MARY E. LAUGHREN,
Administrative Supervisor and Consultant,
Contemporary Women's Programs,
Calgary Board of Education;

AL HERMAN,
Educational Psychology,
University of Calgary.

MOTHERS' AND DAUGHTERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF THE COUNSELLOR

ABSTRACT: This study investigated differences between daughters' and their mothers' perceptions of the role of the school counsellor. The subjects were asked to respond to a questionnaire designed to test the appropriateness of different problem areas for discussion with a counsellor. Significant differences in perceptions of counsellor role between daughters and their mothers were indicated. Educational and vocational problem areas were viewed by both daughters and mothers as the most suitable areas in which to seek counsellor help.

A review of literature investigating student and parent perceptions of counsellor role reveals a confused and indefinite view of just what that role is. Researchers have seen counsellors' roles fall primarily within the domain of educational and vocational counselling. Problems of a personal, social, or emotional nature have been found to be beyond the scope of the counsellor role in research to date.

Although counsellor role has been described in many sources (Aubrey, 1972; Altmann, 1972; Arbuckle, 1972; Herman, 1974) most research sampling parents' and students' perceptions do not agree with a broad description. A study by Shertzer and Stone (1963) which found that counsellors should identify and place students in critically needed professions relegates the mental health and welfare to a lesser position than manpower needs. Dunlop (1965) indicated that there was support only for counsellors performing educational and vocational guidance functions. Ford (1969) indicated a high level of agreement among students and counsellors concerning vocational and educational matters, but a high level of disagreement when the problem was of a personal or social nature. Hengel (1970) found that in only one area, that of educational and vocational problems, did counsellors, principals, and counsellor educators agree on suitability of problem areas for discussion in a counselling setting. They did not agree on the validity of discussing problems dealing with adjustment to self and others or problems dealing with love, religion, or morality with counsellors.

Altmann (1972) focused attention on the essence of role definition problems with counsellors as he noted that counsellor role is a role "labelled with distorted perceptions (p. 158)." Altmann concluded that a number of issues must be handled before confusion about counsellor role can be diminished appreciably. Among the issues is continuing research to determine how well the needs of students are being met in order to improve the service.

The purpose of this study was to extend the findings of previous studies by determining whether differences do exist in parents' and their childrens' perceptions of counsellor role.

METHOD

Sample

The subjects for this study were 163 female, Grade-12 students and their mothers. Grade-12 students registered in the second semester of the 1973-74 academic year in two Calgary city senior high schools were randomly selected by class. The choosing of these students predetermined the choice of mothers. Of the 163 mother-daughter pairs, 137 pairs completed the questionnaires they were asked to do. The sample for this study thus constituted 137 mother-daughter pairs or a total of 274 subjects.

Instrument

A questionnaire devised by Laughren (1974) consisting of 90 items was administered to all the subjects. Problem items in the questionnaire were divided into six categories: educational problems, vocational problems, family relationships, personal health, peer relationships, and self-understanding. There were 15 problem items in each of the six categories.

Directions for the questionnaire specified that the respondent could answer each item in one of three response categories — agree, undecided, disagree.

Analysis

A multivariate analysis of variance technique was selected to determine to what extent the independent variable, which was the mother-daughter dimension, predicted the responses of the subjects in the dependent variables. The dependent variables were scores attained by the subjects in the six categories used: educational problems, vocational problems, family relationships, personal health, peer relationships, and self-understanding.

The ordering of the dependent variables within the multivariate analysis design "depends upon the researcher's interest priorities in them and the critical role assigned to them (Bock & Haggard, 1968, p. 112)." Upon consideration of the literature it was decided that educational problems and vocational problems should appear before the others, which were ordered by random selection. The dependent variables, therefore, were ordered as follows: 1) educational problems, 2) vocational problems, 3) family relationships, 4) personal health, 5) peer relationships, 6) self-understanding.

The critical value for the overall multivariate F was set at .05. The calculated critical value for each of the six dependent variables was .008.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows sample sizes, number of items, actual means, standard deviations, maximum and minimum possible scores and Cronbach's α which indicates average inter-item correlation.

TABLE 1

STATISTICS FOR THE DEPENDENT VARIABLES

N = 137; N of items = 15.

Statistic	Educational Problems D* M**		Vocational Problems D M		Family Relationships D M		Personal Health D M		Peer Relationships D M		Self Understanding D M	
Cronbach's .	0.8134		0.8210		0.9162		0.9111		0.9000		0.9278	
Mean	41.85	41.91	41.38	39.34	24.24	28.66	22.96	26.85	24.99	30.10	24.69	30.44
Standard Deviation	4.44	5.02	4.53	5.56	7.76	8.66	5.86	7.95	7.23	7.84	7.56	8.74

*D = daughter
**M = mother
Note: Maximum possible score = 45; minimum possible score = 15.

Pearson product moment correlations were calculated between all possible pairs of the continuous variables and significance is reported at the .01 level in Tables 2 and 3. The correlation matrices show that all intercorrelations of dependent variables are positive and all but six are significantly correlated. Since the dependent variables are related, a multivariate analysis of variance is the most suitable model for detecting group differences.

TABLE 2

CONTINUOUS VARIABLE INTERCORRELATIONS FOR DAUGHTERS

(N = 137)

	FR	PH	PR	ED	SU	VOC
FR						
PH	0.648*					
PR	0.812*	0.657*				
ED	0.275*	0.304*	0.382*			
SU	0.865*	0.672*	0.906*	0.302*		
VOC	0.126	0.230*	0.186	0.733*	0.104	

*significant at the .01 level
Code: FR = Family Relationships
　　　　PH = Personal Health
　　　　PR = Peer Relationships
　　　　ED = Educational Problems
　　　　SU = Self-Understanding Problems
　　　　VOC = Vocational Problems

The results of the multivariate analysis of variance, when the six dependent variables were considered simultaneously, provided an F ratio of 13.548 $(df = 6/131; \ p < .001)$, indicating that there is a significant difference between daughters' and mothers' perception of what is appropriate for discussion with the counsellor.

TABLE 3

CONTINUOUS VARIABLE INTERCORRELATIONS FOR MOTHERS

(N = 137)

	FR	PH	PR	ED	SU	VOC
FR						
PH	0.609*					
PR	0.833*	0.664*				
ED	0.124	0.170	0.250*			
SU	0.859*	0.698*	0.889*	0.249*		
VOC	0.163	0.334*	0.298*	0.726*	0.231*	

*Significant at the .01 level
Code: FR = Family Relationships
　　　　PH = Personal Health
　　　　PR = Peer Relationships
　　　　ED = Educational Problems
　　　　SU = Self-Understanding Problems
　　　　VOC = Vocational Problems

Table 4 provides a summary of analysis of multivariate criteria. As can be seen from Table 4, a significant difference exists in the variables of vocational problems, family relationships, and personal health between daughters and mothers when the stepdown F test is considered.

TABLE 4

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF MULTIVARIATE CRITERION

F Ratio for Multivariate Test of Equality of Mean Vectors
$F = 13.5483$, $df = 6/131$, $p < .001$

Variable	Hypothesis Mean Square	Univariate F	p Less Than	Stepdown F	p Less Than
Educational Problems	.296	.017	.897	.017	.897
Vocational Problems	286.131	13.659	.004*	27.070	.001*
Family Relationships	1340.277	25.265	.001*	26.961	.001*
Personal Health	1032.934	26.606	.001*	13.208	.004*
Peer Relationships	1156.821	24.990	.001*	.220	.640
Self-Understanding	2266.219	40.888	.001*	2.681	.104

*significant difference $p = < .01$
df Hypothesis $= 1$
df Error $= 136$

Discussion

Although differences exist between daughters' and their mothers' perceptions of counsellor role, it is interesting to note that, essentially, these groups see counsellors performing functions limited largely to educational and vocational problems, while remaining outside the province of personal, emotional, or social problems.

The comparison between the daughter and mother groups was highly correlated, which suggests that both daughters and mothers perceived problems from similar frames of reference. This view seems evident when Figure 1 is inspected. The graph illustrates that mean differences between daughters and mothers do exist but that the response trend for both daughters and mothers appears to be in the same general direction.

Within the area of educational problems, both daughters and their mothers agreed strongly that this area was most suitable for discussion in a school counselling setting. In the remaining five problem categories, daughters indicated a lower level of agreement than did their mothers. This indicates a disturbing trend in that those people most directly concerned with school counselling services see them as being only minimally appropriate. The mothers whose knowledge of counsellor functions and roles would be limited as a result of less direct exposure to counsellors in the school regard counsellor involvement more favorably than do their daughters. This paints a decidedly negative picture of appropriateness of functions of school counsellors.

If high-school counsellors see their role as encompassing more than the traditional educational and vocational issues, such problem areas as family relationships, personal health, peer relationships, and self understanding should be suitable bases for counsellor-student discussion. Yet this study has indicated that daughters and mothers do not see these areas as a major part of counsellor role. If indeed counsellors see a broader scope to their role than that indicated by parti-

FIGURE 1

Variable Means for Daughters and Mothers.
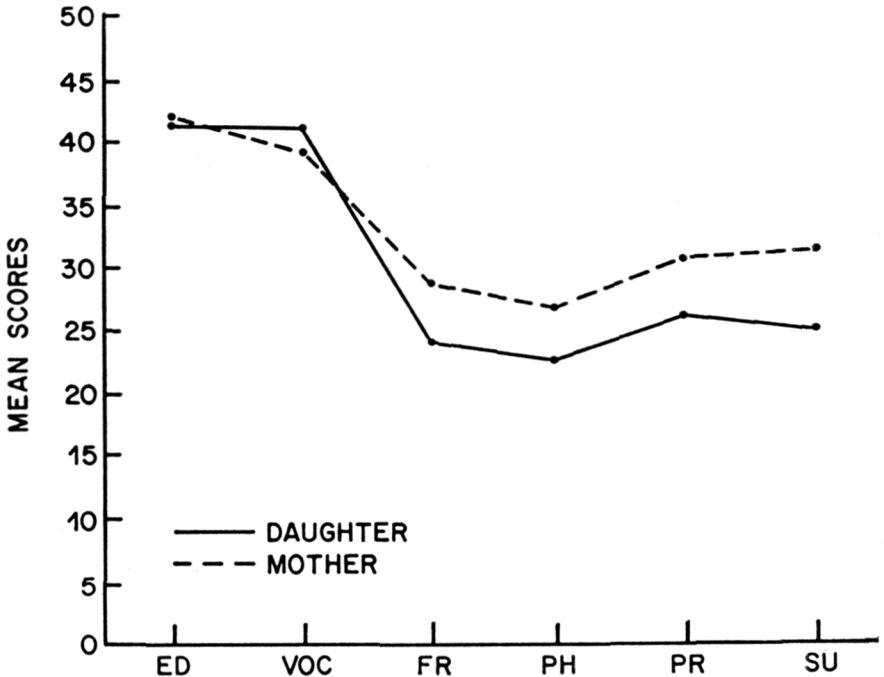
ED - Educational Problems   PH - Personal Health
VOC-Vocational Problems   PR - Peer Relationships
FR - Family Relationships   SU - Self-Understanding

cipants in this investigation, the school counsellors should act upon the public relations approach suggested in the research findings. Perhaps counsellors need to inform their publics as to their range of skills and abilities so their clients will see them as sources of help and information in areas outside of educational and vocational problems. Possibly counsellors have been ineffectual in dealing with issues outside the educational or vocational problem spectrum in terms of student client appraisal and are seen as unsuitable help sources for problems outside of these areas. Another reason could be advanced for the existence of differences in perceptions of counsellor role if we consider the possibility that counsellors have been replaced in the helping role by significant others when student clients seek help for problems outside the educational or vocational area. These problems

require and demand counsellor consideration and reassessment of role and an action response geared to a prompt approach to the problem in terms of its participants and setting.

The school counsellor's student and parent public has seen counsellor role as being limited generally to educational and vocational concerns. It is to this public the school counsellor is and will continue to be accountable. Either he continues to confine his role primarily to educational and vocational information giving and problem discussion, or he demonstrates his skills and knowledge in other areas so decisively that they become accepted by doubting publics.

In Alberta, the school counsellor is a certified classroom teacher. This should mean that he already has at his disposal one approach to the solution of his problem. Could not the counselling skills and expertise come out of the isolated office and into the framework of the teaching setting to restore a greater element of credibility to the role of the school counsellor? Within the classroom setting the counsellor might become accepted as an effective teacher and resource person exposing students to a broad range of life skills. This could be done by utilizing the counsellor and his special skills in a group or class setting, with the counsellor serving as a group leader, a teacher, or a resource person for utilization by both classroom teacher and students. If the counsellor is to appear less remote and threatening, it would seem practical to have him spend some of his time in a setting where both students and teachers can see his skills used to teach and help many rather than a select few who manage to invade his office. Counsellors in a classroom setting might be in a position to spot real and potential problems and work towards their solution with students and teachers in the problem setting rather than attempt the problem's solution in an office setting well removed from the incident and people concerned. His very presence within the classroom on a regular rather than a seasonal basis should facilitate student acceptance of the counsellor as an integral part of the helping team within the school.

RESUME: On a étudié les différences dans les perceptions que les filles et leurs mères ont à l'endroit du conseiller scolaire. On a demandé aux sujets de répondre à un questionnaire destiné à établir le genre de problèmes qu'il serait convenable de discuter avec le conseiller. Les mères et leurs filles ont répondu au questionnaire de façon significativement différente. Cependant elles étaient d'accord que l'aide du conseiller était particulièrement appropriée dans le cas des problèmes éducatifs et vocationnels.

REFERENCES

Altmann, H. A. The role of the counsellor. In A. Herman (Ed.), *Introduction to guidance: A book of readings*. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1972.

Arbuckle, D. S. The counselor: Who? What? *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1972, 50, 785-790.

Aubrey, R. F. And never the twain shall meet: Counselor training and school realities. *The School Counselor*, 1972, 20, 16-24.

Bock, R. D., & Haggard, E. A. The use of multivariate analysis of variance in behavioral research. In D. K. Whitla (Ed.), *Handbook of measurement and assessment in behavioral sciences*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1968.

Dunlop, R. S. Professional educators, parents and students assess the counselor's role. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1965, 43, 1024-1028.

Ford, B. G. A comparison of problems which students and counselors perceive to be appropriate for counselor discussion. Unpublished master's thesis, The University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1969.

Hengel, H. The role of the counsellor in Alberta high schools as perceived by counsellors, counsellor educators and principals. Unpublished master's thesis, The University of Calgary, Calgary, 1970.

Herman, A. The school counsellor as educator. *The School Guidance Worker*, 1974, 29(6), 19-22.

Laughren, M. E. Daughters' and mothers' perceptions of counsellor role. Unpublished master's thesis, The University of Calgary, Calgary, 1974.

Shertzer, B., & Stone, S. C. The school counselor and his publics: A problem in role definition. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1963, 41, 687-693.