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The Roles and Functions of the School Psychologist and the Counselor: Perceptions of School Psychology Trainees and Counselor Trainees

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The Roles and Functions of the School
Psychologist and the Counselor:
Perceptions of School Psychology
Trainees and Counselor Trainees

(TITLE)

BY

Leslie A. Englehart

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I	Introduction	1
	Purpose of study.....	4
II	Review of literature.....	5
III	Methodology.....	15
	Research design.....	15
	Subjects.....	17
	Techniques of measurement	18
IV	Results	19
	Significant differences.....	19
	Chi-square tables	21-26
V	Discussion	27

Appendix

	Questionnaire.....	30
	Bibliography.....	34

Chapter

Introduction of Problem

How does a professional person acquire or create a definition of his professional activity? In most cases, there are sets of expectations generally held in the society-at-large that serve to structure and limit the activities of any person whether he is a member of a profession or not.

These loosely defined limits are often related to levels of training and preparation that evolve through joint effort and that enjoy joint acceptance by the society and the profession (Bentley, 1968.) Therefore, the concept of role must include the idea of interaction between two or more parties, each of which has a voice in the role defining process. Bentley also feels that any role is a product of expectations shared by at least two, and often more, individuals or groups of individuals. A clarification of any role, therefore, must be shared as a process in which all participants contribute to the final outcome.

In the present study, the roles and functions of the School Psychologist and Counselor as perceived by School Psychology trainees and Counselor trainees in five Midwestern universities will be investigated. In many school settings, the duties of the Counselor and Psychologist greatly overlap, possibly due to many commonalities in training and shared responsibilities, and often these two professions are in the center of role diffusion difficulties.

Cramer (1966) suggests the following five areas as possible sources of role conflict:

1. The School Psychologist has become more and more concerned with "normal children," while the Counselor has also exhibited greater involvement with exceptional children and both have claimed concern for all pupils.
2. The School Psychologist has broadened his base of operations to school concerns of a non-clinical nature while the Guidance Counselor has become more clinically-oriented.
3. Both the School Psychologist and the Counselor are operating on the basis of the "team" approach and in many cases their methodologies and techniques are similar.
4. The School Psychologist is gradually becoming an integral and resident member of the school faculty rather than a "visitor" to the school.
5. Training standards for School Psychologists and Counselors sometimes overlap.

Studies have shown that discrepancies concerning role definitions of the School Psychologist and the Counselors

do exist, although it has not been determined whether these discrepancies originate during the training process or if they arise when the Psychologists and Counselors are actually involved professionally. Also, no evidence was available that differentiated the perceptions of males and females as to the roles and functions of Psychologists and Counselors; this is an area that will also be explored in the present study.

Purpose of the Study

Hypotheses

-that School Psychology trainees will not perceive the roles of the School Psychologist and the Counselor as being measurably different from the perceptions of Counselor trainees.
-that female School Psychology trainees will not perceive the roles and the functions of the School Psychologist and the Counselor differently than will male School Psychology trainees.
-that female Counselor trainees will not perceive the roles and functions of the two professions differently than will male Counselor trainees.

Review of the literature

School Psychology as a profession continues to search for its proper domain in the educational network. The profession has not developed a standard mode for its services to the schools nor have researchers and educators been able to arrive at a consensus with respect to the utilization of this new member of the team. Bardon, 1968, ascertained that each academic department and professional specialty would prefer that School Psychology be shaped after the image of each of their particular specialties.

Knowles and Shertzer (1966) suggested that one of the major difficulties surrounding the problem of role delineation is that an individual is apt to see the roles of others from a perceptual framework in which his own role is the center. When another person's role overlaps with one's own, the tendency is to emphasize role differences in order to maintain a consistent role perception, even if the roles are not in actuality, so different.

Eiseier (1963) also pointed out that if a smoothly functioning team is to result, the job functions and roles of the various specialists, such as School Psychologists

or Counselors, must be clarified to their mutual satisfaction. The goal of working together is the responsibility of the representatives of each discipline.

Trachtman (1961) viewed the School Psychologist as the quality control engineer of the public schools, as the educational change agent, and as the individual most concerned with the mental health of children, so far as it affects their educability.

Gray (1963) perceived the School Psychologist as the "problem solver"; Cook (1958) saw him as a multidisciplinary team member who would collect and disseminate information in the school and implement programs in the educational milieu. Bardon (1968) firmly stated that the School Psychologist's role is defined by whatever each particular School Psychologist does, whether it be counseling, behavioral management, testing, etc.

Cutts (1954) reported the following conclusions of a conference of the American Psychological Association concerning the functions of the School Psychologist: The School Psychologist serves in an advisory capacity to school personnel and performs the following function:

1. Measuring and interpreting the intellectual, social, and emotional level of children.

2. Identifying exceptional children and collaborating in the planning of appropriate educational and social placements.
3. Developing ways of facilitating the learning and adjustment of children.
4. Encouraging and initiating research and helping to utilize research findings for the solution of school problems.
5. Diagnosing educational and personal disabilities, and collaborating in the planning of re-educational programs.

Among the other specialties and professions, Micheal (1965) pointed out the many myths and preconceived notions about the School Psychologist. He suggests four extra-mural myths held by those outside the profession:

1. That all School Psychologists have the same training.
2. That all School Psychologists have the same type of job, and do the same thing.
3. That the expectations of administrators in regard to School Psychologists are the same.
4. That all School Psychologists can make themselves understood and can make sense to those with whom they talk.

Micheal (1965) also suggested three intra-mural myths held within the profession itself:

1. That School Psychologists agree on what they should be doing in the schools.
2. That all universities agree on what the training program for School Psychologists should be.

3. That all School Psychologists should be trained to function alike.

The net result of Micheal's myths seems to indicate and offer further evidence that the profession of School Psychology has still not gained the foothold it desires.

A study in New York involving elementary principals, elementary teachers, and School Psychologist educators (Valachovic, 1968) came to the conclusion that the roles and functions of the School Psychologist have not been developed to a point where there is substantial agreement among the three professional groups about many different aspects of the activities of School Psychologists.

Some of the reasons which may explain why the previously mentioned professions and School Psychologists themselves may have difficulty in defining their role have been suggested by Bower (1958). One of these factors is the relative newness of the profession which makes it difficult for administrators and other public school personnel to have any clear perception of the School Psychologist's role. Another factor may be that the perception that others may have of the School Psychologist is that he is seen as promoting a "soft" approach to human behavior, and that they are constantly involved in

trying to understand why children behave as they do without having any ideas for assisting them to change their behavior.

School Psychology is not alone in its role crisis. Donald Mansen (1965) felt that despite the fact that the profession of counseling has grown in the past century, its professional boundaries, its social goals, and the significance of its service was and still is being disputed even by counselors, let alone other professionals.

Then again, many counselors may fail to see the need for a role definition. Peter (1962) recognizes this factor but still feels that if the Counselor does not define his duties, he will be saddled with tasks and responsibilities that not only take time away from primary concerns, but actually interferes with the guidance function. Peters further defines what he feels the Counselor's duties should be:

- 1...to ascertain his own readiness for counseling duties
- 2...to concern himself with the developmental progress of all boys and girls
- 3...to assist boys and girls in the exploration of self
- 4...to assist the individual in decision-making

- 5...to focus part of his career energies upon interpretive trending
- 6...to be involved in interpretive programming (working with parents)
- 7...to spend at least half-time in counseling interview situations

Actual duties of the Counselor were outlined in an early study by Arnold (1949), according to the amount of time spent in certain activities:

1. Attendance and tardiness
2. Discipline and failure
3. Working with teachers
4. Vocational and educational counseling
5. Clerical guidance work
6. Schedule making
7. School-wide activities
8. Placement and work certificates
9. Organization of occupational information
10. Guidance Committee work

Mathewson (1964), when trying to outline actual programmatic operations of Counselors, delineated three main forms of Counselor function in his view:

1. The Counselor as program director.
2. The Counselor as information dispenser and interpreter.

3. The Counselor as problem-solver and trouble-shooter.

Although recognizing that the roles of Counselors and School Psychologists have not been sharply defined, Capabianco (1967) feels that the duties and responsibilities of the School Psychologist and Counselor supplement one another. Consulting with the Counselor, the School Psychologist can further add valuable material regarding clinical impressions and prognosis for future success in various areas of vocational promise. Capabianco believes that the relationship between the Counselor and the School Psychologist is one of mutual advisement and consultation rather than direct cooperative effort.

The above mentioned Counselor-Psychologist relationship appears to be ideal, however, White and Harris (1961) pointed out that some Counselors feel that psychological referral may place a stigma on a child, or that the psychologist delves into areas of emotional orientation unnecessary for affective remediation of the problem. Along the same lines, the Psychologist may tend to perceive all problems as stemming from a profound emotional pathology and fail to recognize the effectiveness of personal and educational counseling. Because of these

role communication difficulties, several researchers have thought it important to investigate the attitudes of Counselors toward the School Psychologist and vice versa, and to define the elements that formulate these attitudes.

In one such instance, (Knowles and Shertzer, 1966), the School Psychologists questioned about the role of the Counselor emphasized the information-giving role of the Counselor more than any other group, thereby minimizing the personal and educational counseling aspects of the Counselor's role. Because the Psychologists questioned emphasized few overlapping functions between their profession and that of the Counselor, the authors (Knowles and Shertzer, 1966) concluded that such a viewpoint distorted the reality of the school situation and that it could lead to friction between the two groups.

When a similar study was undertaken to describe the attitudes of Counselors and Counselor Educators toward the role of the School Psychologist (Knowles and Shertzer, 1968-69) the authors found that both these groups tended to differentiate the School Psychologist's role from the School Counselor's role to a greater extent than did the other groups. The professional questioned also agreed that the School Psychologist is identified more with Psychology

than with education.

In the same study, Counselors were perceived as working more with normal students, and Psychologists as working with disturbed students. In a study that again questioned Counselor educators and Psychologist educators, (Cramer, 1966), the three major functions of the Counselor were perceived as:

1. Counseling
2. Group testing
3. Clerical and miscellaneous tasks.

The major functions performed by the School Psychologist were perceived as being:

1. Group testing
2. Consultation
3. Counseling therapy
4. Clinical diagnosis
5. Remedial and special education programs.

The following areas were perceived as similar for both professions, which could be regarded as collaborative endeavors or as sources of role conflict: Counseling students regarding their personal and social adjustment and counseling students with discipline problems; Cooperative efforts in the identification of retarded students, gifted

students, and students with personal-social adjustment difficulties, and collaborating in educational planning for these students; Carrying out various professional and pupil personnel department obligations; Making referrals to community agencies for therapy and other related reasons; Assisting teachers in securing and interpreting information about students and making recommendations to teachers for working more effectively with students; Assisting in the development of mental hygiene and sound emotional attitudes; Conducting case conferences concerning individual students; and knowing the community, its resources, and expectations.

The above study (Cramer, 1966) concluded that the perceived role of the Counselor is broad and extensive, whereas the perceived role of the School Psychologist appears narrow and intensive.

Chapter III

Methodology

Research Design

In order to test the hypotheses of this study, a questionnaire was developed to survey the perceptions of School Psychology and Counseling trainees regarding the roles and functions of each profession. The questionnaire was made up of thirty-five duties or functions and the subject was asked to choose whether it was the responsibility of: (1) the School Psychologist, (2) the Counselor, or (3) Joint responsibility.

Items on the questionnaire were derived from a previous study by Cramer, 1966, (refer to items 1-18, 20, 22, 24, 27, 28, 30, 32, and 33 on the questionnaire) and nine additional items were selected by the author from recent psychological literature to make a total of thirty-five.

This questionnaire was given to twenty-three male and twenty female School Psychology trainees, and twenty-five male and twenty-eight female Counseling trainees selected from five Midwestern universities. Results compiled from the questionnaire were tabulated by a computer and

Chi-squares were computed between each professional group on each item. Computations were also done between the responses of both sexes of each professional group. The .05 level of confidence was used to determine which Chi-squares were indicative of significant differences.

The Chi-square data was tabled and the items yielding significant Chi-squares were designated and discussed in an interpretation of the results.

Subjects

The subjects used in this study were twenty-three male and twenty female School Psychology trainees selected from Indiana State University, Eastern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University, and Western Illinois University, and twenty-five male and twenty-eight female Counseling trainees selected from Eastern Illinois University and the University of Illinois. These universities were selected by this researcher because of proximity and availability of eligible students for the study; the selection had no bearing on the academic merit of any particular program.

All of the subjects questioned had to have at least twelve hours of graduate work in their field but could not have completed an internship or training on-the-job. The subjects may have worked in the schools, except as a School Psychologist or Counselor.

All of the subjects were asked to complete the questionnaire and return it to the researcher or person in charge at the immediate time of completion.

Techniques of Measurement

Each questionnaire was coded for each individual sub-group (Psychologists, Counselors, male, female, etc.) and the totals were key-punched on IBM cards. Every item was tabulated to indicate the number of persons in each professional group (School Psychologists and Counselors) who classified the item as the responsibility of:

- (1) the School Psychologist, (2) the Counselor, or
- (3) Joint responsibility.

Chi-squares were computed between School Psychologists and Counselors on each item. Chi-squares were also done between both sexes of each professional group. In each case, observed and expected frequencies were recorded, Chi-square summations were obtained, and the .05 level of significance was used as the significance determinant. Items that yielded Chi-squares with significant differences are indicated by an asterisk on Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Chapter IV

Results

Significant Differences

Chi-square was used to test for the significance of differences between the responses of each of the paired groups (Psychologist trainees-Counselor trainees; female Counseling trainees-male Counseling trainees; and female Psychologist trainees-male Psychologist trainees) on each item on the questionnaire. Results are shown on tables 1, 2, and 3, with significant items designated by an asterisk.

Twenty-five Chi-squares with significant differences were obtained between the perceptions of the Psychologists and Counselors; these included items: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 32, 33, and 34. Of these items, all except 19, 23, 25, 26, and 34 were taken from Cramer, 1966. We may reject the hypothesis that "School Psychology trainees will not perceive the roles of the School Psychologist and the Counselor as being measurably different from the perceptions of Counselor trainees" on the twenty-five items mentioned.

Seven Chi-squares with significant differences were obtained between the perceptions of the female Psychologists

and the male Psychologists: this included items 7, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30, and 32. Items 7, 24, 27, 30, and 32 were derived from Cramer, 1966. On the basis of the said differences, we may reject the hypothesis that "female School Psychology trainees will not perceive the roles and the functions of the School Psychologist and Counselor differently than will male Psychology trainees," on those seven items.

Only one Chi-square with significant difference (item 4) was found between the responses of the female Counselors and the male Counselors. This item was derived from Cramer, 1966. We can accept the hypothesis that "female Counselors trainees will not perceive the roles and functions of the two professions differently than will male Counselor trainees," excluding item 4.

Table 1Chi-squares: Psychologists and Counselors: df 2

<u>Item</u>	<u>Chi-square value</u>	<u>Level of Significance</u>
1	23.8176	.001 *
2	8.35249	.02 *
3	17.0054	.001 *
4	15.3093	.001 *
5	17.8828	.001 *
6	2.33871	.500
7	11.8966	.01 *
8	19.4394	.001 *
9	31.2655	.001 *
10	26.0422	.001 *
11	6.64248	.05 *
12	3.76047	.250
13	6.23704	.05 *
14	4.7848	.100
15	.429248	.100
16	11.3321	.01 *
17	21.922	.001 *
18	8.89316	.02 *
19	17.713	.001 *
20	7.22536	.05 *
21	5.6336	.100
22	5.49516	.100
23	7.78502	.05 *
24	17.0218	.001 *
25	.95087	.01 *
26	9.427	.01 *
27	16.826	.001 *

Table 1 (continued)

Chi-squares: Psychologists and Counselors: df 2

Item	Chi-square value	Level of Significance
28	.470072	.100
29	5.22962	.100
30	9.01958	.01 *
31	5.15232	.100
32	19.8601	.001 *
33	9.57639	.01 *
34	15.0344	.001 *
35	5.49106	.100

* Indicates item that has significant Chi-square, using the $< .05$ level of significance as the determinant

Table 2

Chi-squares: Female/Male Psychologists: df 2

Item	Chi-square value	Level of Significance
1	5.35241	.100
2	1.29529	.750
3	4.05483	.100
4	2.49008	.500
5	1.96857	.950
6	3.42761	.250
7	1.44927	.05 *
8	5.91821	.100
9	1.79348	.500
10	2.87037	.100
11	2.23684	.500
12	3.75672	.250
13	2.23684	.500
14	2.44048	.500
15	.313051	.250
16	.13468	.950
17	2.58929	.500
18	1.71296	.500
19	.101755	.750
20	2.54928	.500
21	1.53409	.500
22	2.01058	.500
23	3.37632	.250
24	.701754	.02 *
25	.411878	.250
26	5.9375	.05 *
27	.681818	.05 *

Table 2 (continued)

Chi-squares: Female/Male Psychologists: df 2		
Item	Chi-square value	Level of Significance
28	1.0008	.750
29	7.8836	.02 *
30	8.18732	.02 *
31	.57041	.900
32	.809295	.02 *
33	3.82353	.250
34	2.92541	.250
35	.146329	.950

* Indicates item that has significant Chi-square, using the $<.05$ level of significance as the determinant

Table 3

Chi-squares: Female/Male Counselors: df 2

Item	Chi-square value	Level of Significance
1	1.3447	.750
2	1.81865	.500
3	1.01526	.500
4	7.22618	.02 *
5	3.98401	.250
6	2.58793	.500
7	1.63224	.500
8	4.23557	.250
9	2.36673	.500
10	3.27705	.250
11	1.26758	.750
12	.922032	.750
13	.939259	.750
14	.554187	.900
15	1.28529	.750
16	3.96053	.250
17	4.11993	.250
18	3.71221	.250
19	5.01292	.100
20	5.22471	.100
21	.354581	.250
22	3.56033	.250
23	.920859	.750
24	3.8729	.250
25	.885658	.750
26	1.05579	.750
27	.769162	.750

Table 3 (continued)

Chi-squares: Female/Male Counselors: df 2

Item	Chi-square value	Level of Significance
28	no value	no value
29	.565333	.900
30	3.21712	.250
31	1.53152	.250
32	.650455	.750
33	1.23157	.500
34	.10756	.750
35	2.35157	.500

* Indicates item that has significant Chi-square, using the $<.05$ level of significance as the determinant

Chapter V

Discussion

This study dealt with finding significant differences, if they existed, between the role perceptions of School Psychologist and Counselor trainees. Significant differences were found, primarily between the broad pairing of Psychologists and Counselors.

Many of the items that yielded significant differences were areas which Cramer, 1966, also perceived as source of role conflict (see page 2 of this study.) Also, Knowles and Shertzer, 1966, found perceived differences between Psychologists and Counselors regarding their professional functioning; the authors concluded that these differences distorted the reality of the school situation and could lead to friction between the two groups.

Thus, it seems evident that differences in role perception between Psychologists and Counselors do exist. A suggestion for further research might be one in which the data collected in the present study would be tabulated to find out specifically what the majority in each profession perceive their role to be. We know from the present study that role discrepancies exist, but we don't know, for instance, how, why, or to what degree the Psychologist

separates himself from the "Counselor" role or vice versa.

We also know that there are significant differences in the way the sexes of both professions view their roles, but this author could not find a pattern or consistency in the differences. The female and male Psychologists were in disagreement on items 7, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30, and 32 whereas the female and male Counselors disagreed significantly only on item 4. On the most part, the female and male Psychologists differed on the testing questions and the Counselors (female and male) on who was responsible for identifying retarded children.

It is interesting to note areas of consensus that seemed to be evident from the information obtained in this study, although this research was not done as part of the study and should not be viewed as such. By totaling percentages on each item, it would appear that most of the respondents feel that the following duties belong uniquely to the Psychologist:

1. Administering individual tests
2. Diagnosing emotional problems in children
3. Implementing B-mod techniques in the classroom

The following duties were designated by most respondents to be unique to the Counselor:

1. Counseling students with their educational and vocational plans
2. Making referrals to community agencies for therapy and for other reasons
3. Being primarily responsible for interpreting the school to parents by means of personal interviews
4. A person trained in studying the problems of students through the use of observational procedures
5. Maintaining job placement service

6. Supervising the giving of standardized group aptitude, interest, intelligence, and achievement tests
7. Identification of gifted students

The following duties were designated to be Joint responsibilities of the School Pscychologist and the Counselor:

1. Cooperating in the identification of retarded students
2. Developing a group testing program to appraise individual aptitudes, intelligence, achievement, and interests
3. Knowing the community, its resources, and expectations
4. Assisting in the development of mental hygiene and sound emotional attitudes
5. Conducting case conferences concerning individual students
6. Conducting individual and group sessions with parents regarding their children
7. Conducting an annual survey of placement opportunities in the community and assisting students with job placement
8. *Diagnosing learning disabilities*
9. *A specialist for the interpretation of test results*
10. Carrying out various professional and pupil personnel department obligations
11. Conducting in-service training sessions with teachers

If these areas of role conflict could be isolated, this might result in a smoother functioning team approach in the schools. Eiseier (1963) pointed out that if role divisions are not clarified to the mutual satisfaction of the members of both teams, uncomfortable conflicts may arise. If these conflicts could be dissolved during the training process of both professions, a better functioning team would probably evolve.

Appendix I

Questionnaire

The following questionnaire is being used in a Master's thesis entitled, "The roles and functions of the School Psychologist and the Counselor; Perceptions of School Psychology trainees and Counseling trainees."

By applying your educational and field experiences when filling out the questionnaire, you will be providing valuable information for this survey. Even if your exposure to School Psychology or Counseling is limited, your responses will be just as important.

Please fill out the confidential personal data sheet along with the questionnaire; your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Please indicate on the answer sheet provided, which professional you personally would attribute with each duty or function (please answer according to your own professional viewpoint.) Answer on the sheet according to the sample given below; make only response for each item;

1 School Psychologist	2 Counselor	3 Joint Responsibility
-----------------------	-------------	---------------------------

Duties

1.....helping a child who is handicapped

1 ----- 2 ----- 3

Duties

- 1...Counseling students with their educational and vocational plans
- 2...Assisting teachers with their own personal and social adjustment
- 3...Counseling students regarding their personal and social adjustment
- 4...Cooperating in the identification of retarded students
- 5...Visiting schools that "feed" transfer students for orientation purposes
- 6...Making referrals to community agencies for therapy and for other reasons
- 7...Developing a group testing program to appraise individual aptitudes, intelligence, achievement, and interests
- 8...Knowing the community, its resources, and expectations
- 9...Assisting in the development of mental hygiene and sound emotional attitudes
- 10...Conducting case conferences concerning individual students
- 11...Practicing psychological therapy with students over a protracted time
- 12...Teaching a course in group guidance
- 13...Working with citizen committees on community projects
- 14...Administering individual tests
- 15...Being primarily responsible for interpreting the school to parents by means of group processes and the personal interview with them

- 16...Grouping students according to their abilities
- 17...Conducting individual and group sessions with parents regarding their children
- 18...Conducting an annual survey of placement opportunities in the community and assisting students with job placement
- 19...Diagnosing learning disabilities
- 20...Developing case histories of students with problems
- 21...A person trained in studying the problems of students through the use of observational procedures
- 22...Diagnosing emotional problems in children and providing treatment
- 23...Identifying a brain-damaged child
- 24...A specialist for the interpretation of test results
- 25...Implementing Behavior Modification techniques in the classroom
- 26...Dealing with psychological problems of the physically handicapped
- 27...Carrying out various professional and pupil personnel department obligations
- 28...Maintaining informational resources for post-high school educational and placement opportunities
- 29...Conducting in-service training sessions with teachers
- 30...Supervising the giving of standardized group aptitude, interest, intelligence, and achievement tests
- 31...Identification of gifted students
- 32...Assisting teachers in planning homeroom programs

- 33...Helping to utilize research findings for the solution of school problems
- 34...Helping students with drug problems
- 35...Counseling an unwed mother

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