Role Conflict and Ambiguity as Predictors of Job Satisfaction

in High School Counselors

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between role conflict and role ambiguity, and percentage of time spent on ASCA recommended duties (counseling, coordination, consultation, and large group guidance); and job satisfaction of high school counselors. The Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Scale and the Job Descriptive Index were administered to 175 high school counselors. Role conflict, role ambiguity, time spent on counseling related duties, time spent on consultation related duties, and time spent on non-ASCA functions were all found to be significant predictors of job satisfaction.

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The American School Counselor Association (2009) defines the role of the professional school counselor as to "address all students' academic, personal/social, and career development needs by designing, implementing, evaluating, and enhancing a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes and enhances student success." However, school counselors handle numerous duties, many of which do not fall under the traditional realm of school counseling services (ASCA, 2005; Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Wines, Nelson, & Eckstein, 2007; Young & Lambie, 2007). School counselors are often overwhelmed by increasing job responsibilities, expectations, and array of duties. "Given the conflicting and inconsistent messages school counselors receive and their personal viewpoints, there is a potential for school counselors to experience role stress" (Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005, p. 59).

In spite of the clear role statements by ASCA and a clear preference towards activities indicated in the ASCA National Model (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008), "professional school counselors experience high levels of stress because of multiple job demands, role ambiguity, large caseloads, and lack of clinical supervision" (Lambie, 2007, p. 82). Whereas ASCA (2004, 2005) and CACREP have defined best practices for school counseling, professional school counselors often find themselves in organizational systems where there is no defined role or the role is incongruent with their training and values. This frequently inhibits personal wellness as well as contributes to occupational stress and impairment (Young & Lambie, 2007).

Role conflict, role ambiguity, and job overload have been identified as organizational factors associated with burnout (conceptually the opposite of job satisfaction) in school counselors (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Role conflict is defined as the simultaneous occurrence of two or more role pressures so that the compliance with one makes it more difficult to comply with the other (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964), and role ambiguity is the degree to which clear information is lacking regarding the expectation associated with a role (Kahn et al., 1964). "Role conflict and role ambiguity are the two specific occupational stressors that school counselors experience with regard to the multiple roles they assume within schools" (Bryant & Constantine, 2006, p. 265). Pierson-Hubeny and Archambault (1987) found that school counselors reported the highest level of role conflict and role ambiguity when compared to school psychologists, school social workers, and teachers. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact that role conflict and role ambiguity have on job satisfaction of high school counselors.

The role of school counselors has typically gone beyond what ASCA has defined as the scope of professional school counselors to include clerical duties, administrative duties, curriculum development, testing, advising teachers, providing AIDS education, providing English as a Second Language (ESL) services, record-keeping, and disciplinary functions. In addition, school counselors may also function as mental health counselors to meet expanding needs of students (Lockhart & Keys, 1998). Falls and Nichter's (2007) qualitative study of job stress for school counselors articulated several challenges: "limited human resources due to high school counselor to student ratio, lack of paraprofessional help, marginal support of administrators, and poor parent and

teacher cooperation; limited monetary resources…and limited time to complete their assigned job duties, whether appropriate or not" (p. 27).

Much of the possible role conflict for school counselors results from the many and multiple demands for their services. Pressure on school counselors comes from a variety of directions. Administrators, teachers, students, and parents all have different, and often conflicting, expectations of how counselors should function in schools (Perera-Diltz & Mason, 2008). Principals, in particular, do not have an accurate sense of the school counselor's role (Brown, Dahlbeck, & Sparkman-Barnes, 2006; College Board, 2009a, 2009b; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005), and often have counselors focusing on administrative tasks and coordination of services (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Zalaquett, 2005). Leuwerke, Walker, and Shi (2009) noted that over half of the principals they surveyed reported no exposure to the ASCA National Model. In addition "Principals face declining budgets, increasing instructional and managerial regulations, and complex, time-consuming legal issues, all while balancing daily emergencies...force school leaders to delegate responsibilities to other staff members including professional school counselors" (Leuwerke et al., p. 264). Culbreth et al. (2005) suggested that principals "operate from philosophical and methodological guidelines that are different from those of school counselors, have their own agendas, and typically have little knowledge of the school counseling profession" (p. 58). Interestingly, Lieberman (2004), from an administrative point of view, wrote "such clarity of roles has not existed for school counselors for some time, with strong implications for schools and the counseling profession, as well as for school leadership" (p. 552).

School counselors at the high school level are often criticized that they allot too much time to the college admissions process while neglecting other important roles. Ragsdale (1987) pointed out that a major part of counselors' jobs has become just getting through a variety of mail each day and finding a way to store the information contained in it for future reference, as well as being encouraged to attend breakfasts, workshops, and informational sessions sponsored by colleges. Kareck (1998) noted that the time needed for organizing and distributing standardized tests, building schedules, doing registration, attending meetings, and organizing cumulative folders has increased significantly. Burnham and Jackson's (2000) study of school counselors reported the following nonguidance duties in rank order: requesting and receiving records, scheduling, permanent record keeping, enrolling students, special education referrals and placement, recoding keeping, filing paperwork, withdrawing students, computer time (word processing or typing), checking immunization records, grades and report cards, duplicating materials, working with test materials or results, scholarship recommendations, telephone reception, office reception, and nurse/medical coordinator. Kolodinsky, Draves, Schroder, Lindsey, and Zlatev (2009), in their study of school counselors at all levels, reported that the greatest frustrations were being overwhelmed by duties, disharmony with administration, difficulties with parents and family support. As responsibilities increase and time spent with students inevitably decreases, it is important to consider how this affects the job satisfaction of school counselors.

Burnham and Jackson (2000) suggested that role ambiguity has been present since the early days of the guidance movement and still impacts school counselors today. However with increased demands for accountability in schools and many

administrators still not being aware of the ASCA National Standards, role ambiguity remains an issue.

Perera-Diltz and Mason (2008) emphasized the difference in the perception of role by counselor and supervisor, usually the principal, as a key part of role ambiguity. Several studies have noted differences in perception, or misperceptions by principals with regard to the role of the school counselor (Pérusee, Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004). Leuwerke et al. (2009) stated that "principals frequently request that counselors perform responsibilities not aligned to the standards developed by ASCA and for which counselors have not been trained to perform" (p. 263) such as developing master schedules, disseminating tests, or administering student discipline. Coll and Freeman (1997), based on their study of 1510 school counselors, reported that one item was consistently higher for all levels, "having to buck a role or policy in order to carry out an assignment" (p. 257), suggesting clear conflict with administration and/or policies. Lambie (2007) found that for school counselors at all levels, burnout was negatively associated with occupational support, suggesting that the relationship between school counselor and principal is critical.

A very early study (Dietz, 1972) examined school counselors' job satisfaction based on how much time they spent on ASCA defined activities and their rankings of importance. He reported that the two activities reported as the most important by school counselors were ranked 7th and 8th in terms of time allotment, suggesting a role conflict that may contribute to decreased job satisfaction. More recently, Baggerly and Osborn (2006), using a sample of 1280 Florida school counselors, found that time spent on appropriate duties and time spent on inappropriate duties, self-efficacy of appropriate

and inappropriate duties, supervision by district and peers, and stress all predicted career satisfaction. They concluded that "frustration of not being able to implement appropriate duties significantly increases school counselors' career satisfaction" (p. 203).

Scarborough and Culbreth (2008) found significant differences between actual and preferred activities for all four ASCA areas, with the largest effect sizes for Counseling and Coordination, a medium effect size for Curriculum, and a small effect size for Consultation. They also found significant differences in preferred to actual time for the following nonguidance functions: Clerical and Administrative. In addition, Kolodinsky et al. (2009) reported that for school counselors at all levels, job satisfaction was positively correlated with time spent counseling students and working with teachers and negatively correlated with time spent on crises, system support, and nonguidance activities. Culbreth et al. (2005) examined personal characteristics as they relate to role stress of school counselors and stressed the importance of job perceptions matching reality contributing to role stress (or the lack of). Peer consultation and supervision was also noted as reducing role stress.

In a related study by Agresta (2006) of school social workers, job satisfaction was highest when discrepancy between ideal and actual professional roles was lowest. Bryant and Constantine (2006) concluded that for female school counselors, multiple role balance and job satisfaction significantly predicted life satisfaction. Butler and Constantine (2005), in their study of 533 school counselors, found that higher levels of collective self-esteem (how their profession was valued by others) in school counselors

was correlated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion and higher levels of personal accomplishment.

Some studies suggest that school counselors in general are moderately to very satisfied in their jobs (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; DeMato & Curcio, 2004; Jones, 1991; Schuttenberg, O'Dell, & Kaczala, 1990; Vandergrift & Wright, 1997; Wilkerson, 2009). In contrast, other studies have reported high levels of burnout, specifically emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, in school counselors (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Lambie, 2007). Studies in other career fields have supported the relationship between role conflict and role ambiguity and job satisfaction, specifically within schools (Agresta, 2006; Embich, 2001). Wilkerson and Bellini (2006) reported significant correlations between role conflict and role ambiguity and burnout in school counselors, but did not find them to be significant predictors in multiple regression equations (perhaps due to a small sample). Recently, Wilkerson (2009) examined the concept of burnout in school counselors using occupational stress and coping styles as possible predictors. They found that years of experience, role conflict, role ambiguity, and use of emotion-orienting coping predicted emotional exhaustion. For depersonalization, only years of experience and emotion-oriented coping were significant predictors.

While job satisfaction has been suggested to be moderate to high for school counselors, several predictors of stress have been identified. While other studies have examined the concept of burnout, this study is focused on the more positive concept of job satisfaction, but will also examine role conflict and ambiguity in an attempt to understand some of the discrepant results. Measures were also chosen to identify specific elements of job satisfaction as other studies (e.g., Culbreth et al., 2005) have

studied job satisfaction in general but suggested that specific factors such as supervision and organizational support associated with less role stress. As duties increase and the ASCA National Model is being implemented, it is essential to examine the job satisfaction of school counselors, how it is impacted by role overload and role ambiguity, and its relationship to performance of ASCA suggested duties. High school counselors were targeted as the sample to control for the range in their activities as the role of school counselors varies by level and has been found to correlate with role stress (Culbreth et al., 2005; Rayle, 2006).

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship of role conflict and role ambiguity and time spent on ASCA duties with job satisfaction. Specifically, (a) How well do role conflict, role ambiguity, and time spent on school counseling activities (as defined by ASCA) predict overall job satisfaction and specific aspects of job satisfaction for high school counselors?, and (b) Are there differences based on gender or school location in reported role conflict, role ambiguity, or job satisfaction for high school counselors?

Method

Participants and Procedures

In the current study, data were collected from 175 high school counselors. Of these, 27% were male and 73% were female. The age range was 24 to 63 years old (*M* = 43.43, *SD* = 10.68). Additionally, 88.6% were Caucasian, 6.9% Black, with the remaining participants selecting Latino(a)/Hispanic or Other for ethnicity. All had a master's degree or higher. Permanent certifications were held by 78.9% of the counselors; 70.1% had been granted tenure. Length of time as a school counselor

ranged from 1 to 41 years (M = 9.17, SD = 8.00). Caseload ranged from 0 students to 2400 students (M = 350.43, SD = 222.93). Of the counselors, 44.7% worked in suburban districts, 31.8% in rural and 23.5% in urban. Over 93% worked in public schools. Salaries ranged from $26,700 to $97,500 ($M$ = 48,961.62, SD = 14,654.76).

Participants were listserv members of one of the following organizations: the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC), the Western New York Counselors Consortium, or the Niagara Orleans County Counselors Association. Both national and local listservs were utilized to increase the diversity in the sample since members of local organizations may not necessarily belong to national professional organizations. An email was sent to the listservs of the above organizations asking for counselor participation and directing them to the survey website. The website contained a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, as well as the survey instruments. Data was recorded anonymously.

Measures

Participants completed three measures online: a demographic questionnaire, the Job Descriptive Index (Smith et al., 1969), and the Role Conflict and Ambiguity Questionnaire (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, et al., 1970).

The demographic questionnaire asked about: age, gender, race, education, experience, tenure, caseload, school location, and salary. In addition, counselors reported the percentage of time spent on the four primary interventions as defined by ASCA: Counseling, Large Group Guidance, Consultation, Coordination, and Other.

The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) (Smith et al., 1969) measures job satisfaction. The JDI is the most widely used measure of job satisfaction (DeMeuse, 1985). The JDI contains five subscales, which measure facets of job satisfaction including *Work, Supervision, People, Pay*, and *Promotions*. The *Work, Supervision*, and *People* subscales each contain 18 items. The *Pay* and *Promotions* subscales each contain 9 items. In addition, it includes an overall satisfaction scale, the Job in General (*JIG*) scale; 9 items which reflect a global measure of job satisfaction. High scores reflect higher levels of job satisfaction. Coefficient ά estimates for the five scales of the JDI and the *JIG* exceeded .85 (Stanton & Crossley, 2000). Using a meta-analytic multitrait-multimethod matrix, convergence with the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss et al., 1967) and the Index of Organizational Relations (Dunham, Smith, & Blackburn, 1977) was indicated. Each subscale has a range of 0 to 54. Scores of 32 and above indicate satisfaction; scores of 22 and below indicate dissatisfaction.

The *Role Conflict and Ambiguity Questionnaire* (RCAQ) (Rizzo et al., 1970) contains 14 items and measures the degree of role conflict and role ambiguity on the job. Rizzo et al. (1970) defined role conflict as the incongruity of the expectations associated with a role and role ambiguity as a lack of clarity to several different aspects of a job. Six items of the RCAQ measure *Role Ambiguity* and eight items measure *Role Conflict*. Each statement is rated on a scale of 1 to 7. Scores toward 1 = strong disagreement with 7 = strong agreement. The range for *Role Conflict* scores is 8 to 56 and the range for *Role Ambiguity* scores is 6 to 42. High scores indicate higher levels of role conflict and role ambiguity. Coefficient ά estimates were .82 for the Role Conflict subscale and ranging from .78-.81 for the *Role Ambiguity* subscale (Rizzo et al.;

Schuler, Aldag, & Brief, 1977). In addition, construct validity has been reported across various samples (House, Schuler, & Levanoni, 1983; Rizzo et al.; Schuler et al., 1977). For this study, the means (and standard deviations) were 34.25 (6.76) for *Role Conflict* and 19.51 (5.13) for *Role Ambiguity* subscales. Duffus (1998) reported means (and standard deviations) for high school counselors of 31 (5.84) for Role Conflict and 26.53 (4.87) for Role Ambiguity.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Means (and standard deviations) for all variables are presented in Table 1. A two-way MANOVA revealed no significant differences between male and female counselors on the *Role Conflict* or *Role Ambiguity* subscales. A three-way MANOVA indicated no differences based on location (urban, suburban, or rural settings) on the *Role Conflict* or *Role Ambiguity* subscales.

A two-way MANOVA revealed no significant differences between male and female counselors on the 6 job satisfaction subscales. A three-way MANOVA indicated no significant differences based on location (urban, suburban, or rural settings) on the 6 job satisfaction subscales.

Role conflict and role ambiguity were highly correlated *(r* = .617, *p* < .01) as were JIG satisfaction and Satisfaction with Work *(r* = .756, *p* < .01). Time spent on Other Duties was significantly and negatively correlated with time spent on ASCA Duties: Counseling *(r* = -518, *p* < .01), Consultation *(r* = -.441, *p* < .01), Large Group Guidance *(r* = -.271, *p* < .01), and Coordination *(r* = -.171, *p* < .01).

Table 1

Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Variables for Scores on the RCAQ and JDI Subscales

Measure	*M*	*SD*	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Role Conflict	34.35	6.76	.617**	-.145*	-.063	-.046	-.159*	-.193**	-.256**	-.173*	-.217**	-.018	.197**	.205**
2. Role Ambiguity	19.51	5.13		-.043	-.149*	.036	.024	-.001	.037	.090	.058	.069	-.203**	-.052
3. JIG Satisfaction	42.65	11.68			.756**	.037	.369**	.458**	-.455**	.348**	.126	.207**	.037	.539**
4. Satisfaction with Work	44.05	10.37				-.068	.340**	.365**	.442**	.344**	.070	.090	.030	-.451**
5. Satisfaction with Pay	27.26	6.97					.080	-.039	.000	.081	.013	-.001	.006	-.057
6. Satisfaction with Promotion	14.10	10.44						.291**	.258**	.267**	-.044	.107	-.039	-.273**
7. Satisfaction with Supervision	38.34	13.82							.312**	.106	.090	.093	.010	-.197**
8. Satisfaction with People	40.40	11.42								.183*	.031	-.146*	.090	-.162*
9. Counseling	28.19	17.55									-.207**	-.207**	-.363**	-.518**
10. Large Group Guidance	12.49	10.00										-.002	-.122	-.271**
11. Consultation	19.95	10.69											.100	-.441**
12. Coordination	15.35	9.87												-.171*
13. Other Duties	24.18	18.60												

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed) * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Main Analyses

A stepwise forward multiple regression model was used to test for significant predictors of job satisfaction in high school counselors for each of the following dependent variables: overall job satisfaction with the *JIG, Satisfaction with Work, Satisfaction with Pay, Satisfaction with Promotion, Satisfaction with Supervision, and Satisfaction with People*. The independent variables included the *Role Conflict* and *Role Ambiguity* subscale; and percentage of time spent on *Counseling, Large Group Guidance, Consultation, Coordination*, and *Other Duties* outside the four ASCA areas. Table 1 contains correlations between all variables. Table 2 contains the results of each multiple regression.

Satisfaction with the Job in General. Results from the regression model using the *JIG* as the dependent variable indicated that percentage of time spent on *Other Duties* was the only significant predictor, accounting for 28.0% of the variance. A *significant negative relationship (r = -.539, p < .001)*, suggesting that less time spent on other duties predicted general job satisfaction.

Satisfaction with Work. Results from the regression model utilizing *Satisfaction with Work* as the dependent variable indicated that percentage of time spent on *Other Duties* and *Counseling*, and *Role Ambiguity* together significantly predicted 23.2% of the variance. The percentage of time spent on *Other Duties* accounted for 18.5% of the variance *(r = -.451, p < .001), Counseling* an additional 2.4% *(r = .344, p < .001)*, and *Role Ambiguity* another 2.4% *(r = -.149, p = .05)*. Less time spent on other duties, less role ambiguity, and more time spent on counseling best predicted satisfaction with work.

Satisfaction with Pay. Results from the regression model indicated that none of the independent variables individually or in combination significantly predicted *Satisfaction with Pay* for high school counselors.

Satisfaction with Promotion. Results from the regression utilizing *Satisfaction with Promotion* as the dependent variable indicated that percentage of time spent *Counseling* and *Consultation* together significantly predicted 11.4% of the variance, with *Counseling* accounting for 8.6% of the variance *(r = .267, p < .001)*, and *Other Duties*

Table 2

Summary of Regression Analyses Predicting Satisfaction With JIG, Work, Pay, Promotion, Supervision, and People

Variable	*B*	*SEB*	*ß*	*$R^2\Delta$*	*p*
JIG					
Other Duties	-.335	.044	-.529	28.0	<.001
Satisfaction with Work					
Other Duties	-.194	.048	-.343	23.2	<.001
Counseling	-.332	.147	-.164	18.5	.026
Role Ambiguity	.106	.050	.179	2.4	.037
Satisfaction with Pay					
No Significant Predictors					
Satisfaction with Promotion					
Counseling	.206	.050	.332	8.6	<.001
Other Duties	.170	.078	.174	2.9	.032
Satisfaction with Supervision					
Role Conflict	-.385	.164	-.188	3.5	.020
Satisfaction with People					
Role Conflict	-.440	.138	-.255	6.5	.002

B=Raw Beta (the measure of how strongly each predictor variable influences the dependent variable)

SE B=Standard Error of the Raw Beta

$R^2\Delta$ = Adjusted R^2 Change (the additional percentage of variance explained by this variable towards the total variance explained for the model)

β=Standardized Beta (standardized measure of how strongly each predictor variable influences the dependent variable)

an additional 2.9% *(r = -.273, p < .001)*. Less time spent on other duties and more time spent on counseling best predicted satisfaction with promotion.

Satisfaction with Supervision. Results from the regression using *Satisfaction with Supervision* as the dependent variable indicted that *Role Conflict* alone accounted for 3.5% of the variance *(r = -.193, p < .001)*. Less role conflict best predicted satisfaction with supervision.

Satisfaction with People. Results from the regression utilizing *Satisfaction with People* as the dependent variable indicated that *Role Conflict* alone accounted for 6.5% of the variance *(r = -529, p < .001)*. Less role conflict best predicted satisfaction with people.

Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between role ambiguity and role conflict, time spent on ASCA recommended tasks, and job satisfaction for high school counselors. Consistent with other studies (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Wilkerson, 2009; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006), role conflict was a significant predictor of job satisfaction, specifically satisfaction with supervision and people. The multiple demands placed on high school counselors appear to create pressure to make decisions on what services to provide or how to provide all of them with finite resources and time.

Role ambiguity was also significant predictor of satisfaction with work. While the ASCA Comprehensive School Counseling Model appears to be more widely disseminated in recent years, it appears that there is still much ambiguity surrounding the role of the school counselor, particularly the high school counselor, which creates pressure and influences job satisfaction. Other studies have reported a correlation

between role ambiguity and job satisfaction (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Coll & Freeman, 1997). Several (Leuwerke et al., 2009; Perera-Diltz & Mason, 2008; Pèrusee et al., 2004) have specifically identified the role of the principal as critical in establishing the role of the school counselor. Janson, Militello, and Kosine (2008) suggested that school counselors need to educate their principals about the role of the professional school counselor to increase quality of services and support for students and also increase job satisfaction. Baggerly and Osborn (2006) also suggested that supervision by the school district and peers predicted career satisfaction.

ASCA has also suggested certain activities are central to the role of the school counselor. This study found that that time spent on some of those activities, specifically percentage of time spent on counseling, was a predictor of satisfaction with work, the job in general, and promotion. Other studies have found similar results; Baggerly and Osborn (2006) reported that time spent on appropriate and inappropriate duties predicted career satisfaction. Culbreth et al. (2005) and Kolodinsky et al. (2009) suggested that differences in perception of ideal and actual roles, perhaps viewed as what ASCA recommends and what is actually expected of high school counselors, were predictive of job satisfaction and role stress.

Probably the most important findings of this study relate to the time spent on other duties. First, time spent on other duties was significantly correlated to the four ASCA job duties but all in a negative direction. Thus, as expected, the more time spent on other duties, the less time spent on ASCA recommended functions. Also important is the finding that of all the variables, time spent on other duties was the variable that

alone best predicted job satisfaction in general, and also was a significant predictor for satisfaction with work and promotion.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study, which should be considered. First, the web-based nature of the study may have excluded counselors who do not have access to a computer and/or deterred counselors who are not proficient on the computer. Second, counselors were solicited through various counselor professional organizations and listservs. However, listservs at both the local and national level were used to obtain some diversity in those who chose to participate, recognizing that there may be differences between those school counselors who belong to ASCA and those who do not that may impact job satisfaction and perceptions of their role. Finally, because of the voluntary nature of the studies, counselors that chose to participate may have had strong opinions they wanted to voice. Those who participated for the most part were satisfied to highly satisfied (M_{JIG} = 42.65), mainly female and Caucasian, and in the mid-range of their career (M_{age} = 43.43; $M_{length \, as \, school \, counselor}$ = 9.17). Future studies should explore ways to include counselors without access to computers as well as counselors who are not members of professional organizations. Secondly, the impact of grade level, whether elementary, middle, or high school, should be investigated.

Implications for Practice

Role conflict and role ambiguity has been associated with the role of the school counselor for a long time and appear to impact job satisfaction, particularly for high school counselors. Professionals in the field should work to clarify their roles in the schools and to educate their non-counselor colleagues on their function and value. Role

ambiguity relates to incongruity of the expectations related to the role of the school counselor. In this study, role ambiguity was most highly correlated with satisfaction with work, suggesting that the less role ambiguity the school counselors perceived, the more satisfaction they reported. Thus, it is important to help constituents (parents, teachers, students, administration) understand the role of the school counselor in a high school. Using role statements and the ASCA Comprehensive School Counseling Model guidelines, counselors may be able to inform those of how they can be most helpful in helping students succeed academically. With the aid of such documents, school counselors may also be able to advocate that the scope of their role be evaluated with a focus on the ASCA duties and the appropriateness of their non-guidance duties. Green and Ebmeier (2006) suggested a series of questions/information that could be used to help educate principals about the role of school counselors and also in job interviews for school counselors. Some counselor education programs have begun to work with educational leadership programs to have school counselors and administrators, particularly principals, in training inform each other of training standards, professional documents, and relevant literature. A brochure entitled *What Do High School Counselors Do?* (based on the info on the ASCA website) could be discussed and provided at parent and student orientations, open houses, and conferences; published in school materials such as district calendars, orientation guidelines, student and teacher handbooks; and published on the school website.

Another contributing factor to role ambiguity in school counselors may be related to turnover in personnel. Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Chung, and Ross (2003) suggested that the average tenure of a principal nationally was less than three years,

suggested that school leadership changes often. Such change in leadership means renegotiation of the school counselor role on a regular basis with each principal probably having a different perception of the role. School counselors as an organization, and within school districts and schools, need to be systematic about how they will educate new principals about their role in the building and how they contribute to the mission of the school. Written documents distributed often and posted in handbooks and on the website are critical to informing the public of the role of the school counselor.

Role conflict and time spent on other duties were other consistent predictors of several types of job satisfaction. Less role conflict and less time spent on other duties were highly correlated with each other, and also several aspects of job satisfaction. The job duties of school counselors, particularly high school counselors with high college admissions demands, have increased dramatically. Recent budget cuts have also asked school counselors to do more with less. Thus, efficiency is essential.

In this age of technology, it is essential to use computers, databases, and student information systems to their fullest capacities. Clerical staff may be able to generate reports, print report cards, and other data management tasks under the supervision of school counselors and administrators. School counselors, high school counselors in particular, do need to keep informed about students' grades, absences, and other information such as colleges applied to, but they do not need to be responsible for creating and maintaining (and printing) such records. Lieberman (2004) suggested that administrators need to clarify the role of school counselors in an effort to prevent "inappropriate and ineffective use of school counseling personnel" (p. 555). Because of the ambiguity of the role of the school counselor, some tasks that may be

more clerical or administrative in nature may have become guidance functions. It is essential to examine the job duties of high school counselors and determine which are truly under the purview of the school counselor and which fall under administration (e.g., creation of the master schedule) and which are clerical in nature (printing report cards).

Young and Lambie (2007) suggested school districts create a district school counseling manual with the goal of identifying and clarifying the role of the school counselor at each level and how they contribute to the mission of educating children. The counseling manual would include: school counseling program philosophy, definition of a professional school counselor, role of the professional school counselor, breakdown of services professional school counselors offer and proportion of time allotted, issues/topics professional school counselors typically work with students and others on, ethical and legal standards that guide professional school counselors, methods of evaluation professional school counselors use to assess program's success and worth. Such a manual would greatly help define the role of the professional school counselor in general and at each level, as well as providing accountability for their services.

In summary, how high school counselors spend their time is related to their job satisfaction. Significantly higher levels of role conflict were reported in this study than role ambiguity. More role conflict, role ambiguity, and time spent on other duties were negatively correlated with job satisfaction while time spent counseling was positively correlated. For high school counselors, it may be helpful to clearly define their role and focus their time on duties suggested by ASCA.

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