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PRESENT AND PREFERRED FUNCTIONS OF CGCA MEMBERS*

ABSTRACT: This research was undertaken by the CGCA Role Committee as a preliminary step in gathering opinions regarding counsellor role from the membership.

A 53-item Counsellor Role Questionnaire (CRQ) was sent to a randomly chosen sample of 150 CGCA members, their administrators, and their clients. Counsellors were asked to respond to the CRQ both in terms of what they were doing and in terms of what they judged they should be doing.

Returns were received from 49 CGCA members, 24 clients, and 27 administrators, representing all provinces and most categories of membership in the Association. The bulk of the respondents were employed in educational institutions, and were professionally well prepared.

The most frequently reported counsellor activities were in the traditionally accepted areas of educational-vocational counselling. Most counsellors expressed a desire for a greater level of involvement in group counselling, research, and public relations activities. Counsellors were satisfied with their level of involvement on only approximately one quarter of the CRQ items.

Comparison of counsellor, administrator, and client responses indicated that there is conflict or lack of consensus regarding counsellor role. It was found that counsellors and administrators had the least number of interposition differences, whereas administrators and clients had most.

A resolution was passed at the 1969 CGCA Conference which committed the Association to the formulation of an official statement concerning the professional responsibilities of the counsellor. The present researcher, as Chairman of the CGCA Role Committee during 1972-73, undertook an exploratory study as a preliminary step in gathering information regarding present and preferred counsellor role.

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The particular role theory model on which the study was based was that described by Bentley (1968). After reviewing the literature concerning role theory in counselling, and presenting a number of definitions of the term role, Bentley defines role as "an inclusive term consisting of role performance, role expectations, role conceptions and role acceptance (1968, p. 74)."

The aims of the present study were:

1. To investigate the relationship between the counsellor's role performance (i.e. what the counsellor actually does on the job) and his/her role concept (i.e. what the counsellor conceives his/her role should be).

2. To investigate the relationship between the counsellor's role concept, as defined above, and his/her role expectation (i.e. what others, such as clients and administrators, expect the counsellor to do).

The next sections describe the method used, the results, and discussion.

METHOD

A 53-item Counsellor Role Questionnaire (CRQ) was constructed by drawing items from a variety of existing questionnaires (Akman, 1972; Glofka, 1967; Raines, 1964; Rankine & Angus, 1971; Storey, McCormick, & Loken, 1969; Tennyson, 1956) and by reviewing the literature in *Psychological Abstracts* from 1967-71, which numbered 129 entries. The resulting questionnaire was general in nature, covering a broad spectrum of counselling functions and responsibilities, and was designed to sample opinions from CGCA members in a variety of job settings. Persons interested in a more detailed account of this and other aspects of the research are referred to Brown (1973).

A Data Blank similar to the one used by Merchant (1973), which requested counsellors to supply biographical data and list additional functions and responsibilities not included in the CRQ, was also used.

The CRQ and Data Blank were sent to a randomly chosen sample of 150 CGCA members, who were asked to respond to the CRQ both in terms of how frequently they were performing, and how frequently they judged they should perform, the functions and responsibilities listed, by selecting one of five frequency responses: never, rarely, sometimes, usually, and always.

The counsellor was also requested to ask his next client, and his administrator, to respond to the CRQ in terms of how frequently they judged the counsellor should perform the functions listed.

A letter from the President of CGCA urging that the membership participate in the study accompanied all materials sent to the CGCA members, clients, and administrators. A follow-up letter was mailed four weeks after the original contact.

RESULTS

Characteristics of the Counsellor

Returns were received from 49 CGCA members, 24 clients, and 27 administrators, residing in all provinces. These numbers represent a return of 33 percent from the counsellors, 16 percent from the clients, and 18 percent from the administrators.

Two-thirds of the 49 CGCA members were male, and 44 was the median age.

Twenty-two percent of the respondents listed teaching, administration, or a combination of both as their full-time professional commitment, while 53 percent were full-time counsellors, most of whom worked in secondary-school settings. The remaining 25 percent combined counselling with administration, teaching, or a combination of both.

Approximately 65 percent of the respondents held a master's degree, graduate level diploma, or better; however only a little over one half of these had completed a thesis. Only one had less than a bachelor's degree.

Courses which had been completed by 75 percent or more of the respondents were: principles of guidance, statistics and/or research design, child and adolescent psychology, counselling theory, and psychological measurement. Approximately two-thirds of the counsellors had completed course work beyond the level of their highest university degree.

Eighty-eight percent of the respondents had completed a counselling practicum, but only 25 percent had completed a counselling internship.

Information on Counsellor Role Performance

The CRQ, responded to in terms of the frequency with which the CGCA member was performing each item, was the data source for counsellor role performance.

Items on which over 60 percent of the responses fell in the "Usually" or "Always" categories were considered "frequent" and were as follows: providing counselling for clients with educational problems, providing vocational and educational information, and recording notes of counselling interviews for the counsellor's own future reference.

Alternatively, there were 21 items for which over 60 percent of the responses fell in the "Rarely" or "Never" categories, and were designated "infrequent," such as providing counselling for clients who have moral, religious, and legal problems. Other "infrequent" activities clustered in the area of group activity, such as conducting group dynamics sessions, conducting group counselling sessions, and holding group sessions of an instructional nature focusing on particular areas of human concern. Likewise some testing and record

keeping activities, such as assisting with the testing program, scoring psychological tests, and recording results in a file, were "infrequent" activities.

The majority of respondents did not use notes of counselling interviews outside the counsellor's office, nor did they maintain a record of number of clients seen for periodic report to their superiors.

Referral of clients to speech therapists was an "infrequent" item, as was involvement with in-service programs for other professionals, and interpretation of counselling services to the public and to other professionals.

Finally, the respondents tended not to be involved in counselling research of an evaluative or follow-up type.

Comparison of Counsellor Role Performance and Role Concept

A comparison of counsellor role performance and role concept was achieved by comparing the counsellors' CRQ responses under two conditions. First, the counsellors responded in terms of their present functions, and then in terms of what they thought they should be doing. When 60 percent or more of the respondents engaged in the activity less frequently than they would prefer to do, the item was considered to indicate "lack of congruency" between counsellor-role performance and role concept.

The 16 items indicating lack of congruency were clustered in the areas of personal counselling for dating problems, group activities, referral of clients to speech therapists and psychiatrists, organization of in-service education and public relations programs, consultation with counsellors in other settings, research, and follow-up.

When 60 percent or more of the respondents engaged in an activity as often as they would prefer to, the item was considered to indicate congruency between role performance and role concept. The two items for which such congruency existed involved use of counselling summaries outside the counselling office, which counsellors disapproved of, and providing educational information, which they approved of.

Comparison of Counsellor Role Concept and Role Expectation Interposition Differences

The task in this part of the study was to examine whether there were significant differences in the way counsellors, clients, and administrators expected the counsellor to function. To measure differences between response frequencies for counsellors, clients, and administrators, the chi square test for k independent samples was used. The 5 percent level of significance was chosen as indicating difference or lack of consensus between positions.

When response frequencies were compared for the counsellor-client, counsellor-administrator, and client-administrator pairs, the counsellors and administrators were found to have the least number of significant differences (3 items). A greater percentage of administrators than counsellors felt that scoring psychological tests was a

legitimate function of counsellors, whereas in the areas of research and follow-up a greater proportion of counsellors than administrators favored counsellor involvement.

Counsellors and clients differed on six items. A larger percentage of clients than counsellors favored counsellor involvement in counselling clients with emotional and legal problems, in scoring as well as recording the results of psychological tests, and providing information regarding educational programs. Alternatively, a larger proportion of counsellors than clients felt that counsellors should apply results of counselling research to their counselling practice.

Clients and administrators differed on nine items. A greater percentage of clients than administrators felt that counsellors should provide counselling for clients who have social-emotional, moral and religious, and health and physical development problems, as well as group counselling for clients with similar problems. Clients also favored follow-up in special cases such as when the counsellor is concerned for the client's safety.

A greater proportion of administrators felt that counsellors should provide counselling for those with dating problems, that they should record notes of interviews for their own future reference, and that counsellors should refer clients with specific problems to psychologists and psychiatrists.

Interposition Consensus

There were nine items on which there were no significant chi square values, and over half of the responses fell in the same response category for counsellors, clients, and administrators. There was general agreement that counsellors should provide counselling for clients with vocational, educational, social-psychological, and family problems. Consensus also existed regarding provision of information concerning vocations and personal adjustment, referral to speech therapists, and consultation between counsellors and members of other helping professions and community helping agencies. There was agreement that notes of counselling interviews should not be used outside the counsellor's office.

For an additional 25 items, there was no significant difference between the positions, but there was lack of consensus within the positions. In this case, there is no consensus as to what counsellors should do, and the results may be more accurately termed "no disagreement" as opposed to "agreement."

These items may be divided into ten identifiable clusters. Counsellors, clients, and administrators did not reach a consensus regarding provision of counselling for clients with personal-psychological problems, nor for those with financial and employment problems. Group dynamics, and groups of an instructional nature were also an area of uncertainty. The largest cluster (7 items) was in the area of testing, appraisal, and information gathering.

There was no agreement regarding whether counsellors should periodically report to superiors regarding numbers of clients and

type of client problem. Similarly, provision of information concerning family life and interpersonal relationships produced no strong agreement.

Other areas which could be termed "no disagreement" were: referral to other counsellors and community agencies, in-service education for other professionals, public relations, and research of an evaluative and follow-up nature.

Finally, no meaningful consensus was reached regarding whether counsellors should work in consulting relationships with client's relatives, instructors, or employers, even when this was done with client's permission.

Summary of Additional Functions and Responsibilities

The bulk of the functions not listed in the CRQ which counsellors wrote in as requested on the Data Blank, and which they felt restricted their usefulness, centered in the area of routine clerical duties, such as attendance checking, timetabling and computer work, assigning detention for late students, addressing mail, and ordering tests and related material. Several counsellors indicated that teaching duties interfered substantially with their counselling functions, while others objected to organizing and updating the vocational information center, providing post-secondary educational information, and processing applications of various sorts.

Functions not included in the CRQ but deemed vital by the counsellors included the following:

- Teaching family life programs
- Counselling unmarried mothers
- Visiting homes
- Conducting life career development programs
- Routine interviewing with students
- Helping retarded children and their parents
- Counselling teachers, and acting as a consultant to them
- Preparing self-help audio-visual aids for students
- Community involvement, and acting as a community change agent
- Counselling with family groups
- Providing legal guidance
- Keeping informed of current issues and research

The final section of this paper is an attempt to discuss the importance of the various findings presented thus far.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

As nearly as one can tell, when comparing the sex and dwelling place of respondents with the information supplied in the CGCA Membership Directory, 1973, the 49 counsellors who responded to the questionnaire formed a representative sample of the total membership. However, the results must be interpreted with caution, because a sample of 49 represents only 6 percent of the total CGCA membership.

As anticipated, the largest single membership group were school counsellors. Apparently counselling is still frequently combined with other duties, as only half of the respondents were full-time counsellors. In view of the fact that most counselling authorities consider counselling to be a fulltime job, one views this finding with no small concern.

The counsellors were professionally well prepared, as indicated by the fact that two-thirds possessed a master's degree, with specialization in counselling courses, and the vast majority had completed a supervised practicum in counselling. It is encouraging that the bulk of these counsellors had not stopped taking courses when they achieved their highest degree, but had continued their professional preparation beyond that point.

Although the percentage of counsellors who reported completion of a supervised practicum was high, 12 percent of the respondents had not completed this requirement. Surely we should require that all counsellors be exposed to a practicum experience, under adequate supervision, at some time during their training period. In fact, two-fifths of those who had experienced a practicum reported that the duration thereof was only six months or less, and one cannot help but question whether supervisory personnel can really determine the suitability of a potential counsellor in such a brief period of time. The implication of this finding for CGCA is clear. We must take a stand on counsellor certification, in spite of the difficulty posed by differing training programs in the various provinces.

Other findings have serious implications for those involved in counsellor education. For instance, testing, an area which has traditionally been a compulsory requirement in most counsellor education programs, was not a frequent nor popular counsellor involvement. Are our counsellor education programs preparing all counsellors for a task which a minority will involve themselves in, and which a majority do not feel should be a frequent involvement?

Research involvement is another area of concern, as in this case the majority of the respondents favored involvement, but were not engaged in this activity, even though over 75 percent reported that they had completed course work in this area. Counsellors are usually required to study statistics and research design so that they will be able to understand research when they read it and presumably apply the findings to their own counselling, and so that they will be able to conduct their own research. However, the results of this study indicate that counsellors neither conduct research studies as often as they would like to, nor do they apply the research findings of others to their own counselling practice as often as they would wish. Apparently, therefore, the aims of requiring graduate students in counselling to complete courses in research design and statistics are being thwarted somewhere along the line.

However, it would be premature at this point to make a judgement regarding whether these courses should be dropped as a requirement for a degree in counselling, because only about half of the respondents had completed a thesis, and it might be argued that

such "total immersion" is necessary if one is to feel truly competent in the area of research. Another possibility is that the counsellors were too busy to use the research skills they had learned. Further research is planned in which the respondents will be asked why they are not involved in more preferred activities, and hopefully the results will shed light on this and other issues raised by the data presented here.

Group counselling and related group procedures, which have been widely acclaimed in recent years by some counselling authorities as the wave of the future, were engaged in infrequently by the respondents, even though this was a preferred activity.

Since the median age was 44, it might be reasoned that many of these counsellors completed their training before the great emphasis on groups emerged, yet a check on course work indicated that 63 percent of the respondents had earned university credit for courses in group counselling and/or group dynamics, 46 percent had done courses in group guidance, and 38 percent reported course work in human relations.

Lack of time is difficult to entertain as a cause of low group involvement, as group counselling should not take any more time per client than individual counselling, and some proponents of groups argue that this approach saves counsellor time. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that most of the counsellors were working in educational institutions where scheduling of groups may have posed a problem.

Public relations was one final activity which counsellors preferred but did not tend to engage in. This is probably an area which is mentioned and then neglected in most counsellor education programs, with the result that most counsellors are not very effective when it comes to projecting themselves and informing the public of their activities.

The overall impression which one gets from viewing the results of the comparison of counsellor role performance and role conception is that most of the counsellors were not satisfied with many of their present activities. Agreement was only achieved on less than one quarter of the functions listed. Lack of congruency between role performance and role conception, expressed on approximately one-third of the CRQ items, was a function of the counsellors' wanting more involvement in the functions and responsibilities listed in the questionnaire.

When counsellor role concept and role expectation were compared, the most striking initial impression was the lack of consensus about what counsellors should be doing. Even when relatively homogeneous groups of counsellors were compared, there was still a lack of consensus about the role. Therefore, the results suggest that if the counsellors who comprise the CGCA membership do attempt to define the role, functions, and responsibilities of members in various counselling positions, they will have very few definite guidelines to help direct them to that goal. This lack of consensus supports the position that professional associations such as CGCA should stimulate

dialogue among counsellors with a view to attempting a definition of role (Clemens, 1970).

In almost all cases of counsellor and client differences, the client tended to assign more functions and responsibilities to the counsellor than the latter appeared ready to accept. In other words, the clients appeared to expect more from counsellors than the counsellors felt they should perform. These results indicate that the counsellors were probably quite perceptive in expressing a need to do more public relations work regarding their role.

Although the numbers of items involved were small, a comparison of the data suggests that the counsellors involved were more in tune with their administrators than they were with their clients. Rankine and Angus (1971), in a study in which intermediate- and secondary-high-school counsellors were asked to anticipate how their administrators would expect the counsellor to respond to a role questionnaire, found many more role conflicts between counsellors and students than they did between counsellors and administrators. The implication of these findings is that although counsellor-administrator agreement would help the counsellor become an efficient extension of the administration (Rankine & Angus, 1971, p. 98), it would probably reduce his effectiveness with the clients. The data from the present research support the findings of the earlier study.

Functions on which counsellors, clients and administrators clearly agreed would probably be judged traditional by most counselling authorities. These areas included provision of counselling and/or information for those with vocational, educational, home and family, and social-psychological problems. There was agreement that counsellors should consult with other counsellors and members of other helping professions, as well as maintaining consultative contact with community helping agencies. There was agreement that notes of counselling interviews should not be used outside the counsellor's office.

The results of this research did not, therefore, identify any striking new aspects of counsellor role. What the study did was underline the lack of consensus, and sometimes the conflict, which now exists in regard to counsellor role.

In conclusion, the data appear to support the impression that Canadian counsellors are a professional group with a limited number of traditionally accepted, relatively clear cut preferred functions and responsibilities, and a much larger area in which various elements of role are undefined. Further research, including a larger sample of the CGCA membership, and designed to identify the reasons counsellors are not engaged in more preferred activities, appears warranted, and is planned.

In the final analysis, the onus is on us, as professionals, to take the lead in defining our role more clearly, taking into account the needs of those whom we serve and others with whom we work closely, so that we may educate ourselves and others in regard to our functions and responsibilities.

RESUME: Il s'agit d'une recherche préliminaire entreprise par le Comité sur le rôle du Conseiller auprès des membres de la S.C.O.C.

On a fait parvenir à un échantillon pris au hasard de 150 membres de la S.C.O.C., à leurs administrateurs et à leurs clients, un questionnaire de 53 item portant sur le rôle du conseiller (Q.R.C.). Les conseillers devaient répondre tout autant à des questions concernant ce qu'ils faisaient qu'à des questions relatives à ce qu'ils estimaient qu'ils devraient faire.

49 membres, 24 clients et 27 administrateurs représentant toutes les provinces et toutes les catégories de membres de la Société ont retourné le questionnaire. La plupart des répondants était bien préparé au plan professionnel et travaillait pour le compte d'institutions éducationnelles.

Les réponses les plus fréquentes concernaient les activités dans les domaines traditionnels du counseling scolaire et vocationnel. La plupart des conseillers exprima le désir d'une plus grande implication dans le counseling de groupe, la recherche et les activités de relations publiques. Ils étaient satisfaits de leur niveau d'implication dans seulement environ un quart des activités indiquées aux item du Q.R.C.

La comparaison des réponses des conseillers, des administrateurs et des clients a montré une absence de consensus au sujet du rôle du conseiller. On a observé que les conseillers et les administrateurs partageaient le plus petit nombre de points de vue différents, tandis que les administrateurs et les clients partageaient le plus grand.

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