Virginia counselors working at the middle school level.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the current level of job satisfaction for professional school counselors practicing in Virginia middle schools. In addition, this study compared the levels of job satisfaction with particular work and demographic variables. The research design of this study was descriptive. Descriptive statistics are used when the primary purpose of the study is to describe a set of data (Howell, 2002) and acquire information concerning the status of phenomena (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, 1990). Chapter three presents the methodological procedures and strategies used, including research questions, sampling and survey procedures, and the statistical techniques implemented to analyze data.

Research Questions

The procedures described in this chapter were designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the overall job satisfaction level of Virginia middle school counselors?
2. What degree of job satisfaction is expressed by Virginia middle school counselors in regard to each of the 20 dimensions of job satisfaction as measured by a modified version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss et al., 1967)?
3. What is the relationship between selected demographic variables and work setting characteristics with the overall job satisfaction of middle school counselors in Virginia?

4. How does the level of job satisfaction of Virginia middle school counselors compare with the level of job satisfaction for Virginia elementary school counselors in 1990, 1995, and 2001?
5. Does the current political and social climate of the public educational system affect middle school counselors' feelings regarding their jobs and performance?

Participants

Participants selected for this study were all working as professional school counselors in Virginia middle schools. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) identified 304 middle schools in Virginia and 150 schools were randomly selected for participation in the study. Survey packets were mailed to each of the school counselors working in a chosen school, creating a total of 400 total participants.

Instrumentation

Each participant was asked to complete and return by mail an Individual Information Form (IIF) and a modified version of the MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967). Results of this study were drawn on the basis of participant responses to these two instruments. A copy of the IIF is presented in Appendix A.

Individual Information Form

The IIF was used to gather demographic information pertaining to the counselor's gender and age. In addition, participants reported information on past experience, educational background, licensure status, and current counseling position in regard to contract length, salary, number of co-workers, role of testing coordinator, caseload, number of students receiving free or reduced lunch, clinical supervision, intent to remain

in position and profession, and interest in changing to an administrative position. Open-ended questions regarding the current political and social climate of the public educational system were also included on the IFF. Lastly, individuals were asked to indicate an overall level of job satisfaction as Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Dissatisfied, or Very Dissatisfied. These personal and demographic/work setting characteristics were used in determining levels of overall job satisfaction and satisfaction in relation to selected demographic and work setting characteristics.

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)

The MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) is a popular instrument used in the assessment of job satisfaction (Spector, 1997). This instrument was originally developed as part of The Minnesota Studies in Vocational Rehabilitation, otherwise known as the Work Adjustment Project, in 1964 and later revised with in 1977. Weiss et al. developed the MSQ to assess overall job satisfaction levels and satisfaction levels for 20 dimensions of the work environment. Spector (1997) noted that the long form of the MSQ , “...contains facets that are more specific than most other scales and covers the nature of work very thoroughly” (p. 17). These MSQ scales, measuring 20 job dimensions, include the following (Weiss et al., 1967):

1. Ability Utilization: The chance to use personal abilities.
2. Achievement: The feeling of accomplishment from working in the job.
3. Activity: The ability to stay continuously busy on the job.
4. Advancement: The possibilities for advancement on the job.
5. Authority: The opportunities to tell others what to do.

6. System Policies and Practices: The manner in which system policies are put into practice.
7. Compensation: Feelings about pay with respect to the amount of work completed.
8. Co-workers: The way one gets along with fellow co-workers.
9. Creativity: The chance to try one's own methods of doing the work.
10. Independence: The opportunity to work alone on the job.
11. Moral Values: The opportunity to do things that do not go against one's own conscience.
12. Recognition: The praise received for doing a good job.
13. Responsibility: The freedom to use one's personal judgment.
14. Security: The way a job provides steady employment.
15. Social Service: The opportunity to do things for others.
16. Social Status: Being respected by the community.
17. Supervision-Human Relations: The relationship between employees and their bosses.
18. Supervision-Technical: The supervisor's competence in making decisions.
19. Variety: The chance to do things differently.
20. Working Conditions: The physical conditions of the occupational setting.

The long version of the MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) is self-administered in approximately 15-20 minutes and contains five items for each of the 20 job dimensions creating a total of 100 items. Each item has five possible responses ranging from Very Dissatisfied to Very Satisfied. Response options are assigned a weighted score with Very

Dissatisfied having a value of one and Very Satisfied having a value of five. The MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) yields a total of 21 scores consisting of one score from each of the 20 scales and one score of overall satisfaction. Scores for the 20 MSQ scales are composed by summing the weighted scores for each of the five items per job dimension. The overall job satisfaction index is derived by summing scores from 20 items, one question from each of the 20 scales. In order to convert scores to percentiles, the MSQ provides norms for 25 occupations categorized into five groups of professional/technical/managerial, clerical and sales, service, bench work, and miscellaneous (Weiss et al., 1967). Scores from individuals working in different occupational groups may be converted into percentiles using the Employee Disabled or Employee Non-disabled norms (Weiss et al., 1967).

Reliability

The MSQ was found to be a reliable measure of satisfaction based on internal consistency and stability measurements (Weiss et al., 1967). Hoyt reliability coefficients for the MSQ scales ranged from a high of .97 for ability utilization of typists and stenographers to a low of .59 on variety for buyers. Of the 567 reported Hoyt reliability coefficients, less than 3% were lower than .70 and 83% were .80 or higher. Such results indicate that MSQ scores have sufficient internal consistency reliabilities. Scores testing the stability on the MSQ scales were obtained at one week and one year intervals. Correlation coefficients for test-retest stability of the one-week interval ranged from .66 for co-workers to .91 for working conditions, while ranges for the one-year interval ranged from .35 for independence to .71 for ability utilization. The one-week interval had a median coefficient of .83 for the 20 job dimension scales and a .89 stability coefficient

for the general satisfaction scale. The one-year interval had a median coefficient of .61 for the 20 job dimension scales and a .70 for the general satisfaction scale.

Validity

Construct validation is concerned with the extent to which a test accurately measures an unobservable and theoretical concept (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). Evidence supporting construct validation for the MSQ was obtained indirectly from validation studies conducted on the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ) which is based on the theory of work adjustment (Weiss et al., 1967). Specifically, researchers hypothesized that satisfaction was a function of the correspondence between the job's reinforcer system and the needs of the individual. According to Weiss et al., analysis of the data indicated a relationship between need and reinforcement correspondence on seven of the sixteen MSQ scales. Construct validity of the MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) as a measure of general job satisfaction was derived from another study, whereby satisfaction was found to be a linear function of needs when reinforcement was assumed constant because participants worked in the same kind of job. Based on these combined studies, Weiss et al. reported that the MSQ measures satisfaction according to expectations of the theory of work adjustment. Concurrent validity for the MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) was determined through the study of group differences in satisfaction. The analysis of data for 25 occupational groups indicated group differences were statistically significant for means and variances on all 21 MSQ scales at .001 levels (Weiss et al., 1967).

Modified Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire

In this study, the long version of the MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) was used as modified by Kirk (1990), Murray (1995), and DeMato (2001) in their study of Virginia

elementary school counselor job satisfaction. Anderson, et al. (1984) originally developed this modified version of the MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) to make the wording more applicable to professionals working in a school setting, reduce sexist language, and to simplify interpretation. The neutral (N) response option was eliminated for each question, leaving the four choices of Very Dissatisfied (VDS), Dissatisfied (DS), Satisfied (S), or Very Satisfied (VS). The response options, VDS, DS, S, and VS, were assigned ordinal weights respectively of 1, 2, 3, and 4. Twenty scale scores were derived by summing the scores for each of the five items per job dimension. Scale scores ranged from 5-20, with a higher score indicating a higher level of job satisfaction for that particular MSQ scale. An overall job satisfaction score was created by summing responses across the 100 items of the modified MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967). Scores of overall job satisfaction ranged between 100-400.

For analytical purposes, satisfaction categories were developed for all 20 job dimension scores and the general satisfaction score. Response options were considered to be midpoint intervals versus absolute scores. Multiplying the number of scale items by the response option interval determined the five intervals or satisfaction categories. For example, the category of Very Satisfied was weighted a 4 and therefore, assumed to be the midpoint of an interval ranging between 3.5 and 4.5. This response option interval was then multiplied by 5 to create the satisfaction category of 17.51 to 22.50. The remaining satisfaction categories were derived in the same manner with results yielding a range of 12.51 to 17.50 for Satisfied, 7.51 to 12.50 for Dissatisfied, and 2.50 to 7.50 for Very Dissatisfied. Multiplying response option intervals by 100 created overall

satisfaction categories such as 351-450 for Very Satisfied, 251-350 for Satisfied, 250-151 for Dissatisfied, and 50-150 for Very Dissatisfied.

Past research has indicated that the modified MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) has reliability and concurrent validity. Measures of internal consistency for the 20 scales, as reported by Anderson, et al. (1984), consisted of Cronbach alpha scores ranging from 0.738 to 0.937. A reliability coefficient of 0.973 was found for the overall job satisfaction scores. Jones (2005) also found high reliability in his use of the modified MSQ, with Cronbach's Alpha scores ranging from 0.83 to 0.98 for the 20 scales and an overall reliability coefficient of 0.99. Kirk (1990), Murray (1995), and DeMato (2001) only made one further change to the modified version of the MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) developed by Anderson et al., whereby the wording in one item on the compensation scale was changed to read school counselors instead of school psychologists. Kirk reported Cronbach alpha scores ranging from 0.76 to 0.93 for the 20 job dimension scales and a coefficient alpha of 0.93 for the overall satisfaction score. Both DeMato and Murray reported Cronbach alpha scores between 0.80 and 0.94 on the 20 job dimension scales and a coefficient alpha of 0.97 on the overall satisfaction score. In this study, an analysis of internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha also generated evidence of high reliability with scores on the 20 scales ranging from 0.83 to 0.94 and a coefficient alpha of 0.98 on the overall satisfaction score.

Murray (1995) tested concurrent validity by correlating overall job satisfaction scores measured by the modified MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) with respondents' rating of overall job satisfaction as indicated on the IIF. Results found a statistically significant, though moderate, correlation of 0.576. The same analysis was run in the current study

and results also yielded a significant correlation of 0.538 between the two measures of overall job satisfaction.

Data Collection

Survey materials were distributed to respondents and returned to the researcher by mail. This collection process involved the following five steps:

Pre-letter

Introductory letters endorsed by a prominent leader in the field of school counseling were sent out to participants three days before the initial survey. These letters described the study's purpose, confidentiality of responses, and encouraged the school counselor's participation in the study.

Initial Mailing

The first mailing included a letter of explanation, the survey materials, and a packet of post-it notes as an incentive gift. In addition, stamped, self-addressed envelopes were also provided for respondents to return completed surveys. Each mailing was coded to determine which school counselors had not responded.

Postcard Reminder

A postcard reminder was sent to each participant one week following the initial mailing. Postcards thanked participants who had already completed the survey, encouraged those counselors who had not, and provided contact information for participants who had not received the survey materials.

First Follow-up

Two weeks following the initial mailing, a duplicate packet was sent to all

participants who had not responded. An accompanying letter reminded participants of confidentiality and urged participation in the study.

Second Follow-up

Four weeks after the first survey mailing, a third duplicate packet of materials was sent to all non-respondents. A final letter encouraging participation in the survey and stressing the importance of having the largest possible sample of middle school counselors was included.

Nonresponse

One concern for researchers conducting mail surveys is the probability of a low response rate. According to Dillman (2000), “nonresponse error occurs when a significant number of people in the survey sample do not respond to the questionnaire and have different characteristics from those who do respond, when these characteristics are important to the study” (p. 10). Fortunately, however, nonresponse can be reduced through the implementation of specific steps taken prior to the distribution of survey materials, such as the careful design of questionnaires and the use of particular implementation methods (Dillman, 2000). Several steps designed to increase respondent trust and thus, improve survey response rates were used in the current study. Such steps included sending a small gift or token of appreciation, thanking participants for their cooperation (Groves, Dillman, Eltinge, & Little, 2002), multiple contacts, and the emphasis of the surveys usefulness and the importance of the response from each person in the sample (Dillman, 2000).

Statistical Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze data and answer research questions presented in this study. The following statistical analyses were conducted:

1. A frequency count based on the number of respondents in each category of overall job satisfaction was used to describe an overall level of job satisfaction of practicing Virginia middle school counselors.
2. Means and standard deviations across respondents on the 20 scales of the modified Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss et al., 1976) were calculated and then used in constructing a hierarchy of job satisfaction dimensions for the middle school counselors working in Virginia.
3. A multiple regression analysis was used to describe the relationship between selected demographic and work setting variables with the overall level of job satisfaction for Virginia middle school counselors. These variables, including age, gender, educational degree, counselors' intent to remain in their current position, counselors' intent to remain in their current profession, number of school counselors working in the building, type of middle school licensure held, and the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch, were selected based on the results found in previous studies of school counselor job satisfaction (DeMato, 2001; Kirk, 1990; Murray, 1995).
4. Levels of overall job satisfaction for this study and those conducted by Kirk, Murray, and DeMato were compared using a chi-square test of independence.

5. A qualitative analysis was completed on the reasons given by participants for job satisfaction or dissatisfaction in response to selected questions on the IIF. An inductive analysis was conducted on participant responses using a constant comparative approach. Data were coded to identify important aspects related to the research questions and then grouped together to formulate themes among responses. Lists of themes were then ranked by frequency.

Summary

The intent of this study was to provide descriptive information regarding the job satisfaction of Virginia middle school counselors. In addition, comparisons were made between the job satisfaction of Virginia middle school counselors and Virginia elementary school counselors as reported by three previous studies. Chapter three provided a detailed description of the methods, population sample, research questions, instruments, data collection procedures, and statistical techniques used throughout this investigation of counselor job satisfaction.

Chapter IV

Results of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the job satisfaction of middle school counselors working throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. This chapter presents the results of the data analyses conducted. Response rates for each step in the data collection process and demographic information obtained from the Individual Information Form (IIF) are summarized. In addition, the analyses relating to each of the five research questions guiding this study are examined.

Survey Responses

Data were collected using a five-step procedure, including an introduction letter, an initial packet of survey materials, a post card reminder, a first follow-up mailing, and a second follow-up mailing. Survey packets were originally mailed to 400 school counselors, of which, 276 counselors responded. This represented a 69% final response rate and included 21 non-usable surveys. Of the non-usable surveys, 7 counselors declined to participate in the study, 6 held part time positions, 2 were administrators, and 6 surveys were incomplete, leaving a total number of 255 (64%) usable surveys. The numbers and percentages of return for each data collection step are shown in Table 1.

Nonresponse bias occurs when nonrespondents are systematically different from respondents and can greatly limit the generalizability of the survey findings (Edwards, Thomas, Rosenfeld, & Booth-Kewley, 1997). According to Edwards et al., however, when the response rate is high, “even if nonrespondents do differ dramatically from those who completed the survey, their absence should not affect the overall survey results or conclusions very much” (p.93). Babbie (1973) suggested that if 50% of possible

Table 1

Survey Response Rates

Step		Number Returned %Total
Initial mailing including postcard reminder	166	41.50
First follow-up mailing	73	18.25
Second follow-up mailing	37	9.25
Total	276	69.00

Note. There were 400 possible participants.

participants respond to a survey, this represents an adequate a response rate. A 60% response rate, however, is good, and a 70% response rate or more is very good (Babbie, 1973). In this current study, proactive steps were taken to increase the chances of a high response rate. These steps, such as the use of repeated contacts, the inclusion of stamped, self addressed return envelopes, (Edwards et al., 1997), thanking, and sending a small token of appreciation (Groves, Dillman, Eltinge, & Little, 2002) were incorporated and resulted in an overall response rate of 69%, reducing the impact of nonresponse bias. However, it is undetermined if nonresponse bias was present in the current study because participants who did not respond to the survey were not contacted for follow up information.

Demographic Data

School counselors' responses on the Individual Information Form (IIF) were used to describe the population participating in this study and determine relationships between demographic variables and overall levels of job satisfaction. The variables are discussed in the order in which they appeared on the IIF.

Age

Table 2 summarizes the age distribution of participants. School counselors between the ages of 50 and 55 comprised the largest age group, representing 21.7% (n = 53) of the sample, while the smallest group was between the ages of 62 and 65 (n = 3) and represented 1.2% of the sample. Eleven participants failed to answer this item. The youngest school counselor was 24 years old, while the oldest was 65 years old. The mean age for Virginia middle school counselors participating in this study was 45 years old. This mean age is consistent with past studies on Virginia elementary school

Table 2

Age Distribution

Age Range	Number	% of Total
20-25	9	3.7
26-31	40	16.4
32-37	31	12.7
38-43	26	10.7
44-49	32	13.1
50-55	53	21.7
56-61	50	20.5
62 and over	3	1.2
Total	244	100.0

Note. Eleven respondents failed to answer this item.

counselors in which the mean ages were 41 (Kirk, 1990), 45 (Murray, 1995), and 50 (DeMato, 2001).

Gender

The majority of respondents in this study were female. Specifically, 208 female school counselors comprised 83.9% of the sample, while 40 males represented 16%. Seven counselors failed to respond to this item. All three studies on Virginia elementary school counselors also found females to represent the majority of participants, with percentages ranging between 84 and 94.

Race

The largest group of respondents reported their ethnicity as European-American or Caucasian (80.5 %, n = 190), followed by African- Americans at 15.3% (n = 36). Hispanic Americans (1.3%, n = 3) and Asian Americans (1.7%, n = 4) both represented less than two percent of the sample. The remaining three participants reported their ethnicity as either biracial, German, or Ethiopian, while 19 counselors failed to respond to this item.

Membership in Professional Organizations

Slightly over half of the participants in this study were not members of the Virginia Counselors Association (VCA) (55.6%, n = 139), while 111 (44.4%) respondents were members of VCA. Similarly, 163 participants were not members of the Virginia School Counselor Association (VSCA), representing 65.2% of the sample, while 87 counselors were members of the VSCA (34.8%). Five counselors did not respond to either question regarding membership in a professional organization. All counselors surveyed by DeMato, Kirk, Murray, were members of the VSCA.

Testing Coordinator

The majority of middle school counselors in the current sample were not testing coordinators (68%, n = 170). Eighty participants, constituting 32%, were testing coordinators. Five participants did not respond to this item.

Clinical Supervision

A large number of school counselors surveyed in this study did not receive or provide clinical supervision. Specifically, 217 (88.6%) respondents reported that they did not receive clinical supervision in their positions, while 211 (86.5%) reported that they did not provide supervision. Twenty-eight counselors (11.4%) received clinical supervision and 33 (13.5%) counselors provided supervision. Ten counselors did not indicate whether or not they received supervision and 11 counselors failed to indicate if they provided clinical supervision. Similarly, DeMato and Murray found that over 80% of the elementary school counselors surveyed did not provide nor receive clinical supervision.

Years of Experience

Years of experience for Virginia middle school counselors surveyed ranged from zero to 34 with a mean of 9.18 years. Results are detailed in Table 3.

Number of Middle School Counselors in the Division

Participants were asked to indicate the number of middle schools counselors working in their division. Seventy-two counselors opted not to answer this item and many stated that they were unsure of this information. Of those participants who did respond, 65% (n = 119) reported that their division had one to 20 middle schools counselors. The remaining respondents stated that their divisions included more than 20 middle school

Table 3

Years Employed as a Middle School Counselor

Range	Number	%Total
0-3	67	26.7
4-6	53	21.1
7-10	47	18.7
11-15	37	14.7
16-20	25	10.0
21-34	22	8.8
Total	251	100.0

Note. Four participants failed to answer this item.

counselors. Specifically, 60 participants (32.8%) reported that their division had 21 to 90 counselors and 4 (2.2%) participants worked in a division with over 90 middle school counselors.

Number of Schools Served

Twenty-two participants declined to answer this question. Of the 233 (91.4%) participants who responded to this item, the overwhelming majority (80.8%, $n = 206$) indicated that they served only one school. Nine (3.5%) counselors reported working in two schools, while six counselors (2.5%) stated that they served 5 schools. Two (.8%) counselors reported working in six schools, while two (.8%) other counselors worked in seven schools, and two (.8%) others served eight schools. Of the remaining seven respondents, one worked (.4%) in four schools, one (.4%) in 13 schools, one (.4%) in 18 schools, one (.4%) in 23 schools, one (.4%) in 50 schools, and one (.4%) in 60 schools. Similarly, DeMato, Kirk, and Murray also found between 70% and 89% of elementary counselors working in one school.

Number of Middle School Counselors in the School

Including themselves, participants were asked how many school counselors worked in their buildings. Of the total number of 251 responses to this item, the majority of participants indicated that 3 middle school counselors worked in their school (41%, $n = 103$). Two participants (.8%) reported that they had 6 middle school counselors in their buildings, while 17 respondents (6.8%) had five counselors, 62 (24.7%) had four counselors, and 53 (21.1%) had 2 counselors. Fourteen participants (5.6%) reported being the only counselor in their school. Studies conducted by three individuals, found the

majority of elementary school counselors working alone in their schools, with percentages ranging from 55.67% to 91.95% (DeMato, 2001; Kirk, 1990; Murray, 1995)

Student Caseload

Information was obtained regarding the number of students assigned to each counselor's caseload. Numbers ranged from zero, for which the counselor clarified that he was the director, to 1159, with a mean of 326. Most counselors reported being assigned to work with students in the range of 101 to 500 (92%, $n = 230$). Five participants did not answer this item. Table 4 summarizes the data for this question.

Degree Status

The largest number of school counselors surveyed held a masters degree (94.4%, $n = 236$), while only eight (3.2%) counselors had an educational specialist degree and six (2.4%) had a doctorate. Studies by DeMato, Kirk, and Murray, found 92% of surveyed counselors holding a masters degree.

School Counseling Licensure

Participants were asked to specify what type of school license they held. Response choices included Postgraduate Professional, Pupil Personnel Services, Provisional, and Other. According to the Virginia Department of Education (2006), a Pupil Personnel Services License and a Post Graduate Professional license are both five-year renewable licenses obtained by an individual who has an appropriate degree from an accredited institution. Under the Pupil Personnel Services License, an individual has endorsements only as a school counselor, a school psychologist, a school social worker, a visiting teacher, or vocational evaluator. To receive a Post Graduate Professional License, however, an individual must also have teaching or administrative endorsements. A

Table 4

Number of Students Assigned

Range	Number	Total
0-100	7	2.8
101-300	115	46.0
301-500	115	46.0
501-700	10	4.0
701-900	2	0.8
901-1100	0	0.0
1100-1300	1	0.4
Total	250	100.0

Note. Five respondents did not answer this question.

Provisional License is a three-year nonrenewable license granted to an individual completing the required years of experience prior to receiving a five-year renewable license (Virginia Department of Education).

Of the 231 (90.6%) counselors who responded to this item, over half of the sample reported having a Postgraduate Professional License (60.2%, $n = 139$). Twenty eight percent ($n = 65$) of respondents indicated that they held a Pupil Personnel Services Degree and 11.7% ($n = 27$) held a Provisional License. No respondents indicated that they had a license other than the three provided options. The majority of Virginia elementary school counselors surveyed also held a Postgraduate Professional License, with percentages ranging from 75.9% to 87.28% (DeMato, 2001, Kirk, 1990, & Murray, 1995).

Contract Length

Slightly over half of the 244 participants who responded to this question had a 10-month contract (56.1%, $n = 137$). Four (1.6%) counselors had a nine-month contract, 76 (31.1%) counselors had an 11-month contract, and 27 (11.1%) counselors had a 12-month contract. Similarly, most of the elementary school counselors surveyed by DeMato, Kirk, and Murray, also held 10-month contracts.

Salary

Participants were asked to indicate their annual salary. The majority of respondents earned over \$45,000 (69.4%, $n = 170$). This shows a slight increase since the studies on elementary counselors, whereby the majority of participants earned between \$35,000 to \$45,000 in 2001 (DeMato, 2001) and between \$25,001 to \$35,000 in 1995 and 1990 (Kirk, 1990; Murray, 1995). In the current sample, 27.8% ($n = 68$) of

respondents reported a salary between \$35,001 and \$45,000, while 2.9% ($n = 7$) of participants earned a salary between \$25,000 and \$35,000. Ten participants in the current sample did not respond to this item.

School Population Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch

Participants were asked to indicate the percentage of students in their school receiving free or reduced lunch. Thirty-one counselors chose not to answer this item, several of which stated on their IIF that they did not have access to this information due to confidentiality issues. Of the 224 participants who did respond, the largest percentage (44.6%, $n = 100$) reported that 25% or less of their student population received free or reduced lunch. Seventy-six respondents (33.9%) indicated that 26% to 50% of their students received free or reduced lunch. Of the remaining participants, 33 (14.7%) counselors worked in schools with 51%-75% of students receiving free or reduced lunch and 15 (6.7%) counselors worked in schools where more than 75% of the student population receiving free or reduced lunch.

Remain in Current Position

Slightly over half (58.5%, $n = 138$) of the current sample reported that they intended to remain in their middle school counseling position for the upcoming five years. Just under half (41.5%, $n = 98$) of the respondents indicated that they planned to leave their current position within the next five years. These results show a decrease in the number of counselors planning to remain in their present job when compared to the 88% of elementary counselors intending to remain in their position found in DeMato's study in 2001 and the 71.3% found in Murray's study in 1995. Nineteen participants in the present sample, declined to answer this item. Twelve of these participants who opted

not to indicate their intent to remain in their current position, reported that they were undecided.

Respondents who intended to remain in their current position were also asked to report how long they anticipated continuing their job. Eighty-three responses were given. Twenty-three participants indicated that they were unsure as to the length of time they planned to remain in their current position. Twenty counselors indicated that they planned to remain in their present position until retirement and 17 participants planned to continue their job for one to five years. Participants' responses are provided in Table 5.

Counselors who did not intend to remain in their current position for the next five years were asked for a brief explanation and 82 participants opted to provide this information. The two most common explanations given were retirement ($n = 37$) and changing schools ($n = 19$). Table 6 details the list of explanations provided by participants for leaving their current position.

Remain in Current Profession

Counselors were asked to indicate whether or not they planned to remain in the profession of middle school counseling for the next five years. Sixteen counselors failed to respond to this question and eight of these counselors reported that they were undecided. Of the 239 (93.7%) respondents, 167 (69.9%) intended to remain in their current profession, while 72 (30.1%) participants planned to leave the field of middle school counseling. Over 90% of respondents in DeMato's survey, however, planned to remain in the field of elementary school counseling, while 80% of counselors in Murray's study, projected that they would remain in the field of elementary school counseling.

Table 5

Anticipated Time Remaining in Current Position

Response	Number
Undecided	23
Until retirement	19
1-5 years	17
6-10 years	11
11-15 years	3
No plans to leave	3
16-20 years	2
21-30 years	1
Until eligible to become director	1
Until demographics of school change	1
Until starting a family	1
Until no longer affective with students	1
Total	83

Table 6

Reasons for Leaving Current Position

Explanations	Number
Retirement	37
Changing schools	19
Seeking different type of position	11
Moving/relocating	10
Looking for a change	1
Personal growth limited	1
Desire more rewarding position	1
Depends on life situation	1
Job dissatisfaction	1
Total	82

Participants intending to continue middle school counseling for the next five years were also asked to specify how long they planned to remain in the profession. Seventy-five participants opted to answer this question. Of these, 30 reported that they intended to remain in the field until retirement, while 20 participants were unsure and 17 participants planned to continue middle school counseling for six to 10 years. Table 7 presents the participants' responses to this item.

Respondents indicating that they did not intend to remain in the field of middle school counseling for the next five years were asked to provide a brief explanation as to why. Forty-nine respondents provided this information. The overwhelming majority (n = 31) stated that their decision to leave the profession was due to retirement. Seven additional counselors were seeking administrative positions and five more were looking for positions at different levels. Table 8 provides a list of explanations given by subjects for leaving the field of middle school counseling.

Administrative Position

Participants were asked if they were interested in changing to an administrative position. Only 3.1% (n = 8) of the current sample failed to respond to this item. Of the counselors who did respond, over 80% (84.2%, n = 208) indicated that they did not intend to seek an administrative position. The remaining 39 participants, representing 15.8% of the counselors who responded to this question, reported that they did plan to change to a position in administration. Previous studies by DeMato (2001) and Murray, (1995) also found that the majority of counselors did not plan to switch to an administrative position. Specifically, 92.6% of respondents in DeMato's survey and 86.8% of respondents in Murray's survey indicated a lack of intent for such a change.

Table 7

Anticipated Time Remaining in Current Profession

Explanation	Number
Until retirement	29
Undecided	20
6-10 years	17
11-15 years	5
Until changing to a high school position	3
Total	74

Table 8

Reasons for Leaving Current Profession

Explanations	Number
Retirement	31
Seeking administrative position	7
Seeking a position at a different level	5
Starting a family	2
Pursuing doctoral degree	1
Want to work with different populations	1
Explore other educational opportunities	1
Seeking more rewarding position	1
Total	49

In the current sample, participants who were interested in changing to an administrative position were asked to specify what type of job they were seeking. Seventeen counselors chose to complete this portion of the question. Of the responses given, the majority of subjects were looking for a job as a principal or assistant principal ($n = 6$), a director of guidance ($n = 5$), or a director of student services ($n = 4$). Table 9 presents the data for this question.

Participants who indicated that they did not plan to seek an administrative position were not prompted to answer a follow up question. Two counselors, however, left comments. One stated, “I was in administration for nine years” and another wrote, “I already do mostly administrative work, but do not make administrative pay”.

Current Political Climate

Participants were asked how the current political climate affected their feelings towards their job. Eighty-eight (34.5%) participants declined to answer this question. Of the 167 (65.5%) counselors who responded, 68 (40.7%) stated that the political climate did not affect how they felt about their counseling position. Fourteen (8.4%) simply stated that it affected their job in a negative manner, while six (3.6%) reported a positive influence without further explanation. Over 50 respondents (31.1%, $n = 52$), however, reported that their job was influenced by the current political climate in regard to testing. Direct references were made by many of these participants in regard to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) Tests and several explanations were given by respondents as to how testing had negatively impacted their jobs. Specific explanations included a reduction in the accessibility of students, less time available for counseling services, less focus on the

Table 9

Type of Administrative Position

Explanations	Number
Principal or assistant principal	6
Director of guidance	5
Director of student services	4
Supervision	2
Total	17

emotional well-being of students, concern for pressures felt by teachers, additional paperwork, accountability concerns, and less flexibility. One respondent for example, stated, “the emphasis on testing has diminished our contacts with students and frustrated teachers. It has negatively affected my job”. Other statements included, “SOL’s as changed by NCLB act is detrimental to the education process” and “way more counseling of stressed out about SOL students”. Another participant reported, “the current policy on NCLB means less time for counselors to go into the classroom, establish groups or do other meaningful activities because we TEST all the time”. Results are provided in Table 10.

Current Social Climate

Participants were asked how the current social climate affected their feelings towards their job as a school counselor. Seventy-six (29.9%) participants did not respond to this question. Of the 179 (70.1%) counselors who did respond, 29.8% (n = 48) reported that the social climate did not influence their attitudes regarding their job. A similar number of counselors, however (24.0%, n = 43) said that their job was affected by an increase in difficult problems and issues faced by students today. Examples of such issues included a lack of parental involvement in child rearing, fewer nuclear families, economic stress, emotional illness, bullying, gangs, increase in disciplinary problems, and an overall decrease in student moral, responsibility, and character. Typical statements included, “students affected by security issues, safety issues, home life, incarceration of parents, depression, etc., can be overwhelming” and “less support at home for students makes for a whole lot more work for us. We don’t feel we can possibly do all that needs to be done for these kids.” One counselor stated, “students have greater needs and

Table 10

Responses to “How has the current political climate affected how you feel about your job?”

Responses	Number
No affect	68
Adding testing pressures/stress	52
Negative affect	14
Positive affect	6
Feel counselors are less valued	6
Feel counselors are more necessary	6
Insufficient salary levels	6
Unclear role expectations	5
Divided staff/local community	4
Promotes job security	3
Promotes job insecurity	3
Decreased program implementation	3
Economic stress for families of students	2
Hindered productivity and ability to help	1
Untrustworthy administration	1
Immigration discrimination	1
Too conservative	1
Demanding parents	1

Table 10

Political Climate Continued

Responses	Number
Grief counseling due to war	1
Limited mental health resources	1
Unsure	1
Total	186

and problems, therefore I feel overwhelmed with the volume and expectations of me.” Fifteen (8.4%) respondents indicated that their job was more necessary and valued in light of the current social climate. Thirty-eight participants commented on the social climate between coworkers within the school. Specifically, 22 (12.3%) counselors reported a positive school atmosphere among the faculty and staff and 12 (8.9%) counselors stated that the faculty and staff negatively affected the school climate where they worked. Results are presented in Table 11.

Impediments to the Preferred Role and Function of the Job

Participants were asked to list any significant impediments to their preferred job role and function. Fifty (21.6%) counselors participating in the study opted not to complete this item. The remaining 205 (80.4%) participants answered this question and reported a total of 277 impediments. A complete list of responses is in Table 12. Ten respondents stated that they did not experience any significant impediments to their job role and function. The most commonly reported impediment was the excess of non-counseling related duties (30.7%, $n = 63$). Such responsibilities included administration duties, clerical duties, registration of students, report cards, lunch duty, student scheduling, tutoring, school improvement, student activities, transcripts, committee assignments, hall duty, and bus duty. Comments similar to, “counseling has become very administrative and thus, those duties have hindered the performance of real counseling duties” were common. One respondent said, “people know that if any job is given to the counselor it will be done quickly and correctly so we have been given tasks way outside the realm of counseling students”. Another participant expressed frustration with the assignment of lunch duty by claiming, “I have lunch duty everyday (90 minutes a day). It

Table 11

Responses to “How has the current social climate affected how you feel about your job?”

Responses	Number
No affect	48
Increase in student problems/issues	43
Positive school climate among faculty/staff	22
Negative school climate among faculty/staff	16
Feeling that job is more important or valued	15
Positive affect	8
High expectations from parents placed on school personal	6
Mixed school climate among faculty/staff	3
Increased in need to be flexible	2
Issues of distrust	2
Negative influence from government	2
Negative affect	2
Feeling of not being appreciated or valued	2
Overwhelmed by paper work	1
Need to clarify role	1
Intolerance of opposing views	1
Negative stigma regarding counseling	1
Local society values students	1
Job appreciation	1

Table 11

Social Climate Continued

Responses	Number
Increased parent involvement	1
Unsure	1
Total	179

Table 12

Responses to “What are the significant impediments to the preferred role and function of your job?”

Responses	Number
Too many non-counseling duties	63
Testing responsibilities/coordination	48
Not enough time	29
Excess paperwork	28
Lack of effective leadership from building administration and central office	14
High student caseload	14
Difficult needs of students	14
No impediments	10
Lack of secretarial support in the guidance office	10
Under funding for resources	8
Teacher conflicts	7
Special education duties and coordination of 504 plans	7
Teachers less willing to release students from class	4
Lack of or insufficient supervision	4
Insufficient working conditions	4
Accountability concerns	3
Difficulties with co-counselors	3

Table 12

Impediments Continued

Responses	Number
No Child Left Behind Act	2
Lack of support from social services	1
Increased political oversight	1
Concern for lack of honesty	1
Split school assignment	1
Too few social workers and school psychologists	1
Total	277

is supported from the very top of the school system. This has been going on for five years despite documenting how it decreased my time spent with individual and group appointments”.

The second most commonly cited impediment was standardized testing. Specifically, 48 (23.4%) participants reported that responsibilities associated with testing negatively affected their preferred role as a school counselor. Many of these respondents claimed that the time needed to prepare, give, or coordinate testing decreased counseling time with students. For example, one counselor responded with, “being school test coordinator keeps me from being able to counsel with students as much as the students need counseling”. Even participants who were not test coordinators reported frustrations such as “testing is a great impediment to my job. Even though I am not the testing coordinator for my two schools, the time I spend in testing preparation is tremendous”. In addition, 29 (14.1%) counselors indicated that a lack of time was a significant impediment to their preferred role, while another 28 (13.7%) participants claimed that their role was affected by an excessive amount of paperwork. Other obstacles included a lack of effective leadership within the building or central office, a high student caseload, and the difficult needs of students.

Supports to the Preferred Role and Function of the Job

Participants were asked to report any significant supports that allowed them to perform their preferred role and function. Of the 255 counselors participating in the current study, 48 (18.8%) chose not to answer this question. The 207 participants who did respond expressed a total of 354 explanations. A small number of respondents (10.7%, n = 10) stated that they felt very few supports in their current job, if any. One counselor

explained, “I do not feel we there is a ton of supports out there. As testing coordinator, I am asked to do more and more every year without additional support”. Another said, “very few if any! Most significantly we have an uncommunicative leader”.

Over half of the participants (55.6%, n = 115), however, claimed that the administration or principals in their building were supportive of their preferred role and function as a middle school counselor. One participant stated that “we have a wonderful and supportive administrative staff who do not infringe on the time we need to counselor. They understand and appreciate our role and function”. Another respondent explained, “our administration views counseling as a vital part of the educational process. At our school we have limited paperwork. This in turn, allows us to spend more time doing what we had planned (counseling)”. Specific words used by these participants to describe their principals included, “wonderful”, “fantastic”, “supportive”, “amazing”, “understanding”, “strong”, and “counselor-centered”. Forty-one (19.8%) participants indicated that they received significant support from other counselors in their department or district, while another 31 (15.0%) respondents found support from the faculty and staff in general. Twenty-five counselors reported that they received support from teachers in particular. Details are presented in Table 13.

Other Factors Contributing to Job Satisfaction

The last open-ended question on the IIF, asked participants to indicate other factors contributing to their overall level of job satisfaction. Approximately 70% of participants chose not to answer this item. Of the 77 (30.2%) participants who responded, the three most prevalent issues expressed included the counselor’s love for the job and working with students (16.9%, n = 13), non-counseling duties and responsibilities

Table 13

Responses to “What are the significant supports that allow you to perform your preferred role and function of your job?”

Responses	Number
Administration/principals	115
Counselors in building or district	41
Faculty/staff in general	31
Teachers	25
Supervisors	20
Guidance director or coordinator	20
Secretaries	13
Support staff	12
No significant supports	10
Central office	9
Parents of students	9
Not having a particular duty or responsibility	8
Teams	5
Students	5
Staff development training and workshops	4
Family and friends	3
Sufficient working conditions	3
Community resources	3

Table 13

Supports Continued

Responses	Number
Freedom to set own schedule	2
Small caseload	2
Following kids for three years	2
Personal work ethic	2
Parent/teachers association	2
Church and faith	1
SOL clerk	1
Speech and LD department	1
On-site day treatment program	1
Membership in a professional organization	1
Sufficient salary	1
County liaison to communicate with administration	1
Time to work with kids	1
Total	354

(16.9%, n = 13), and co-workers (15.6%, n = 12). One counselor, for example stated, “I will never tire of working with my students. It is the extra tasks that add the stress and is running some counselors to early retirement”. Another respondent expressed a love for the job by saying, “I love the time I can spend with students, helping, listening, guiding, and counseling”. A list of responses is provided in Table 14.

Overall Job Satisfaction

The final question on the IIF asked participants to rate their overall level of job satisfaction in their present positions. The four response choices included very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, satisfied, and very satisfied. Twenty-one counselors opted not to complete this item. Of the 234 respondents, 11 (4.3%) indicated that they were very dissatisfied with their jobs and 23 (9.8%) reported that they were dissatisfied in their present middle school counseling positions. Nearly half (46.6%, n = 109) of respondents, however, were satisfied with their jobs, while 38.9% (n = 91) were very satisfied. Similarly, Demato (2001) found 51.9% of elementary counselors were satisfied with their job and 38.9% were very satisfied. Murray (1995) also found the majority of respondents in her study as either satisfied (48.6%, n = 237) or very satisfied (46.4%, n = 226) in their elementary school counseling positions.

Job Satisfaction Among Middle School Counselors

The job satisfaction of middle school counselors working full time in Virginia was measured using a modified version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). The 20 scales of the modified MSQ were analyzed and results are presented in the section below.

Table 14

Responses to “Are there factors that have not been asked about that would help in understanding your level of job satisfaction?”

Responses	Number
Love for the job and students	13
Non-counseling duties or responsibilities	13
Co-workers	12
Respect	7
Salary and benefits	7
Supervision	4
Working conditions or atmosphere	4
Counseling time	3
Counselor role	3
Clerical support	3
Professional organizations	2
Flexibility	1
Department of social services	1
Advancement opportunities	1
Desire for private practice	1
Special education inclusion	1
Discipline issues	1
Total	77

Levels of Overall Job Satisfaction

An overall job satisfaction score was obtained for each participant by summing response weights for each of the 100 items on the modified MSQ. Each score fell within one of four job satisfaction categories. These four categories were 351-450 for very satisfied, 251-350 for satisfied, 151-250 for dissatisfied, and 50-150 for very dissatisfied. The majority of scores (73.7%, $n = 188$) fell within the satisfied range. Only one score (.4%) fell within the very dissatisfied range, while 17 (6.7%) scores fell within the dissatisfied range and 49 (19.2%) scores fell within the very satisfied range. Table 15 presents this information.

Dimensions of Job Satisfaction

Along with a measurement of overall job satisfaction, the modified MSQ also measured 20 specific dimensions of job satisfaction. Summing the weighted responses for five questions related to each job satisfaction dimension derived 20 scale scores. Scale scores fell within the categories of 17.51 to 22.50 for very satisfied, 12.51 to 17.50 for satisfied, 7.51 to 12.50 for dissatisfied, and 2.50 to 7.50 for very dissatisfied. Scale scores for each dimension were then averaged and ranked. A hierarchy of the 20 scale scores was created to determine the dimensions of job satisfaction among middle school counselors surveyed. Table 16 presents the mean scores, ranges, and standard deviations, ranked from highest satisfaction to lowest satisfaction. All 20 job satisfaction dimensions in the current study fell within the satisfied range, with social service ranked as the highest source of job satisfaction and compensation ranked as the lowest source of job satisfaction.

Table 15

Levels of Job Satisfaction

Category	Number	%Total
Very Dissatisfied	1	0.4
Dissatisfied	17	6.7
Satisfied	188	73.7
Very Satisfied	49	19.2
Total	255	100.0

Table 16

Hierarchy of MSQ Scales

Scale	Mean	SD	Range
Social Service	17.5082	2.65411	15.00
Moral Values	17.0223	2.37812	12.00
Activity	16.6323	2.59134	13.00
Achievement	16.5110	2.72255	14.00
Security	16.4382	2.40723	15.00
Variety	16.3045	2.72549	15.00
Co-workers	16.2787	3.04903	15.00
Ability Utilization	16.2375	3.26798	14.00
Creativity	16.2230	2.90480	15.00
Independence	16.0262	2.52298	15.00
Responsibility	15.9790	2.52874	13.00
Work Conditions	15.3373	3.35263	15.00
Authority	15.1979	2.20929	13.00
Supervision-Human Relations	15.1408	3.80626	15.00
Supervision-Technical	14.9745	3.58259	15.00
Recognition	14.5594	3.4069	15.00
Advancement	13.8704	2.98192	15.00
Company Policies	13.6206	3.11840	15.00
Compensation	13.1003	3.66179	15.00

Job Satisfaction and Demographic Variables

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the relation between overall job satisfaction and selected demographic variables. The following demographic variables were selected for this analysis based on previous research (DeMato, 2001 & Murray, 1995): age, gender, educational degree, counselors' intent to remain in their current position, counselors' intent to remain in their current profession, number of school counselors working in the building, type of middle school licensure held, and the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch. These variables were entered into a regression equation using a stepwise regression method. All variables were dropped out of the equation, with the exception of licensure, intent to remain in the current position, and gender. These three variables were found to significantly affect counselors' overall job satisfaction, while the other variables did not. Specifically, the variables of licensure, intent to remain in the current position, and gender, explained 10% of variance in overall job satisfaction levels. Results of the multiple regression analysis are found in Table 17.

Comparisons of Overall Job Satisfaction Levels

As measured by the modified MSQ, the overall levels of job satisfaction for the current study and the studies on elementary counselors in 1990, 1995, and 2001 were compared using a chi square test of independence. The observed frequencies were similar across all four years. The statistical analysis resulted in a nonsignificant chi-square of 20.160 at the .01 critical level, indicating that the survey years and the overall levels of job satisfaction were unrelated. This information is presented in Table 18.

Table 17

Multiple Regression Summary

N=255

Source	SS	<i>df</i>	MS	<i>F</i>	Sig
Regression	34519.035	3	11506.345	6.851	.000
Residual	309017.180	184	1679.441		
Varibales	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig
Constant	328.609	8.107		40.076	.000
License	-15.176	4.313	-.247	-3.519	.001
Position	14.417	6.123	.166	2.355	.020
Gender	-18.440	8.214	-.158	-2.245	.026

*p < .05

Table 18

Chi-Square Test of Independence for 2006, 2001, 1995, and 1990 Studies

Category	2006 (Observed/Expected)		2001 (Observed/Expected)		1995 (Observed/Expected)		1990 (Observed/Expected)		Total
Very Dissatisfied	1/	1.0	2/	1.1	1/	1.9	1/	1.0	5
Dissatisfied	17/	14.8	25/	17.2	7/	28.2	17/	15.8	76
Satisfied	188/	205.1	233/	238.9	411/	392.5	224/	219.6	1056
Very Satisfied	49/	34.2	37/	39.8	59/	65.4	31/	36.6	176
Total	255		297		488		273		1313

 $\chi^2(9) = 20.160, p = .017$

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the current study. A total of 276 middle school counselors responded to the survey, generating an overall response rate of 69%. The majority (92%, $n = 237$) of respondents expressed being overall satisfied or very satisfied in their current middle school counseling positions. Additionally, participants conveyed satisfaction with all of the specific 20 job dimensions, as measured by the modified MSQ, although compensation was the area of least satisfaction and social service was the area of greatest satisfaction. The three demographic variables of licensure, intent to remain in the position, and gender, were found to be significant predictors of overall job satisfaction. In comparison to the past studies, which surveyed elementary school counselors (DeMato, 2001; Kirk, 1990; Murray, 1995), the current sample is similar in overall levels of job satisfaction.

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the study, including a review of the research questions and a discussion of the significant findings. In addition, conclusions based on the data analysis and recommendations for the profession and future research on the topic of school counselor job satisfaction are presented. The chapter will conclude with a brief summary.

Review of Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine the current job satisfaction level of professional middle school counselors working in Virginia. Information was gathered using an Individual Information Form (IIF) and a modified version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss et al., 1967) to answer the following research questions:

6. What is the overall job satisfaction level of Virginia middle school counselors?
7. What degree of job satisfaction is expressed by Virginia middle school counselors in regard to each of the 20 dimensions of job satisfaction as measured by a modified version of the MSQ?
8. What is the relationship between selected demographic variables and work setting characteristics with the overall job satisfaction of middle school counselors in Virginia?

9. How does the level of job satisfaction of Virginia middle school counselors compare with the level of job satisfaction for Virginia elementary school counselors in 1990, 1995, and 2001?
10. Does the current political and social climate of the public educational system affect middle school counselors' feelings regarding their jobs and performance?

Summary of the Results

Job satisfaction can affect an individual's mental and physical health (Portugal, 1976), as well as influence productivity and effectiveness (Bledsoe & Haywood, 1981). While the topic of job satisfaction has been widely studied over the years, little attention has been given directly to the satisfaction of mental health workers and even fewer studies have focused on the population of middle school counselors in particular. The intent of this study, therefore, was to investigate the present level of job satisfaction among Virginia middle school counselors, as they are faced with new challenges arising from political and social changes in our modern society.

Participants in this study consisted of professional school counselors working full time in Virginia public middle schools. All data was collected using an IIF and a modified version of the MSQ. Initially, surveys were mailed to a sample of 400 counselors. Of these, 276 questionnaires were returned, including 21 unusable surveys. This resulted in a 69% overall response rate.

The findings for each of the research questions are summarized below:

1. What is the overall job satisfaction level of Virginia middle school counselors?

The majority of Virginia middle school counselors are either satisfied or very satisfied with their present jobs. As measured by the modified MSQ, over 92% of counselors were either satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs. Specifically, 74 % of counselors fell within the satisfied range while another 19% of counselors fell within the very satisfied range. Less than 8% of participants indicated that they were dissatisfied with their jobs. These results are similar to those found using the IIF, in which case, over 90% of counselors reported that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs and less than 15 % of participants indicated that they were dissatisfied.

2. What degree of job satisfaction is expressed by Virginia middle school counselors in regard to each of the 20 dimensions of job satisfaction as measured by a modified version of the MSQ?

Virginia middle school counselors were satisfied with all 20 dimensions of job satisfaction as measured by the modified MSQ. The area of greatest satisfaction was social service, which indicates that participants were most satisfied with the opportunity provided in their job to help others. Although still within the satisfied range, the area of compensation, or how counselors feel about the amount of pay received for the work performed, was the area of least satisfaction. No scores fell within the dissatisfied or very satisfied range.

3. What is the relationship between selected demographic variables and work setting characteristics with the overall job satisfaction of middle school counselors in Virginia?

A stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to determine the relation between overall job satisfaction with demographic variables and work setting characteristics. The

eight variables selected included age, gender, educational degree, counselors' intent to remain in their current position, counselors' intent to remain in their current profession, number of school counselors working in the building, type of middle school licensure held, and the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Results found that the combination of three variables, licensure, intent to remain in the current position, and gender, explained 10% of the variance in overall job satisfaction. Female middle school counselors who held a Postgraduate Professional license and intended remain in their current position for the next five years were more satisfied with their jobs.

4. How does the level of job satisfaction of Virginia middle school counselors in 2006 compare with the level of job satisfaction for Virginia elementary school counselors in 1990, 1995, and 2001?

As measured by the modified MSQ, the overall job satisfaction levels of Virginia middle school counselors in the current sample and Virginia elementary school counselors in 2001, 1995, and 1990 are similar. The majority of respondents in all four years were either satisfied or very satisfied in their positions, with percentages ranging from 96.3% to 90.9%. There has been a slight increase in each of the four studies of participants indicating that they are very satisfied with their jobs, where in very satisfied counselors represented 11.3% of respondents in 1990 and 19.2% of respondents in 2006.

Additionally, results found that less than 9% of counselors in each of the four studies were dissatisfied with their jobs and less than 1% of counselors reported being very dissatisfied.

Elementary school counselors in all three studies expressed most satisfaction in the six areas of social service, moral values, activity, variety, ability utilization and

creativity. In 2006, middle school counselors were also most satisfied with four of these six areas, including social service, moral values, activity, and variety. They were, however, more satisfied with achievement and security, and less satisfied with ability utilization and creativity, than the elementary school counselors in past studies. In other words, middle school counselors in 2006 were more satisfied with feelings of accomplishment and the way in which their job provides steady employment, than with the chance to make use of abilities and try one's own methods as found with elementary school counselors. Counselors in each of the four studies, however, similarly expressed least satisfaction in the areas of compensation, company policies, and advancement opportunities.

5. Does the current political and social climate of the public educational system affect middle school counselors' feelings regarding their jobs and performance?

Participants responded to a series of open-ended questions on the IIF in regard to how the current political and social climate affected their job as a middle school counselor. In response to the question, "How has the current political climate affected how you feel about your job?" 40% of counselors who responded, indicated that the political climate did not affect their feelings towards their jobs. Over 30% of participants, however, stated that their job was negatively influenced by the current political climate in regard to added pressures and responsibilities associated with standardized testing. Many of these counselors made direct references to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (United States Department of Education, 2002) and the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL), such as, "SOL's as changed by NCLB act is detrimental to the education process"

or “way more counseling of stressed out about SOL students”. Another counselor stated, “the current policy on NCLB means less time for counselors to go into the classroom, establish groups or do other meaningful activities because we TEST all the time”. In comparison to the current sample, over twice as many elementary school counselors in 2001 reported that their job satisfaction was negatively influenced by the SOL assessments. It should be noted, however, that several middle school counselors left comments expressing that they were unclear as to whether the question was referring to the political climate of the nation or local school system. Perhaps if this distinction had been made, the number of respondents reporting a negative effect due to standardized testing would have increased.

In response to the question, “How has the current social climate affected how you feel about your job?” about 30% of counselors implied that they did not feel an effect from the social climate. The second largest group of counselors, however, represented 24% of respondents and stated that their job was affected by the social climate due to the increase in problems and stresses faced by students today. These counselors made specific references to the lack of parental involvement in child rearing, fewer nuclear families, economic stress, emotional illness, bullying, gangs, increase in disciplinary problems, and an overall decrease in student moral, responsibility, and character. Typical statements included, “less support at home for students makes for a whole lot more work for us. We don’t feel we can possibly do all that needs to be done for these kids” and “students affected by security issues, safety issues, home life, incarceration of parents, depression, etc., can be overwhelming.” Another 20% of counselors interpreted the question in regard to the social climate between the faculty and staff in their building. Of

these respondents, just over half reported a positive social climate, while slightly less than half of counselors indicated that they worked in a school with a negative social climate.

Counselors were asked to respond to the question, “What are the significant impediments to the preferred role and function of your job?” An excess of noncounseling related duties was the most commonly reported impediment, given by 31% of counselors responding to this item. Many of these counselors listed specific responsibilities as impediments including, administration duties, clerical duties, registration of students, report cards, lunch duty, student scheduling, tutoring, school improvement, student activities, transcripts, committee assignments, hall duty, and bus duty. Comments similar to, “counseling has become very administrative and thus, those duties have hindered the performance of real counseling duties” were not uncommon. Another 23% of respondents specifically stated that testing hindered their preferred role as a middle school counselor, creating a total of 54% of counselors reporting that significant impediments included an excess of noncounseling duties or testing.

Counselors were also asked to answer, “What are the significant supports that allow you to perform the preferred role and function of your job?” The large majority of counselors, representing over half of all respondents, indicated that they were supported in their preferred role as a middle school counselor by their administration or principals. Typical comments by these counselors included, “supportive administration”, “fantastic administrative support”, and “our current principal is wonderful!” Another 20% of counselors stated that they were supported in their role by other counselors in their building or district.

The final open-ended question on the IIF asked, “Are there factors that have not been asked about that would help in understanding your level of job satisfaction?” Only 30% of participants replied to this item. The three most common factors listed by respondents included the counselor’s love for their job and students, noncounseling duties and responsibilities, and co-workers. For example, one counselor stated, “I will never tire of working with my students. It is the extra tasks that add the stress and is running some counselors to early retirement”. Another respondent simply said, “I love the time I can spend with students, helping, listening, guiding, and counseling”.

Discussion

Overall Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is one of the most extensively researched constructs in the social sciences (Dorman & Zapf, 2001; Spector, 1997) and according to Jepsen and Shue (2003), theorists and practitioners seem to accept the assumption that nearly all individuals seek satisfaction from their jobs. Krueger (2005) concluded that after years of research conducted by organizational behaviorists and psychologists, “self-reported job satisfaction reflects two main factors: the feelings workers experience while actually on the job and a judgment about their employment situation, which reflects in part, their expectations and aspirations” (p. 3).

A measurement of general job satisfaction is the overall attitude an individual has in regard to liking or disliking a job (Jepsen & Sheu, 2003). The present study examined the general job satisfaction of professional middle school counselors in Virginia. Overall job satisfaction levels were also compared with levels found in past studies on Virginia elementary school counselors. In all four studies, the majority of counselors were

satisfied in their current counseling positions. A total of 92.9% of middle school counselors in the current sample expressed feeling satisfied in their jobs. This shows a slight increase since the study on elementary school counselors in 2001, in which case, 90.9% of counselors were satisfied. The earlier studies, however, revealed that elementary school counselors were slightly more satisfied than the current sample of middle school counselors, with 96.3% of elementary counselors satisfied in 1995 and 93.5% of elementary counselors satisfied in 1990.

Prior studies have indicated that membership in a professional organization is positively correlated with higher levels of overall job satisfaction (Hansen, 1967; Levinson et al., 1988). The majority of participants in the current study were not members of the Virginia Counselors Association (VCA) or Virginia School Counselor Association (VSCA). Specifically, 44.4% of counselors reported that they were members of VCA, while only 34.8% of counselors were members of VSCA. All participants in each of the three studies on elementary counselors, however, were members of the Virginia School Counselor Association (VSCA). In spite of this difference, similar job satisfaction levels were found in each of the four surveys. Findings in the current study suggest that school counselors are experiencing high levels of job satisfaction, despite a lack of membership to the VCA or VSCA. Possibly, the participants in the current study were members in other national or local professional organizations, which may be influencing their overall job satisfaction.

Research on other populations throughout the nation has also found results indicating that the majority of individuals are satisfied with their jobs. For example, a recent national study of school psychologists revealed that 83.7% of participants were

experiencing job satisfaction (Worrell, Skaggs, & Brown, 2006). Similarly, studies on American workers in a variety of occupational settings have found that the majority of individuals were satisfied with their jobs (Gallup Poll, 2004; New York Times, 2005). A recent poll of 1,764 workers throughout the nation, found 88% of participants satisfied with their jobs (New York Times, 2005), while the most recent Gallup poll found 89% of 580 American workers satisfied. Results of the current research suggest that Virginia middle school counselors are experiencing higher levels of job satisfaction than individuals in other occupational settings throughout the country.

Although results of the current study found middle school counselors experiencing high levels of overall job satisfaction, just under half of participants planned to leave their present position within the next five years and over 30% of counselors intended to leave the field of middle school counseling altogether. Past studies on elementary school counselors, however, found only 12% of participants in 2001 intending to leave their jobs and 29% of participants in 1995 planning to leave their positions. These findings indicate an increase in counselors leaving their jobs and may be due in part to the number of counselors reaching the age of retirement. In the current sample, school counselors between the ages of 50 and 55 represented the largest age group. In addition, the majority of participants planning to leave their jobs and the field of middle school counseling reported that this decision was due to retirement.

Dimensions of Job Satisfaction

Mortimer (1979) claimed that job satisfaction can be assessed as an overall evaluation of an individual's job, or by facet-specific satisfactions related to particular areas of the job, including compensation, sufficient resources, challenge, interest,

autonomy, and relations with co-workers. In addition to general job satisfaction levels, specific dimensions of job satisfaction and their importance to middle school counselors were also measured in this study. Results found that counselors in the current sample were satisfied with each of the 20 job dimensions measured by the modified MSQ. Participants were most satisfied in the area of social service, indicating that counselors were more content with their ability to help others, than other aspects of their jobs. According to Herzberg et al. (1959), social service is an intrinsic feature of the job, and therefore, represents a variable leading directly to job satisfaction when present in the occupation.

This finding is consistent with past studies on other mental health professionals and supports evidence found in related research that counselors are most satisfied in their ability to provide social service to others. For example, elementary school counselors in 1990 (Kirk), 1995 (Murray), and 2001 (DeMato) also found the dimension of social service to be the most satisfying. Similarly, a study on school psychologists revealed that over the past 22 years, school psychologists have continually been most satisfied with the areas of social service, independence, and values (Worrell et al., 2006). A national study on African American counselors, using the modified MSQ, also revealed that participants were the most satisfied with the opportunity provided in their jobs to help others (Jones, 2004). In addition to mental health professionals, other school personnel have shown satisfaction in their ability to serve others. For example, a recent survey of 183 Virginia principals, using the MSQ, revealed participants were most satisfied in the area of social service (Stemple, 2004). School counseling is considered a helping profession and

according to the results of this research and past studies, school counselors are satisfied with the opportunity provided in their positions to provide social service to others.

The job dimension producing the least amount of satisfaction for the current sample of school counselors, although still within lower limits of the satisfied range, was compensation. Herzburg et al. (1959) suggested that the amount of pay received for a job is an extrinsic factor and leads directly to job dissatisfaction when insufficient. According to Weiss et al. (1967), compensation can also lead to lower levels of job satisfaction when correspondence is not met between the worker and the worker environment. Correspondence refers the extent in which the employee brings necessary skills to the job and in exchange, the work environment provides certain requirements, including compensation and safe working conditions. The results of this study provide evidence that such correspondence between participants and their counseling job is only moderately being met in regards to compensation.

Other studies have also found individuals least satisfied in the amount of pay received for the work completed. For example, Jones (2005) found that compensation was one of the areas producing the least amount of satisfaction in African American counselors, only second to advancement opportunities. A recent Gallup Poll (2004) revealed that 26% of American workers were dissatisfied with the amount of money earned. In addition, the source of satisfaction for each of the three past studies on elementary school counselors was compensation. Murray (1995), however, suggested that as school systems experience budget reductions, teachers' salaries in general are increasing in smaller rates. As a result, the finding that school counselors are experiencing lower levels of satisfaction in regard to compensation, than in other aspects

of their jobs, may be reflective of an overall dissatisfaction with teachers' salaries and not just indicative of school counselors in particular (Murray, 1995).

Job Satisfaction and Demographic Variables

Eight demographic variables were chosen for further analysis in order to study their relation with overall job satisfaction levels. A regression analysis revealed that the three combined variables of licensure, gender, and counselors' intent to remain in their current position were statistically significant predictors of job satisfaction, although they only accounted for a small amount of variance. Specifically, these variables accounted for 10% of the variance in overall job satisfaction. Female school counselors who intended to remain in their current position for the next five years and held a Postgraduate Professional licensure were more satisfied. The remaining five variables did not have a significant affect on the job satisfaction of middle school counselors.

Participants in the current study who held a Postgraduate Professional licensure were more satisfied than those counselors who held either a Pupil Personnel Services license or a Provisional certification. Murray (1995) also found that elementary school counselors with a Postgraduate Professional certificate were more satisfied than counselors with a Pupil Personnel license or a Provisional certification. Counselors who hold a Postgraduate Professional license must also have teaching or administration endorsements along with endorsements as a school counselor (Virginia Department of Education, 2006). Murray suggested that because "classroom guidance is an integral component of a developmental guidance program and this involves classroom teaching skills, it may be that counselors who have been trained to be classroom teachers feel better prepared for this aspect of elementary school counseling" (p. 127). In addition, she

concluded that counselors who have previously been teachers may also feel more familiar with school system policies and procedures and that this familiarity may decrease job dissatisfaction. Similarly, perhaps middle school counselors who have also had experience with teaching may feel more comfortable with this aspect of their job and therefore, more satisfied.

In addition to the type of licensure held by participants, gender also affected the overall job satisfaction for middle school counselors. Past research has found inconsistent results in the study of the relation between job satisfaction and gender (Spector, 1997). Although some studies have suggested males to be more satisfied than females (Mertler, 2002; Brush et al., 1987) and other studies have found females to be more satisfied than males (Gazioglu & Tansel, 2006), still other researchers suggest that there is not a difference between the two groups with respect to job satisfaction (Andrew et al., 2002; Hoppock, 1935; Maynard, 1986; Spector, 1997). Results of the regression analysis in this study found women to be more satisfied in their counseling positions than men. The past three studies on elementary school counselors did not find gender to be a significant predictor of overall job satisfaction (Demato, 2001; Kirk, 1990; Murray, 1995). A recent study on individual and job related factors on the job satisfaction of a large sample of British employees ($n = 28,240$), however, revealed that women were more satisfied with their jobs than men (Gazioglu & Tansel, 2006). Researchers suggested that this difference may exist because men and women hold different expectations from their jobs, with females having lower expectations than men (Clark, 1997; Gazioglu & Tansel, 2006). Many women may also work as secondary bread-winners and therefore, are able to leave their jobs more easily if they become dissatisfied in comparison to men who provide the

primary financial support for their families. Consequently, Gazioglu and Tansel claimed that perhaps fewer women continue to work in a dissatisfying position. Additionally, the large majority of school counselors in the current study were female (83.9%) and it may be that men in general are less satisfied in a nontraditional and female dominated career, such as school counseling (Haring-Hidore & Beyard-Tyler, 1984).

Finally, the third variable associated with overall job satisfaction was the counselors' intent to remain in their current middle school counseling position for the next five years. Just over half of the current sample indicated that they intended to remain in their school counseling position. Both of the studies on elementary counselors in 2001 and 1995 also found intention to remain in the position to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction (DeMato, 2001; Murray, 1995). It is not surprising that counselors who are satisfied in their jobs are more likely to continue working in comparison to those individuals who are dissatisfied. In addition, past research has suggested that demographic variables are often times interrelated and difficult to study in isolation from one another (Fournet, Distefano, & Pryer, 1969). DeMato postulated the possibly that the demographic variable of intent to remain in the job is difficult to isolate and also related to years of experience and job tenure. The average age of participants in this study was 45 with a mean of 9.2 years of experience. Past studies have correlated job satisfaction with increased work experience (Hulin & Smith, 1965) and job tenure (Lee & Wilbur, 1985). Hulin and Smith claimed that as job tenure increases, employees gain more realistic job expectations.

Political and Social Climate

Professional school counselors in the new millennium are faced with many changes, such as the implementation of the ASCA National Model (American School Counselor Association, 2003), the NCLB Act of 2001 (United States Department of Education, 2002), and a vast array of social challenges affecting students and families. Although the majority of participants in this study were overall satisfied in their middle school counseling positions, many counselors voiced specific frustrations in response to the open-ended questions regarding the current political and social climate.

In response to the question concerning how the political climate has affected participants' jobs, the largest percent of respondents who indicated an effect, reported that their job was negatively influenced in regard to testing. Past research supports this finding. For example, Baggerly (2002) found that 60% of Florida school counselors indicated that the time they spent administering state mandated accountability tests directly hindered their ability to help students and teachers. Similarly, 65% of Virginia elementary school counselors indicated that SOL testing negatively affected their overall job satisfaction level (DeMato, 2001). Over 74% of school counselors responding to a national web-based study on the NCLB legislation reported negative effects (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006). Specifically, these negative effects included testing, increased paperwork, difficulty in the delivery of the counseling program, and systemic effects on schools, teachers, students, and parents. Findings also revealed that only 25% of participants were involved with their schools testing program in a manner that was consistent with ASCA standards, such as counseling students with testing difficulties and using test data to improve the school (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006).

In response to the question asking participants to specify how the current social climate has affected their job, the majority of counselors reporting an effect stated that their jobs were becoming increasingly more difficult due to the problems and issues faced by students today. Issues included a lack of parental involvement, fewer nuclear families, economic stress, emotional illness, bullying, gangs, increase in disciplinary problems, and a lack of character in students. Similarly, elementary counselors in DeMato's survey (2001) indicated that their role had changed due to an increased awareness of school violence and that counselors were more involved with conflict resolutions, anger management, discipline referrals, and the counseling of students in therapeutic situations beyond their comfort level or training. DeMato speculated that counselors who are trained primarily from a developmental perspective are now "...less secure or inadequately prepared as their roles have broadened" (p. 115).

Participants were also asked to indicate the significant supports and impediments to their preferred role and function. Over half of all respondents reported that the most significant impediment to their preferred role was standardized testing or an excess of noncounseling duties, such as administrative duties, clerical work, registration, scheduling, transcripts, committee assignments, and lunch, hall, and bus duties. Similarly, 57% of elementary school counselors in 2001 who indicated impediments, stated that their role was negatively affected by having to take on more activities or roles that conflicted with their ability to do direct counseling (DeMato, 2001). According to Baggerly and Osborn (2006), appropriate duties, high self-efficacy, and supervision were positive predictors of career satisfaction for a large sample of school counselors in Florida. Negative predictors of career satisfaction included inappropriate duties and

stress. In another study, 95% of middle school counselors surveyed reported an increase in stress on the job within the past two years and this stress was attributed to a lack of clearly defined roles and quasi-administrative tasks (Baggerly, 2002).

Despite the ASCA role statement recommending that counselors spend at least 70% of their time in direct service to students (ASCA, 1999), the findings in the current study support past research (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Baggerly, 2002; Bryant & Constantine, 2006; DeMato, 2001; Rayle, 2006; Violanti 2003) and suggest that middle school counselors still struggle with inappropriate duties and role conflict. Noncounseling duties have been associated with lower levels of job satisfaction (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Rayle, 2006). Specifically, research has suggested that when school counselors perform more appropriate duties and less inappropriate duties as identified by the ASCA National Model, career satisfaction and commitment increases (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006). According to Rayle, the increasing number of assignments and noncounseling duties may make school counselors, “increasingly susceptible to higher levels of job-related stress and greater overall job dissatisfaction when they are unable to meet others’ expectations” (p. 12). Although middle school counselors in this study reported such concerns, they also expressed support in their preferred role and function from administrators and building principals. Perhaps, this support contributes to the high levels of overall job satisfaction found in the current sample of middle school counselors, in light of frustrations reported with noncounseling duties.

Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, the following conclusions can be drawn.

1. Professional school counselors working in a Virginia public middle school expressed overall job satisfaction in their current positions, as well as satisfaction with each of the 20 job dimensions as measured by a modified version of the MSQ. Additionally, almost 70% of participants indicated that they planned to remain in the profession of middle school counseling. According to these results, middle school counselors in Virginia are having a positive experience in their present jobs.
2. Virginia middle school counselors were most satisfied in the area of social service and least satisfied in the amount of compensation received for the work performed, which is consistent with findings for other school counselors working in Virginia.
3. Middle school counselors were most affected by the current political climate in regard to state and federal standardized testing. Counselors were most influenced by the current social climate in regard to the difficult issues faced by the students today.
4. An excessive number of duties unrelated to counseling was the greatest impediment in middle school counselors' preferred role and function, while administrators and principals provided the greatest source of support for middle school counselors.

Recommendations for Counselors and Counselor Educators

1. In order to increase job satisfaction and commitment through the reduction of noncounseling duties, counselors should take a proactive stance at the state and local level and push for the implementation of a

comprehensive counseling program meeting the standards of the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2004).

2. Counselors should participate in accountability efforts to demonstrate how comprehensive school counseling programs, with fewer inappropriate duties as identified by the ASCA National Model, support and enhance the academic progress of students.
3. Counselors need to educate school board members, principals, and faculty members regarding the role of the school counselor as defined by the ASCA role statement (ASCA, 1999).
4. Counselors need to advocate for the reduction of noncounseling related duties through collaboration with other faculty members with in the same school in order to focus attention on appropriate roles as identified by the profession.
5. In a time of increased social pressures and challenges, counselors need to continually participate in professional development education in order to best meet the academic, career, and social/personal needs of students.
6. Counselor educators should prepare students for the possible resistance they may encounter by county policies or local school administration while trying to adhere to guidelines set by the profession.
7. To meet the changing needs and challenges of students and society, counselor educators should prepare students for crisis intervention, stress management, and conflict resolution.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Researchers should replicate this study on the job satisfaction of Virginia middle school counselors in five years to assess changes to the middle school counseling program and suggest recommendations for improvement.
2. Research on the job satisfaction of middle school counselors throughout the nation would be useful in providing a more comprehensive view of how middle school counselors feel about their jobs.
3. Researchers should investigate the job satisfaction of middle school counselors using qualitative methods in order to gather data from a different perspective and provide a more in depth understanding of how school counselors view their jobs.
4. Research examining the direct effects of national and state legislation on the job satisfaction of middle school counselors should be explored to monitor the effects these changes are having on practicing middle school counselors.
5. Researchers should also investigate the possible trend towards shortages of middle school counselors due to retirement.

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the research and a summary of the significant findings. The purpose of the study was to investigate the job satisfaction of professional middle school counselors in Virginia. The results indicated that counselors' were overall satisfied with their jobs. In addition, counselors were also satisfied with each of the 20

job dimensions, as measured by a modified version of the MSQ. These results were similar to past studies on the job satisfaction of elementary school counselors in 1990, 1995, and 2001. In the current study, a statistical analysis of several demographic variables revealed that gender, licensure, and intent to remain in the position, were related to the job satisfaction of middle school counselors. In conclusion, recommendations were made for counselors, counselor educators, and future research.

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APPENDIX A

Individual Information Form

22. How has the current *political* climate affected how you feel about your job?

23. How has the current *social* climate affected how you feel about your job?

24. What are the significant *impediments* to the preferred role and function of your job?

25. What are the significant *supports* that allow you to perform the preferred role and function of your job?

26. Are there factors that have not been asked about that would help in understanding your level of job satisfaction?
If yes, please specify:

27. Overall, how satisfied are you with your present position:

- Very Dissatisfied
 Dissatisfied
 Satisfied
 Very Satisfied

****THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME IN ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS****

APPENDIX B

Correspondence

Vocational Psychology Research
University of Minnesota
N657 Elliott Hall
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0344

Tara Bane
822 Virginia Ave.
Salem, VA 24153

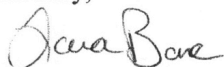
To the Faculty/Staff of the Vocational Psychology Research Department:

Hello. I am interested in using a modified 1977 version of the MSQ (long form) in my research. As requested, I have enclosed a copy of this modified version as used by researchers in three previous studies investigating Virginia elementary school counselor job satisfaction.

I have 6 years experience as a middle school counselor and am currently a doctoral student in the counselor education program at Virginia Polytechnic and State University. I have completed all of the course work requirements towards this degree and am now in the process of conducting dissertation research. My topic for this endeavor is to study the job satisfaction of middle school counselors in Virginia. I have enclosed a brief abstract of my intended study, the qualification and registration forms, a copy of applicable information regarding my educational background, and a check for payment.

I greatly appreciate your assistance in obtaining permission to photocopy the enclosed modified MSQ. If this authorization is granted, I will include a permission statement on each copy used as requested by your institution. Please feel free to contact me at your convenience with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Tara Bane
822 Virginia Ave.
Salem, VA 24153
540-389-7656
tbane@vt.edu

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

*Twin Cities Campus**Department of Psychology
College of Liberal Arts**N218 Elliott Hall
75 East River Road
Minneapolis, MN 55455**Office: 612-625-2818
Fax: 612-626-2079
www.psych.umn.edu
Email: psymain@umn.edu*

Nov 15, 2005

Tara Bane
822 Virginia Ave
Salem, VA 24153

Dear Tara Bane:

We are pleased to grant you permission to use the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire 1977 long form in your research project with the modifications you requested.

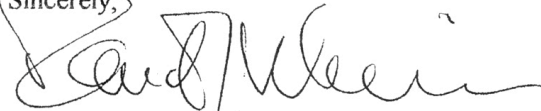
Please note that each copy that you make must include the following copyright statement:

Copyright 1977, Vocational Psychology Research
University of Minnesota. Reproduced by permission.

Vocational Psychology Research is currently in the process of revising the MSQ manual and it is very important that we receive copies of your research study results in order to construct new norm tables. Therefore, we would appreciate receiving a copy of your results including 1) Demographic data of respondents, including age, education level, occupation and job tenure; and 2) response statistics including, scale means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and standard errors of measurement.

Your providing this information will be an important and valuable contribution to the new MSQ manual. If you have any questions concerning this request, please feel free to call us at 612-625-1367.

Sincerely,



Dr. David J. Weiss, Director
Vocational Psychology Research



January 11, 2006

154
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences
219 E. Eggleston Hall (0302), Blacksburg, VA 24061
(540) 231-5642 Fax: (540) 231-7845

University Exemplary Department

Dear Middle School Counselor:

In a few days you will receive survey materials from Tara Bane who is a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech. Tara is conducting a study to investigate the job satisfaction of professional middle school counselors in Virginia and to determine how job satisfaction relates to a number of variables. I would like to encourage your participation in this important survey.

I believe that the information generated from this study will enhance the middle school counseling program in Virginia. I hope you will assist her by taking 20-25 minutes to complete and return the survey materials. You may be rest assured that your individual responses will be kept in strict confidence, and only group data will be used in the analysis.

Thank you in advance for your help with this important study.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nancy Bodenhorn
Professor and Dissertation Director



January 16, 2006

Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences
219 E. Eggleston Hall (0302), Blacksburg, VA. 24061
(540) 231-5642 Fax: (540) 231-7845

University Exemplary Department

Dear Virginia Middle School Counselor,

Your school has been selected to participate in my study investigating the job satisfaction of professional middle school counselors working in Virginia. From my personal experience as a middle school counselor, I am aware that your present duties may be overwhelming. I hope, however, that you can take some time to help me with this important topic.

With this letter I have enclosed an Individual Information Form and a modified Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire relating to your job satisfaction. Completion of both items should require a total of 20 to 25 minutes of your time. Please return completed copies in the provided self addressed stamp envelope by January 23, 2006. Although I can not identify an immediate benefit to you by participating in this study, compiled results will provide valuable information regarding Virginia middle school counseling programs and the degree of satisfaction experienced by counselors. The only potential risk in completing this survey is the possibility of experiencing stress or discomfort as you think about your job in a detailed and systematic manner. Should this occur, you are encouraged to seek consultation or counseling regarding the experience.

I am not asking you to sign an informed consent. By completing and returning the survey itself, you are providing voluntary consent to participate in this study. The information you provide will be considered strictly confidential. The questionnaires are numbered only to assist with follow-up and tracking. I will have sole access to the files linking numbers with particular schools and only group scores will be reported.

The Virginia Tech Institutional Research Board has approved this survey. Information from this study will be available to you upon request. If you have any questions or concerns, I may be reached at tbane@vt.edu or you may also contact the IRB chair, David Moore at moored@vt.edu.

If you are currently working full-time as a middle school counselor, I hope you will take the opportunity to participate in this survey. Along with the survey materials, I am enclosing a pack of sticky notes as a token of my appreciation for your assistance. Thank you for your help, and all you do for the students in your school.

Sincerely,

Tara Bane

Enclosures

January 23, 2006

Dear Virginia Middle School Counselor,

Approximately a week ago, survey materials were sent to you relating to my study on job satisfaction among Virginia middle school counselors. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation if you have already mailed completed materials back to me. If you have not completed these materials, I hope you will please take the time to do so as soon as possible. If you have not yet received a survey packet, please contact me at tbane@vt.edu and I will mail you another packet immediately.

Thank you again for your timely assistance. This study would not be possible without your help.

Sincerely,

Tara Bane



January 30, 2006

Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences
219 E. Eggleston Hall (0302), Blacksburg, VA 24061
(540) 231-5642 Fax: (540) 231-7845

University Exemplary Department

Dear Virginia Middle School Counselor,

I recently sent you survey materials for my study of job satisfaction among professional middle school counselors working in Virginia. At this time, nearly half of your colleagues have completed and returned these materials to me.

My records indicate that you have not yet responded to this survey. In the event that you have misplaced the original survey, I have included a duplicate packet of materials for your convenience. I recognize the many responsibilities of a school counselor, but hope that you will take a short time to help me with this study. I believe that your effort will help provide valuable information pertaining to the Virginia middle school counseling program.

Would you please consider returning the completed survey to me by February 13, 2006? Your individual answers, while confidential, are vital to the success of my study. If you have already responded, please disregard this request and accept my sincerest thanks for your assistance.

With Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tara Bane".

Tara Bane



February 13, 2006

Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences
219 E. Eggleston Hall (0302), Blacksburg, VA 24061
(540) 231-5642 Fax: (540) 231-7845

University Exemplary Department

Dear School Counselor,

A short while ago, you were asked to participate in a study conducted by Tara Bane investigating the job satisfaction among Virginia professional middle school counselors. At this time, approximately 60% of participants have completed and returned the survey materials.

Unfortunately, however, Tara's records show that you have not yet responded to this survey. I am urging you to please complete the enclosed duplicate set of materials as soon as possible because your response is crucial to the findings of this study. The validity of the results depends on the largest response rate possible. The information you provide will be held in strict confidence and only group data will be reported.

Won't you please take some time to complete this survey? Your participation will help provide important information regarding the Virginia middle school counseling program.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nancy Bodenhorn
Professor and Dissertation Director

APPENDIX C

Participants were asked to share their responses to several open-ended questions on a variety of topics. Those responses are presented here, in a form that is as close to the hand-written responses as possible.

Appendix C

Responses to *How has current political climate affected how you feel about job?*

I feel that my job is to help students. Other than the responsibility of SOL testing,

I don't allow politics or social climate to affect my job

I don't agree with the amount of standardized testing we are required to do. Therefore we sometimes place students in a remedial class to prepare for the test, thus taking them out of an elective (fun)

Currently, our school is going through redistricting, so teachers are stressed because jobs are being lost at end of year. I'm hopeful that I can be supportive of them and therefore the students

Don't follow politics on a national level, however the political climate inside the school is tough – caught in between teachers and administrators

It is one of the only negative aspect of the job

It is very difficult to perform any duties related to education in light of the many stresses brought on by NCLB

I still enjoy working with students but all of the testing that has been added makes it less enjoyable

No regarding counselees; yes regarding salary – former Gov. Warner promised to bring us up to national average. He failed and Kaine will too

I don't have any opinion about the topic

Even more committed

I'm leaving profession before retirement age

NCLB; difficult climate; unfunded mandates

It has not affected me

NCLB makes it difficult to address various needs of students due to restrictions in direct services that may interfere with instruction

We are very deeply affected by NCLB. The attendance politics & testing politics have changed how we do our job

SOL's as changed by NCLB act is detrimental to the education process
 I'm glad to see that education is becoming more of a priority in VA but do not think that much time has been given to the counseling portion in the educational realm

It hasn't

Overwhelmed – politics have made educational system set up for failure for a number of students who with certain training could otherwise be productive members of society

It has not

Counselors are needed more

Way more counseling of “stressed about SOL” students; time spent testing, not counseling; counseling more faculty members about dissatisfaction with job; truancy referrals take away from counseling

The increased emphasis on testing has added stress

Middle class families are experiencing economic stress which affects our students. I disagree with the current philosophy of constant testing and measuring at the expense of time for teaching

I can not implement all the programs I would like. Many of my ideas are hindered because of veteran counselors who are resistant to change

The current policy on NCLB means less time for counselor to go into classroom, establish groups or do other meaningful activities because we TEST all the time

It hasn't

At the federal level, it has meant that a couple of programs had access to have been cut. I am saddened by this and somewhat frustrated.

No affect

I am not happy with the current influence of the religious right on congress, the supreme court, and the administrative branch, but it doesn't affect how I feel about my job.

I don't feel too affected by it.

Focus now geared toward SOLs and career counseling rather than overall emotional wellbeing

NCLB has had an effect on classroom teachers and our access to them.

There is much less time to do actual counseling due to time constraints, SOLs etc., I feel discouraged and overwhelmed by paperwork and administrative duties.

It has not had too much of an effect. The media tends to put a negative slant on everything. If one understands that then he/she can easily cope with the news and daily occurrence.

None

Has not

NCLB has added more testing to the administrators taking away from other duties.

I think NCLB has done much more harm than good. I think testing every grade over shadows the positives of school.

N/A

Has made me more cautious, feel like we are taken for granted, public still doesn't understand our role.

I have resorted to helping less, becoming less productive and resigned to "putting in the time".

More stressful, but more structured; much more responsibility with testing

Local politics?

Under funding salaries, no community consensus at school board to fund new high school

Negligible

I believe that if SOL testing remains a part of education, another position should coordinate testing. It is impossible for counselors to "counselor" in the latter part of the year (June) due to SOL testing!

Guidance counselors have been misunderstood for years. We have had many superintendents and each one has used guidance services differently. Most of the time teachers as well as administrators want counselors to be all things to all people

NCLB has placed great stress on the school system. As teachers feel pressure to have students achieve in specified time, they become reluctant to release students from class.

It hasn't affected my feelings about the job, but it has affected how I see our politicians.

Positive – I have been through many changes. I have established my position with respect and maturity.

No affect

No affect

Many students are immigrants. They are greatly undeserved and discriminated against.

I feel my job is more important than ever because the current political climate is rife with dishonesty, immorality, abuse of power and ignores basic human needs.

Very satisfied

It has not, other than how it has an affect on the testing of our students.

No affect

My job is still secure, but now administration is not as trustworthy as what came before, makes me uneasy.

Positive

NCLB makes me want to retire.

I enjoy my job and stay focused on doing my job. I do not pay attention to politics.

The NCLB act has had an impact because there is more pressure on the teachers and in turn, on school counselors.

I feel good about my job and the political climate has not affected me.

Teachers are so concerned about SOL scores that the needs of students are not being met all the time.

Within my school, it makes coming to work very stressful, my administration is very unsupportive of guidance.

Not at all, politics affect money and programs but not what a counselor does on a daily basis.

I am glad that I have a secure job with the unpredictable economy.

Has not affected it too much. NCLB has put additional pressures on me as the test coordinator.

It does make me think that we do need to find ways to let people know what we do and why it's important to have a school counselor. It doesn't though make me more anxious or less secure about my job. I continue to take each day seriously and do the best I can to assist students, parents, and coworkers.

Sometimes I question the ongoing issues which don't get solved but that don't last long.

My attitude never plays a major role in how I'm affected.

No

Keeps abreast of changes that affect job security

More and more mandates developed by the government but no compensation for the time it takes to successfully carry out the mandates

Less programs to help students, more unnecessary testing, more tension in the school environment

Current political climate doesn't affect how I feel about my job.

I believe the NCLB is great in theory, but not in practice.

Political correctness and multicultural emphasis has caused our staff to be somewhat divided, however, I feel we do better than most in the area. We work at getting along.

My job is to serve the public no matter the political climate.

No

Completely affected it. Hate job!

Parents can be very demanding or feel their child deserves more than others.

Not much, same as 20 years ago

The current political climate has not been any different than the previous political climate as far as I can observe.

Not at all

NCLB has created more testing for which I am responsible taking more time away from counseling.

The emphasis on testing has diminished our contacts with students and frustrated teachers. It has negatively affected my job.

The government tries to take too much control over things we can not control, i.e. classroom behaviors, disruptive learning, and SOL scores, but teachers are held accountable.

Very much, quite political

I don't worry about politics, I am here for my students.

It helps me strive to show that educators and counselors play a major role in society.

No different because that is going to occur in any job setting.

I have had to counsel students whose family members have been deployed to Iraq and even one who suffered a loss due to the war. This has been challenging for me.

Much more paperwork to complete, job feels very administrative at times.

Feel privileged to be in this position while leaders (political) value education

I try to stay away from the politics involved with my job. I see how things are looked upon for some who benefit from the political climate but I am on autopilot in regard to getting my job done. I am satisfied right now.

Little to no impact

Having to be accountable for the success of each child is difficult because it should not fully rest on the shoulders of the educator. The parent should be accountable as well

Try to just do my job and stay out of politics

While the concept of NCLB is noble it has added stressors and some frustration.

Local politics or national politics???

NCLB has proven to be very frustrating for educators even though the philosophy sounds good.

As is so often the case in many school systems, the best qualified individuals do not always get the job they deserve or the one where they can be most effective. It's discouraging.

Not affected

The fact that counselors are not regarded as an integral part of the school community (other than paperwork) trickles down.

No affect felt from political climate.

Hasn't affected it

No change

? (participant just left a question mark)

It makes my job much more paper based due to NCLB, leaving less time for one on one and groups with kids.

None

Not at all

It hasn't

The need for counselors at our school is vital when considering NCLB.

Sometimes I feel that I spend more time collecting data for accountability than I do with my students

The political climate has a major impact on our school system as a whole. Many of the challenges affect the teachers who have experienced high level of dissatisfaction, which in turn, negatively impacts my feelings on education.

It feels some what demoralizing that there are so few counselors to students yet there are so many needs. All the money in this country has been spent on the war and yet our poor children suffer because it's more important to make a political statement and one that hurts others.

More testing of students

The NCLB without funding places undo burden on a school system.

The pressure of NCLB with its threats and testing pressures has added layers of work.

It hasn't affected how I feel about my job. I love my job there are just changes that need to be made

I love my job...always have in spite if not being provided the salary I deserve. I am now just reaching a decent salary level and I'm at the end of my career

I have concerns about the impact SOL testing has taken away from my effectiveness and being productive.

The political climate has created major stress on the staff at my school

N/A

Yes!

SOL's drive everything. There is much unfairness in my school depending on who is assigned the closest achieving students. I feel for those teachers.

There is pressure to test well, so social skills and career skills fall by the wayside for my students.

Makes my job frustrating and more challenging at times, especially when it goes up against my desire for the direction of my work and how issues are dealt with.

Under funded & NCLB puts more pressure on job without clear expectations for role of school counselor.

No impact

N/A

Anxious – it looks like its going “data driven” and that’s not guidance.

Glad to have a job with good salary and benefits, time off

No financial support of increased salaries from any one in this state or city!!

It has not affected my feelings about my job

The political climate is unbearable at times. The favoritism is shown amongst the staff and causes clicks and tension.

I feel optimistic since Gov. Kaine seems to have a commitment to education.

N/A

The very conservative political climate tends to limit rather than expand mental health resources. We've had numerous emergency referrals to be put on a waiting list.

In Virginia school counselors are supported in their work and in our county counselors are highly valued in their work. We have added several counseling positions in the last few years, not cut positions as some counties have done.

Frustrated at times. Administration (both building and SBO) makes a tremendous difference. I've been with good and very bad.

I don't think nationally school counselors are valued. It makes me feel like I need to defend my role and function in schools.

N/A

In no way

Broad question. School counselors still provide the basics for students regardless of trends. Academic, personal/social and career plus a lot of testing services

I think the NCLB act is ineffective and prevents teachers and counselors from having flexibility to best work with students.

Not at all – I don't play politics if you don't like what I'm doing ask me to leave.

None

The NCLB program has added a wonderful feature for those students ever failing needing extra help with the school day. Our remedial program is awesome.

It hasn't

Of the county, country or my school?

Being in the education field has become increasingly more difficult and demanding on everyone in the field.

Too much catering too "good families" by the administration has made me somewhat bitter.

I have a certification as a special education teacher, so have never worried about not having a job. I prefer counseling position.

It makes me worried about the future of school counseling.

So focused on SOL testing, leaves little time to be child centered

Absolutely no affect

As a counselor, I try to reach every child and even seek to meet students who do not request to see me regularly.

I think that the NCLB act is just not realistic because I love some of the students I work with and they are more concerned about their survival rather than school.

AYP, NCLB, SOLs...were working, but it is very difficult. It feels like we're being threatened, but there are so many variables beyond our control.

Unappreciated for everything that we do as educators

I enjoy my job.

The current base salary is driven by political state and local money. When the state or locality announces an average 3-5% raise I usually receive 1.3%

This school is not fully accredited and has not passed AYP or NCLB so every moment and everything we do is geared toward passing the SOL tests etc. This means less time in the classroom for counselors.

I don't know all of the details of this particular system but politics usually seem to affect how the majority feels rather than focusing on the best for the students.

We currently have a new division superintendent. His stance on guidance services is yet to be determined by those of us in the school. He has the ear of our guidance director – this is viewed as positive.

It hasn't

I love my job. I understand that there are pros and cons in any position. I try to maintain balance between the various responsibilities in my job.

Unsure how to answer these questions

There is too much pressure due to SOLs and NCLB.

Disappointed about the amount of time middle school counselors have to set aside for SOL testing (entire month of may). Also see administrators trying to give counselors admin duties (ie. lunch duty, after school detention, etc).

I don't pay attention. We have people out there fighting for us!

Not really I guess

SOL focus/pressures reduce attention to total child.

Not at all (school political or national political? Not clear)

Not significantly

N/A

Too conservative!

I ignore politics and try to do my job. I am more of an observer, rather than a participant.

My life is not centered around politics.

Sometimes it makes it more difficult, majority of time though I am content.

No effect

No affect – I just feel sorry that kids don't have a fun time or safe neighborhoods anymore

No

Little effect in last 5 years

It hasn't

SOL testing/reviews keeps children in classroom and less available for counselors.

Budget constraints have affected our being able to hire additional counselors and social workers.

The increased level of stress has adversely affected the level of job satisfaction. Teachers can become resentful when the students are dealing with social/psychological issues, which take them away from SOL curriculum.

Not my job – perhaps my country!!

No influence

State mandated testing has accounted for many hours of counseling services. This service tends to lower your aspirations of not being able to provide more services to students.

Frustrates me because of emphasis on testing – eats into my time with kids. Problem solving, developing talents, good citizenship are more imp in my book than what they are testing under NCLB. I'm a democrat!!

The political climate is poor – low moral and poor communication lowers job satisfaction.

Elected school boards have ruined public schools elections have been bad for our schools

Responses to *How has the current social climate affected how you feel about your job?*

N/A

I don't allow politics or social climate to affect my job.

There are several members of the staff who I am friends with outside of work or are able to discuss any topics with. This is a great support & relief to me knowing others are like me and available to go to!

All 3 counselors are spread out all over building so I seldom ever see them, nevermind socialize, one aspect I definitely dislike.

It hasn't affected me either way

N/A

It can be stressful to deal with stressed out people.

Students change and as counselors we must make changes to accommodate their needs.

MTV is ruining our kids.

Most of my coworkers in my building are easy to get along with. The administration seems very supportive of the staff and students. Staff feels comfortable sharing ideas and thoughts with each other.

Not affected

Leaving profession before retirement age

The fact that we have a war going on in Iraq and a poor president running the country and republicans in office.

N/A

Parents are dropping the ball in child rearing.

I, again, do not feel counselors get the appreciation for the job that we do. I believe this starts at the top.

It hasn't.

Blank

The current "right wing" American has made public schools out to be the enemy of positive intellectual and social growth in this country.

Socially, student behavior is getting worse. I am dealing with more serious issues than in the past (ex: self mutilators, bi-polar students, suicidal ideation).

I like my current job, but I do not like how coworkers are treated at the other school I am located. Middle school is fine.

Job more necessary

Parents turn to counselors for parenting help. Here social climate is one of teamwork and cooperation.

So many hardship cases, you can't help them all, don't know where or how to help some of them.

N/A

I am disappointed at the current social atmosphere of "if you disagree with me, you are not a real American". There seems to be little tolerance for those with opposing views. There are so many family issues that affect our students' academic achievement. I do not feel I can make as big of a difference in the role I'm in now, that is why I am pursuing an administrative role.

Our school has a variety of students from different economic backgrounds. Parents at our level of our school are less concerned with student academic accomplishment and students lack the moral character that should be taught at home.

It hasn't

The influence of the gang mentality in the community concerns me deeply. I fear for the safety of many of our students.

No affect

Two social issues that have not affected my ability to work with students yet might in the future are 1. attempts to limit rights of gay persons 2. attempts to limit birth control and reproductive information to underage adolescents

I have great concern about the increasing social/personal issues of the students.

Parents generally are more aware of laws and rights of parents. They can ask more specific questions and follow their child better.

Community seems more financially stressed due to after effects of 9/11 therefore parents working longer hours and wanting more support from schools academically and financially.

Societal pressures affect our students, parents, and eventually school personnel must address them.

Students have greater needs and problems, therefore I feel overwhelmed with the volume and expectations of me.

Sometimes, teachers, parents, and students do not understand our role(s) as well as they should, however it is as much our responsibility as theirs to make sure that there is a basic assumption of why we're here.

Significantly more negative this year due to change in administration.

Depressing

N/A

Social problems seem to increasingly interfere with providing educational needs.

N/A

Not as free flowing, feel like you are being watched, things have changed on how you deal with students – touch, voice tone, parent sensitivity.

I do not trust or believe anymore to anyone.

Within guidance and with administrators very positive – teachers are very negative about our jobs at time especially during SOL testing.

No problem here

I worry that fewer children have the stability of a two parent home and that fewer are being taught responsibility and morals.

No comment

It makes me sad because I think counselors have a lot to offer teachers and students.

Counselors are at the mercy of their principal and if a principal is not supportive of guidance services it is difficult to accomplish goals.

Not sure what you mean?

I love my job!

None

No affect

LGBTQ issues are ignored. This is a tragedy.

It makes things interesting. So many voices for the attention of kids and I get to help them listen to the voice that comes from inside of them.

The social climate of my students has kept me challenged in my job. I am frustrated because I wish I could do more.

It has not

Lenient parents cause problems. Students are not motivated to achieve. Too much dependency on parents to do work for them

Social climate is as it has been, very good. Makes coming to work something to look forward to.

None

Many parents work long hours to support their families. Thus they do very little parenting and spending time with children. They expect us to parent!!

I just focus on my duties, do my job.

With the economy dropping, the families are becoming needier and there's pressure on the students. It also makes family life difficult if parents need to work several jobs.

Just parent stigma against letting their children get counseling

Students stereotyping other students and bullying because of ethnic background

Socially, I enjoy my job, I have another grade level counselor I am close with and many acquaintances.

I feel that students need school counselors more than ever before due to our country's social climate. I like feeling like an important part of our school.

More emotional illness with fewer community support resources. The job has become part social.

I am very proud to be in the mental health/education field in the current social climate.

N/A

I don't think it has much affect on me. To be honest I'm not sure what social climate this question is really referring to. I basically feel socially accepted for the most part.

I love my job and the people with whom I work.

Never, great people

Promotes cohesion

Students are definitely faced with a lot more social issues – some very severe (is anxiety disorders, school phobias, suicidal ideation)

School climate in my school is fine, it can always be better, personally I am handling it very well.

Frustrated with 1. difference/disparity b/t haves and have nots 2. sense of entitlement 3. lack of personal responsibility

Having been at this school for the last 15 yrs, I am very satisfied with the social climate. I have a lot of close staff members.

The current political climate – NCLB has not affected how I feel about my job. I felt all children could learn already.

Counselors are recognized as important to the core teachers. This is conducive to a more satisfying work environment.

It has not affected how I feel about my job.

Mixed, it contributes greatly b/c some coworkers (especially one counselor is moody and nasty) but it helps having friends at work for venting.

Some of our parents talk about our school to each other without seeing for themselves.

No

I've been in education 32 years and I've learned to go with the flow.

As long as I remain in the counseling field, I am accepting of whatever societal variables that will make my job challenging. This is where flexibility is a must with this career. My heart desires to help as much as possible and accept what I can not help.

Our teachers currently evident low moral. This carries throughout the school.

The only problem I see is when parents are more social with others than their children.

Nuclear families produce more productive, adjusted children.

We have appreciated several major changes this year, which have created stress on the staff and have contributed to a negative societal climate for staff.

There is very low staff morale, lack of trust and insensitivity among staff. Some are just mean spirited.

Okay, took some adjusting, but I'm very much ok now.

Again, I don't worry about things like this, I work for my students who need me.

N/A

Great! Everyone is very nice and supportive. We all try to work together. The staff makes it easier to perform my job successfully.

My current school has many staff members who do not get along. This sometimes causes dissatisfaction.

Not affected

I feel challenged when the social climate is both positive and negative.

There are some social interactions that are not satisfying to me, but overall I'm ok with it. For the most part we have fun with each other.

Huge negative impact

The staff is friendly and helpful. It is nice to be part of a team of counselors.

Schools are expected to assume the role of parent, teacher, and role model.

Try to just do my job and stay out of it.

It has not affected job feelings.

It places more demands on me as a counselor. We have a lot more needy kids then when I entered this profession 12 years ago (due to economic conditions in this community).

Students need more help in many different areas than I am trained to provide.

Kids will always be kids and we simply have to develop new techniques for countering their new ways to rebel or do things that are in their best interests.

Not affected

It makes me question my purpose for being here.

No affect felt from the social climate

Students and parents for the most part have a different attitude towards education today.

Students are less respectful, have or demonstrate poor character and parents are more demanding. It is now a “me society”.

? (participant just left a “?”)

I feel school counseling is more widely accepted.

I am happy with the social climate in my job.

None

Not at all

It hasn't

I feel that I am making a positive difference in my school. I also have data/assessments to support my effectiveness in my school.

I enjoy the social climate. It has motivated me to go beyond the normal expectations of my job.

I love my job, but the teachers around me have not been satisfied. They can be very negative some times which impacts how I feel about my job.

The main impediment I am feeling right now is the lack of good parenting. We need to begin educating parents early about setting limits while at the same time providing a loving supportive environment. Many parents operate with extremes, either too permissive or too harsh. There needs to be a balance.

The lack of nuclear family has created a large population of students raising themselves.

I love my job, however, the amount of paperwork often prohibits you from counseling effectively.

It ___ me to hear that parents expect us to raise their children and take little and no responsibility. We are here for children during school hours.

The social climate has dramatically increased the need for counselors in the school.

I am here to assist young people and their families – socially, educationally, and holistically.

The social climate has grown more distant and stressed among staff, thus leading to dissatisfaction with my current job.

N/A

No

Too many discipline problems, too many students who lack manners and consideration for others; that can be overwhelming

There is pressure to test well so social skills fall by the wayside for my students

A great deal, there is a lot of negativity and frustration among staff and it greatly has impacted my motivation and job satisfaction.

Good. Local society values children

N/A

Its more accepted, but we still have parents who are not open to suggestions, especially for evaluation for therapy.

Glad to have a job with good salary and benefits, time off .

There is a lack of control on the part of students and with parenting at home. These factors lead to chaos in the schools.

No affect

Very little has been done to develop staff cohesiveness and a sense of team spirit.

The social climate at my school is very supportive and fun loving.

The social climate in this school is very family like.

The current social climate of declining moral values makes me feel much more needed in my area.

I work with dedicated professional educators who are very supportive.

It hasn't.

In no way

In my experience counselors have been viewed positively and are generally seen as necessary by administration and counted on by teachers, parents and students.

The greater number of non-English speaking students means that most PWC schools are ill-equipped to properly meet student needs.

Not at all

None

People are more open to and appreciative of counselors in the school system, however expectations are rather high for more personal individual assistance.

Made me more resolved to educate and motivate others.

It has impacted me negatively; too much backstabbing, gossiping and posturing.

We are expected to deal with so many problems, which is difficult given our huge caseload and other job tasks. Some parents expect us to do their work for them.

Parts of NCLB makes me feel that there are children left behind.

No affect at all

I have a very positive outlook towards my profession.

A lot of people don't think counseling is helpful or they are scared, but it is my experience I feel, that I am making a difference.

I enjoy working with kids and enjoy my coworkers.

No impact

The term "counselors" states that I should have time readily available for students and social concerns - when the fact is I am overwhelmed with paperwork.

This is a low socioeconomic area, but I hope that I can have a positive influence on the students so I feel the job is important.

It hasn't other than the fact that social values are very different than what needs to be portrayed in a school for a positive school climate to exist.

Counselors are faced with more contemporary issues in working with students – a general decline in character and responsibility on the part of the students.

It hasn't

I feel that my social climate is positive.

The social climate has not affected how I feel about my job. It has changed how many situations have to be dealt with.

More and more students coming to school from 2 or 3 households. Very rare to deal with students who live with 2 parents. Often one parent and parent's boyfriend or girlfriend

Has not

The students are students (I expect them to be), but the adults I work with sometimes have attitudes.

No effect

Not significantly

N/A

Not enough parent support, really saddened by this

It is positive. As a counselor at the middle school level, I have more time with the children. The high school level is driven by SOL testing.

The only thing that controls my feelings about my job are the parents, students, and staff, not the social climate.

It makes it more stressful I hear things that surprise me.

No effect

It can be frustrating when you want to help children cooperate and they are growing up “protecting” themselves, or race, etc.

No

This school has had internal struggles among staff and administration causing stress on all aspects of school including my position.

It hasn't

The need for counselors is greater than ever due to social issues present today. The social climate makes me feel more needed than ever.

Less support at home for students makes for a whole lot more work for us. We don't feel that we can possibly do all that needs to be done for these kids.

Less parental involvement has hurt our children in the means of accountability for actions.

Not my job – perhaps my country!!

No influence

Our school has a very positive climate as a result of good teaching, student encouragement, and involved parents.

Unsure

Makes me sure that the work I do with students is more important than ever. We fight TV, pop culture, internet and other distractions, inequitable distribution of wealth, immigrant stress and a host of others.

Moral is low in this school and it make my job harder.

No effect

Responses to *What are the significant impediments to the preferred role and function of your job?*

N/A

I feel that my job is to help students. Other than the responsibility of SOL testing, I don't allow politics or social climate to affect my job.

Teachers not wanting to let kids out of class to talk with me

Misconceptions about what school counselors really do, not what guidance did 10-20 years ago; scheduling classes throughout the school

Extra duties – morning duties, lunch duty, etc. Distant (not very supportive) directors/administration; Not enough hours in the day.

Time constraints, other people's agendas

Time, lack of funds

School counseling has become very administrative and thus those duties have hindered the performance of real counselor duties.

Testing

Lack of support from parents; hands off approach from department of social services

At certain times of year, there are more administrative tasks, which sometimes take me away from counseling tasks more than I would like to be i.e. scheduling

Paperwork, access to students, some teachers, administrative work, time in day

Too many non-clinical duties

Lots of kids with little or no parent support

Administrative duties

Administrative duties

Principal who doesn't understand the job of the counselor is a sign impediment

Climate – lacking heat in winter

Testing is a great impediment in my job. Even though I am not the testing coordinator for my two schools, the time I spend in testing preparation is tremendous.

Testing of gifted and talented is a side role I have, though I am not testing coordinator for SOLs or other standardized tests. This does take paperwork/time away from counseling duties.

Testing – specifically red tape and guidelines

Being the testing coordinator takes time away from working with students.

Leadership issues, organization with others, more than one boss

Lack of time, increased political oversight

People know that if any job is given to the counselor it will be done quickly and correctly, so we have been given tasks way outside the realm of counseling students.

Can't take students out of class too much due to SOLs.

Money, time

Administrative and testing duties interfere with the time I would like to spend with my students.

Lack of parental involvement, student apathy, high caseload, extraneous roles (i.e. testing, school improvement, special education, student activities, student recognition, tutoring, etc.); other counselors who do not want to be active in the school

Too much tests, more focus on SOLs, school yearly progress. No one cares that “Johnny” is not getting the values, character, or quality of educational common sense that would be life lasting.

There is a tremendous amount of paperwork and no secretary.

Clerical work, school test coordinator job, and having to account for counseling time

Too much time doing paperwork and other clerical tasks, no secretary support, seen as “keepers” of cumulative files

Coordinating approaches to students with teachers and administrators who have a different perspective on facilitating change

TIME! Too many student needs and responsibilities of job, not enough time

Paper work, for most coordinators – extra duties and testing

I do too much scheduling which is something a secretary could do and testing coordination is difficult on top of handling the Virginia standards of counseling.

How our time is spent dealing with administrative and counselor duties and paperwork

SOL testing, admin duties, paperwork

The caseloads, though normal, are extremely high they need to be reduced in order to adequately meet the needs of our students.

Our principal never gives praise, but is quick to be critical

Time management

Testing

Clerical/testing/administrative duties

Administrative assignments, salary (affects attitude), social concerns – “parental power”

Time to complete all tasks – time to see needy children, time to complete a days work in a days time; basically TIME!!

Difficult to follow ASCA framework when counselor/student ratio is 1:540

Lots of standardized and state mandating testing

SOL testing!

Principal support; supervisor of guidance who understands the function of counselors; teacher support and reinforcement of guidance activities (we do a lot of classroom activities and enrichment)

Time to meet with students as much time is spent with paperwork

School board and ___ office who undermine decisions made by our school administrators.

Not strong leadership with the director and no compassion if you have kids

Class scheduling

Overbearing parents, teachers who don't know role of counselor

There is a delicate balance that is a fundamental aspect of the job. Time management is hard too.

Too much paperwork, registering, attendance issues, testing, applications

Not enough time in day to get it all done.

SOL testing

Too much paperwork, not enough time with students, too much extra duties

Paperwork, lunch duty

Case load

Less and less time to actually counselor, more paperwork and other “add-ons”

Not too much time to finish all of the tasks you have to do, many interruptions during the day, I also do a lot of translation.

School counselors see kids less and less due to administration or other tasks

Lack of administrative support and understanding of the role of a school counselor

Micro-management i.e. county and principal putting specific restrictions on job functions, many because of SOLs

Lack of support or understanding from principal

Having to be test coordinator of the school impedes the second half of the year significantly.

NCLB we do more testing, coordinating, meeting, and planning than spending time with our kids.

I spend more of my time with students who are failing and don't get to see the students who are achieving.

Testing is a huge problem. I am basically unavailable as a school counselor from mid Feb through June.

Some counseling unrelated duties such as lunch duty, testing responsibilities; not enough time to provide small group counseling services and classroom guidance lessons

I can never get done!

None

The additional duties and excess of paper work; Every time something needs to be done we are voluntarily designated to do it.

Added job expectations

State testing requirements often limit access to students as teachers are trying to maximize class time to reach objectives.

Time – not enough time to complete work in 7 1/2 hours, counselors stay late, very late to accomplish their task; clerical duties; In addition to our responsibilities we handle a lot of clerical duties such as filing, copying, mailing, etc.

Non-related duties

Other responsibilities unrelated to job (i.e. lunch duty), limited amount of time to work with students (due to emphasis on academics), lack of parental involvement, teacher/staff not understanding role of school counselor

Test administration takes up too much time and prevents me from interacting with my students.

The current social climate – divorce, high cost of living, low pay has made population more transient, some students don't receive a lot of support at home. I still love my job though.

Time limitations

Supervisor, coworkers

Paper work and testing!

Expected to do an abundance of paper work. More time needed to give counseling to students

Duties and assignments not related to guidance

SOL testing and administrative duties certainly take time away from students.

Obviously clerical tasks such as test coordination and scheduling and not having a guidance secretary

Not enough time

Time spent with testing, report cards, transcripts, records, and scheduling take time away from what I am trained to do.

Testing (SOLs etc...) has limited our time with students. We can hardly access students do to career development or social skills development due to emphasis on instruction for SOL prep.

Lack of parental support, teachers who refuse to be flexible, over crowded classrooms

None, a growing and very much learned process

Testing is the one area of my job that takes away from the time I can spend with students.

N/A

Lack of communication; sometimes you can find yourself in a difficult situation. Also, you are not sure what might occur from one day to the next.

At times the climate is negative due to conflicting personalities in the school. Constant bickering and complaining distracts me from my role as a counselor for the students.

Lunch duty, hall duty affects my role at times.

Caseload size, master schedule, lessened communication with administration, instability within our department

The biggest one is my understanding of what is expected of me at all times. I do work independently, but there are times when I feel I am expected to report everything I am doing although I am not asked to do it. Then I am told I am not working with the team but I am focused on my caseload.

No assigned role and blurred boundaries

Sometimes you are forced to step outside of the role of counselor and into administrative role

Overcrowding in schools

Paperwork and stupid duties

Time and testing

Administrative tasks such as testing, scheduling and other paper work

Too large a caseload – no longer able to know all students assigned to me, too many other duties etc.

The number of students in my caseload makes it difficult to follow up with counselees. Also, if students are in my office, they're missing vital instructional time in class.

The paper work is tremendous, SOL testing and NCLB legislation greatly adds to paperwork

Administrators – at the building and central office level; there appears to be little to no regard to the guidance counselors; very little understanding and respect regarding our job and how we actually contribute to the school community

No impediments felt

Students and parents for the most part have a different attitude towards education today. Students are less respectful, have or demonstrate poor character, and parents are more demanding. It is now a “me society.”

None

I am able to complete my job successfully at this time. Sometimes paperwork and administrative duties are impediments.

Lunch duty, hall duty

Clerical work

None

Not enough time in the day. Sometimes disagreements in philosophies with teachers and administrators

It’s difficult to handle scheduling and student enrollment as well as working individually, in groups, and in classroom.

Language barriers, financial stress on families, low motivation in teachers/students

The amount of students on my caseload, the lack of direct supervision, the lack of financial resources available to students

My AP is awesome. She really understands my job and supports my decisions. Also my principal leaves many choices up to me. We also work collaboratively.

Lack of adequate funding

Paperwork, child study, eligibilities

My function is to function children. My actual job is the guidance office, administration of records, registration, grades, 504 plans and SOL testing in addition to a counseling program. Special education takes hours of work
We need a fulltime secretary to help with the paperwork, grades and testing.

Too much testing coordination!!

SOL testing, NCLB concern, child study chair, 504 building representative

Administration within the school and student behavior

Materials/supplies

Being politically correct hampers honesty

Too many students with too many academic/social concerns

So many special education students for behavioral issues that have nothing to do with their disability – always addressed in IEP as “see the counselor on a weekly basis.”

Administration – their attitude and beliefs toward the role of the school counselor

Too high caseload, too many clerical duties, not enough support staff

A multitude of administrative duties

Scheduling, i.e. data entry – takes too much time!

Meeting all students’ needs with alternative educational setting

Splitting school – rotating everyday between schools

Paperwork and non-guidance duties

Non-guidance assignments, too many students per counselor

No fulltime secretary for guidance office, old computers, printers and no copy machine in guidance office

None!

Lack of financial support to purchase supplies and attend significant conferences/workshops that pertain to being an effective counselors

Paperwork – there is no guidance secretary, so we do a lot of copying and busy work with records.

N/A

There is a vast amount of paperwork (clerical type) required.

Being school test coordinator keeps me from being able to counselor with students as much as the students need counseling.

I have lunch duty everyday (90 min a day) it is supported from the very top – the support of the school system. This has been going on for 5 years in spite of documenting how it decreased my time spent with individual and group appointments.

I have lunch duty everyday, which is a waste of time and I feel totally inappropriate. Also I don't have much freedom to make changes in the system of I think of improvements.

None

TESTING!!!

Having to coordinate and administer standardized tests

Too many students on caseloads; testing coordinator responsibilities; administrative responsibilities

Too many students, too many duties

Testing responsibilities, but are manageable

A supervisor with limited technology skills, poor communication and social skills

Paperwork and unrelated duties

School population - very needy (financial, social, emotional and academic). Many students need individual work we're constantly medicating and putting out fires. I still get in my groups and class guidance so I end up putting in lots of overtime – unpaid of course. Those who handle the master schedule in June change it numerous times which robs me of time with students since I need to spend hours and hours making changes.

Too much administrative work is put on counselor.

As guidance director and test coordinator I have limited time with my caseload of students.

Too many students in my caseload; extra duties

Duties – lunch duty sometimes keeps me from seeing children; also attending child study meetings

Not having enough time to do everything because of the obligations and responsibilities that come besides the counseling.

Tons of administrative type tasks

Some faculty not doing their job

We spend a lot of time dealing with behavior problems.

The paperwork, clerical work is overwhelming – I really don't have time to work with the students. Record keeping is a full time position.

SOL emphasis – we have no guidance secretary so I need to do a lot of record keeping, registering students, sending and receiving records, etc.

Haven't seen many yet

We desperately need clerical help. So much of my time is devoted to paperwork that it takes me away from quality time with students.

A few over reactive parents; weak central office supervision; large number of elementary background central office staff who have no clue how the decisions they make as superintendent and assist superintendent, etc. ripple over secondary.

The new counselor in our school moved to middle from a different level and the counselor is new to the middle school environment. Much of the time is spent mentoring and helping the counselor.

The amount of testing impedes my job. We have less contact with the needy students during the month of May.

SOL testing, tracking for AYP!!; registration for classes

SOLs

Too many insignificant chores, paperwork, lack of administrative leadership in the school, lack of consistent discipline

Difficulty in pulling students from class

Too much paperwork and details related to: attendance management, scheduling students, student assistance meetings, policies and forms, registration of students

Staffing within the building

Lunch duty and paperwork

Too many students, role not defined at administrative level, too many duties beside counseling!

None, currently

The amount of paper work that is required

Lack of cooperation from parents and teachers

Lack of parental involvement at the middle school level; lack of financial backing for programs that would enhance guidance lessons/activities to support students

My belief that all people are important and that I can only impart information, everyone is responsible for themselves.

Like most counselors – too many responsibilities

None

Extra responsibilities that are not related to counseling: i.e. lunch duty and 504 plan coordination; not enough social workers and psychologists available to our students; poor (inadequate) secretarial support

We have serious psychological needs for our students, which go unmet due to a decrease in government funding resources, we try to pick up the slack but the needs are great and our time is limited due to other responsibilities.

Limited time with students

Testing has been a challenge, but as of next year that responsibility will be put in a new position created for testing.

Confusion, disarray, lack of support, weak structure in building

Our superintendent implemented a career guidance program just this year. Although I feel the career activities and conferences with every student and family have value, I feel frustrated most days because it is humanly impossible to do my job the way I feel it needs to.

Excessive testing responsibilities; excessive committee assignments

Too much to do; lots of time testing and scheduling although blessedly I am no longer test coordinator

A distant “disinterested principal” a assistant principal who is trying to fill the principals shoes there is no communication in this school the job is overwhelming, things don’t get done

N/A

Responses to *What are the significant supports that allow you to perform the preferred role and function of your job?*

None

My principal allows me to do my job without a lot of interference.

My immediate coworkers: fellow counselor, school psychologist, guidance secretary, principals

My principal understands what I do and encourages me to do counseling. Teachers are becoming better about using me as a resource for kids; all counselor meetings, middle school counselor meetings; our county director of guidance recommends our abilities to school board

My work ethic and the fact I'm not ___ as to our real mission as counselors

Great teachers and students

Administrators and peers

Good principals

Satisfied kids or helping to make a difference in someone's life

Supportive administrators; presence of S. R. O. daily; on site day treatment program\

Strong administrative support

Counseling director, other counselors in school and district, parents, some teachers

Not required to be testing coordinator, but must be a test monitor

Lots of supportive staff

Supervisor; mandates from county to perform certain duties

Teacher support; director support

My department director is my most significant support

Good relationships with administrators, teachers, other counselors, secretaries
I have the support of my team members and we work together to maximize the time we have with our students, working together on all other tasks that seem to fall in our laps.

A great supervisor who stands up and defines counselor role clearly. Also joining professional organizations like my local chapter of VCA has helped. A strong administration to support my role

Our county supervisor is very supportive and understands our impossible work load

We have a school social worker, a behavioral specialist and a school nurse who are very helpful.

Coworkers, middle school principal

Administrative and school board support

My principal is supportive in me finding appropriate members to “train” to take over noncounseling jobs given to guidance counselors.

Supportive administrators and faculty

A supportive and counselor centered principal

My school is like a family, we are there to support each other. We work together alleviates impediments to our job.

Having a test coordinator, IEP coordinator

Success stories with students, strong principal support, staff development training

The administrators at my school

The administrators and teachers are very supportive and we have a very active parent group.

My principal does not put counselors in a disciplinary role (monitor, etc).

Experienced guidance director, supportive staff

My husband’s commitment to me and my job satisfaction; the support of other counselors, school psychologist, school social workers, and some teachers and administrators; also coordination with community resources

Staff is supportive

Support of administrators and staff in general

The other counselors in my school and the county in providing in-service training and support during student crisis

Teamwork within our section, a competent supervisor and principal

I don't feel supportive by administration in my current school but colleagues and administrators can be the support to perform preferred role

Our administrator views counseling as a vital part of the educational process. At our school we have limited paperwork. This in turn, allows us to spend more time doing what we had planned (counseling).

My support staff – fellow counselors

Support staff

Administrators

I like most of the people I work with and much of the time we work well together. My family is supportive.

Administrator understanding

Fellow counselors, a lot of teachers are supportive, administrative support

Colleagues are the main support

A wonderful coordinator and instructional specialist; Also we have formed a team and are very close.

Secretary who acts as registrar doing bulk of scheduling and grades; principal who is competent, skilled, and values counselor role

Fantastic administrative support

No comment; at this time I do not feel we have support from administrators nor from central office or state!

Very little now – the director of guidance in ___ was forced to retire and most counselors are left at the mercy of principals and new guidance supervisor. The other counselor and myself have both worked together for many years and have built a program that we think is helpful to students. It helps to work with another counselor so that we support what each other does in my school.

Great team of counselors; supportive and wonderful administrator
Smaller caseload than other schools, other counselors in the building open to sharing, trust from the community (teachers, parents, counselors, students)

Teachers, other counselors, secretaries

Administrators and county

Great director, good principal

My coworkers are supportive; Some parents are supportive.

The people I work with, especially other teachers and counselors

Teams, computer, great assistant principal, great guidance director, phone, email, teachers that do extra

Supportive administration

I have bosses that do not bother you and let you do your job.

Immediate supervisors are very good as are other counselors.

Fellow counselors, social worker, and psychologist

Great administration, terrific counseling department

We have a great team of counselors and a great community

The staff at my school is extremely supportive and it helps me to perform my job more effectively.

Great support and encouragement from director and other counselors

Parent support is high in the community.

Supportive director, excellent students, helpful parents, having my own office

I love working for the director of student services on my school. She handles the administrative things and I can do more counseling duties.

My supervisor keeps us away from hall or cafeteria duty.

My boss is such a great support.

I do not feel like there is a ton of “supports” out there. As testing coordinator I am asked to do more and more every year without additional support.

Teachers are supportive to counselors pulling students from classes for individual/group counseling. My director allows us to do things the way that we feel best serve the students.

I have coworkers who pitch in and help when needed.

Great staff

Psychologist, social workers, administrator, speech, LD dept, all school staff and faculty

Administrative support; collaboration with other middle school counselors and directors

FCPS resources are excellent, availability of variety of trainings, workshops & seminars, and support of our principal

Resource specialist and administrative support

Support of administration, freedom to be creative and think “outside the box”

co-workers, administrators, workshops

My immediate supervisor fails to hire the best available staff members. She does not provide the training needed by new members- this is where PC is hurting our quality of new staff.

Great team of counselors, principal supports our dept with money, school system offers remedial classes

Administration

Test coordination and other clerical duties take up some valuable time

None

Fellow counselors work together well. Teachers are very supportive of students. PTA is very supportive of school.

1. Guidance secretary 2. administrators who try to support the guidance counselor

I have a very supportive administrator who allows me to assist students, parents and colleagues with counseling as much as possible

Supervisor trusts my decision

Parents and administrators see the need for counseling students and support counselors fitting it in wherever they can.

We have autonomy to plan activities and the administrator generally supports that, but the limited availability of students is a problem. We work with our teams in collaboration for students.

Coworkers who are willing to be team players (very few unfortunately)

Much support

My principal and school system supervisor go out of their way to give me as much time as possible to really do my job.

Coworkers

Guidance director is available at any time if I need assistance. Most of the staff/faculty are supportive of what I need to do.

My administrator is very approachable when I have concerns/ideas. The other counselors/secretaries are always willing to share ideas and materials.

Principal, staff, and parents

Positive view among staff, support among counselors, no testing responsibilities

Friendships with the teachers I work with

Our principal

The principal supports and respects the role of the counselor. She understands that we have an important job to do.

Strong administrator and program director

Administrative support

Supportive administration and department

No significant supports

Supportive administration

Our current principal is wonderful! He and the two assistant principals know the value of what counselors can do. Also, most of the faculty understands that when we call for students there is a real purpose.

Administrators who support counselors and protect our role

Few people seem to care what I do, which leaves me time to work with students

The support received from central office, administrators, and faculty are a plus for my job

Supportive staff and administration

Supervisor and colleagues

Supportive and knowledgeable lead counselor, supportive administration, support from student services at county level

Teacher support, administrative support, happy school environment

Administrative support

From the supervisor on down to school administrator, all very supportive

My dean, most teachers, fellow counselor

A wonderful administrative team that values a counselor's role

Amazing administration, following my students for three years, supportive parents

My administrative team has been wonderful! They are extremely supportive and open to ideas.

It would help to ask about teachers and their understanding of the emotional issues that affect how kids perform in school. I think middle school teachers don't always understand middle schoolers' emotional lives.

Administrators that understand the role of counselor

Administrative support from central office

2nd counselor, sec, SOL test clerk, great admin, wonderful director in central office

My other counselor, our part time secretary

We have a wonderful and supportive administrative staff who do not infringe on the time we need to counsel. They understand and appreciate our role and function.

Building administrators keep many administrative tasks away from us (i.e. master schedule).

My supports are my fellow counselors, the magnet director (works closely with guidance) and the guidance program supervisor.

Staff/administrator, PTA, parents

My faith! My church! Good staff at my school, good administrative support

Very few if any! Most significantly we have uncommunicative leader

My teachers are awesome and my school division guidance supervisor is the best. She is there with suggestions and sometimes funding.

Other counselors in my building and my grade level teachers

Need within school – we handle everything so are ___ people; emotional realm of students our responsibility

Department chair support, administrative support

The guidance directors at both schools and the support staff

Ethical standards and NPS guidelines

Great team at school, support from head of guidance

Department chairperson is very supportive

Administrator, coworkers

Having friends who are counselors from other localities

Very supportive administration and faculty; relatively private area for counseling

Supportive administration, supportive central office staff, parental support

Understanding admin staff who do not require counselors to become overly involved in other school committees, etc.

Having an excellent school secretary and also having a special education teacher as chairman of the child study committee rather than it be my job

Currently I have building level support for my job and excellent support staff with a secretary and computer info specialist to help with scheduling.

The other counselor I work with is very helpful and supportive. She is teaching me a great deal.

Supervisory support, open administrative team and teachers giving up class time

The principal is amazing! She understands what counselors need to best help students

Other counselors, administrator; social workers and school psychologists; outside community counselors

Principal support, school psychologist, social worker

Excellent counselors, outstanding guidance secretary; supportive administration

Co-counselors unified and supportive supervisory department

Co-counselors

Supportive staff does exist and makes a difference

I'm not test coordinator, don't have a major role in SOL testing; not called to cover or substitute, no lunch or bus duty; set my own calendar (groups etc.)

Building administrator, some central office staff

My principal – hiring a SASI administrator to take that job from me

Money for activities, supportive supervisor and principal

I have a very supportive guidance director who constantly fights for the rights of the counselor. The principal also supports our role as serving the children first.

Teachers, administration, students, parents and other counselors

An absolutely incredible principal, wonderful teachers and excellent support staff

Great administrative team

My administrator fully support our roles.

Last year my school principal was very difficult to work with and not supportive of my job. Due mainly because he didn't know my job or care to learn it. This year I have a very supportive principal and I feel very supportive.

Great staff and administration

Having two of us helps support more children

A principal who supports our program. Fellow counselors who are willing to give advice when called upon.

My principal, guidance coordinator, secretary, teachers and staff in this school

Principal, guidance secretary, supervisors and teachers

The guidance department here uses a team approach.

Not too many. Sometimes we have support from our guidance coordinators at central office. Most of the time they have no power to change things especially with testing.

Good administration, decent central office support

I'm pretty much left alone to do what I need to do

Very supportive building administrator

Having three counselors plus a secretary, having a guidance supervisor at central office who advocates for counselors; having time to do individual counseling with students

My fellow counselors and teachers I work with strongly support me in my roles.

Administration and county supervisor

Principal very understanding and willing to listen and allow us to do as much as we can in our department.

We have a very supportive principal and staff.

None

We receive support from the administration and school personnel that is tremendous in being successful with all that we have to do.

Support from other counselors, office support, and administrator cooperation

Family support – husband and children; administration support – high level of trust; peer support; student/parent support

A supportive staff and administration

Reasonably well supported by staff and administration

A central office director who supports us and fights for us

Strong support groups program for students in our school. We are not heavily involved in discipline.

Administrator covers the disciplinary arena w/o involving us, most of the time

My administrator and supervisor

There are very little if any at this particular middle school

The question about being busy were difficult to answer. I am always busy so yes, the job provides that opportunity. However, I often feel dissatisfied with feeling like I am multi tasking to the max all day long trying to balance planned activities with putting out fires.

Positive teacher assistance, parent input

Low caseload, collegiality, pupil services and support from county and school district, get to stay with kids three years, decent pay

A supportive grade level administrator, superintendent, and fellow counselor

My principal supports most of the time

Responses to *Are there factors that have not been asked about that would help in understanding your level of job satisfaction?*

No

I do like my job for the respect that parents and students show.

There is a director of guidance for the county that helps out but I do not have a true supervisor. My principal and other counselor are who I turn to for guidance.

Coworkers, supervision, mentorship (or lack of)

The role of the principal designee and special ed responsibilities, testing coordinator, homebound coordinator, enrollment and record keeper, schedule coordinator, the list could go on

No, I feel that my department and overall county provides sufficient training for me to do my job.

How does your school system view the role of the counselor?

Outcome of department of social services referrals – some just evade common sense

None

I will never tire of working with my students. It is rewarding to help them learn to be productive, happy citizens. It is the “extra “ tasks that add the stress and is running some counselors to early retirement or other jobs.

I love working with middle school students.

Income (obviously)

The job we do is important. Parents, students, and teachers have times when they talk to “dump” resolve issues or just talk.

Having a guidance secretary would greatly relieve a lot of the clerical burden we carry at the middle school level.

No, I am very satisfied with the exception of the rapid pace and demands of the time I have.

I do not have a lot of the extra duties that many coordinators carry

If the teachers are happy than they are more willing to invite me in for classroom guidance and speak to students during class time; teacher satisfaction is important, also teachers don't understand what the title of school counselor is.

I am dissatisfied with the amount of paper work involving testing and scheduling and the fact that there is less and less time to counsel.

N/A

Counseling is extremely demanding and stressful in today's climate. Guidance supervisors should provide more support for us.

No

What level are you – counselor or guidance coordinator?

Salaries are so low compared to professionals in other areas requiring the same or less education

I love my job! I could have retired four years ago.

Work environment – better office

None

Yes, working in a county that tries to save money by using unqualified staff in counselor positions seven having those people act as director of counseling; unethical and no opportunity to advance administratively, such a weak model

N/A

I feel counselors are overlooked in many areas!

I think that one must feel appreciated for their contributions in the school setting. Being a counselor in a public school has become a very difficult and frustrating job in the last 5 years due to the fact that educators in general are not held at high regard and counselors are expected to fix most problems but given very little respect

More expectations each year, nothing being taken away

No

No

No

No

No

Changes in school programming beyond our control; such as increased testing, inclusion of special education students

Teacher cooperation

N/A

Students – parents, faculty

I would love to be able to do more for students to meet specific needs. i.e. we can not pull students from academic classes because they will miss instruction. How does a student in a major/minor crisis benefit from staying in class?

More guidance administrators are returning to jobs as counselors to try to help kids, that's what I did.

We are always busy. This questionnaire was hard to find time for.

We are asked to do so many extra duties now that helping kids and families seem to be going by the wayside. The pressure of keeping up with 280 students plus testing duties is often overwhelming, and neither job gets done as well as it should.

Not that I can think of

No

No

No

Political correctness – there is too much of it in education. Also emailing and internet have brought some different and complex problems.

I work with wonderful counselors. We agree to disagree, always lend a helping hand and work hard to provide the best services for students.

Life is what you make of it. If I am unhappy it is my job to fix it in my work setting and role.

Parents not respecting what we do. Come in without setting up appointments

This is my second year in this school system and I have found it to be superior over my previous one. Counselors here actually have time to work with students, even with SOL testing.

Given the state of budget issues in the state and county the ideal setting will never exist. This is my belief after 25 yrs in education. There is a national and local shortage of teachers, administrators, and counselors. I think the lack of money or salaries in these fields are greatly a part of the problem. Great teachers, counselors and administrators are born not made and yet many choose to pursue more lucrative careers

No

I love the time I can spend with students, helping, listening, guiding, and counseling

Many major changes occurred last summer (change in teams, A/B schedule, length of classes, addition of reading remedial periods) that have made this year a challenge for many staff. This has not been the case before this year.

No

Money would make my job better only because it would prove how valuable my job is to the educational process

N/A

No

No

N/A

No

No, overall, I am satisfied with where I am. Besides possibly being assigned to another school, I am happy with where I am now.

Counselors are not held in high esteem by teachers we work with.

Noncounseling duties, sometimes we are placed in a position where we have to do discipline.

No

You did not ask about what my preferred role is

My feelings for my job, for which I have done for 27 years, have more to do with my age and the amount of time that I have been doing this job than anything else. For the most part I have had a very rewarding career as a middle and high school counselor.

None

No

None

I can give you helpful and significant information about every student on my caseload.

I don't know if this survey truly shows how happy I am with my job. I love the flexibility of my job. I interact with kids all day. It is a very satisfying field.

I love the children and make an impact. The paperwork is a full days job before ever seeing a student. The work level regarding SOL testing is abusive.

No

No

The student discipline at my school leads to a lot of stress. The reactive v. proactive nature of my school also leads to dissatisfaction

No

My teachers are awesome and my school division guidance supervisor is the best. She is there with suggestions and sometimes funding.

Politics within school vary greatly. Certain negative attitudes reduce satisfaction

N/A

Urban environment is challenging

No!

N/A

Must spend great deal of time after school to complete paperwork, copy and send records, posting test scores, etc. true counseling is limited and done on almost crisis or as needed basis

I love helping children and not being in a supervisory or disciplinary position

I am a school counselor and the director of guidance and counseling. It is two job description. I am often used as an administrator and work very long hours with being the school test coordinator as well, it was overwhelming. It was also not compensated in salary. My professional documentation fell on deaf ears until I involved VCA and adamantly refused to be STC without compensation.

No

N/A

If I wasn't satisfied with job I wouldn't stay.

No

Guidance is alternating exhausting, challenging, rewarding, and frustrating

You didn't ask about the dozens and dozens of jobs, duties, responsibilities etc that are part of everyday environment of a middle school guidance office.

Salary...and poor benefits are a deterrent for recruiting positive skilled staff

Our principal has wrecked havoc on moral. Teachers are leaving every year – great teachers. It's been very disruptive on the whole community

The faculty I work with is very supportive and energetic. For the most part, we get along pretty well.

I'm afraid I'm skewing your results! I've interviewed for 2 admin positions in the past week. I'll be leaving a job I've loved for 12 years. I keep trying to convince myself its time to go (salary will increased by 20K)

No

This questionnaire did not ask about clerical assistance. I have a clerical assistant. This is the first year my system has hired a second counselor. Up until this year I had 568 students with no assistance what so ever. The hours of over time are phenomenal with so compensation. Still now with extra help I still work many hours of over time.

My job satisfaction is high because I like this job because there are two counselors here. I was previously (eight years) in a middle school where I was the only counselor and no clerical support. That almost killed me. I routinely had to work one to three hours after school just to keep up. And then I was never really on top of everything (so for the previous job I had a lot of dissatisfaction).

There are a lot of after school requirements that are unnecessary.

The teachers support us, as well as principals and staff. The central office staff should never include elementary background in areas that decide issues of secondary personnel and students.

I'm very satisfied with my career and current placement. I enjoy coming to work everyday.

Never have time for groups because SOL training or test teaching, students can't come to groups from class because too many of these students are already being pulled for remediation for SOL testing.

None

I need more clerical help

Counselors meet building needs, not division programs, no commitment to national model

Job satisfaction is impacted by the desire and opportunities to do private practice

No

No

No

Our job description continues to expand each year. No job description is given to us in writing that we are shown. We need clarification of our exact role/expectations from administration (central office and building)

We do many things that it is hard to nail down a schedule. We spend most of our time putting out fires so it's hard for others to understand our duties.

N/A

I love the diversity of my schools student body! I love the energy of kids this age!

Counselors are left out of the loop: we are not included in any administrative meetings, more jobs get dumped on our plates, the counselor/student ration is way too high

VITA

Tara Yost Bane
Born in Trenton, NJ 1970
Resides presently in Salem, VA

EDUCATION

Master of Arts in Counseling and Guidance from Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina 1996

Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Interdisciplinary Studies from Radford University, Radford, Virginia 1993

WORK EXPERIENCE

Professional School Counselor at Read Mountain Middle School in Cloverdale, Virginia (1996-2001)

Professional School Counselor at Hudson Middle School in Hudson, North Carolina (1995-1996)