

# Funded Personnel Services Research: Patterns and Trends

GARRY R. WALZ

JAMES L. LEE

Completed and on-going research projects in the personnel services funded by the Office of Education were analyzed regarding the topics investigated, geographical area in which the research was being done, agencies receiving the grant, and the frequency of different research designs and statistical analyses. The analysis suggests that research in the personnel services is predominantly centered in the North Central accreditation region; is experimental in design and has an apparently growing programmatic emphasis; and, finally, is primarily concerned with college student populations. A number of questions are raised for consideration in the discussion and conclusions.

OVER THE YEARS, the periodic reviews of personnel services research and development activities have been well received. The frequency of use and citation of the American Educational Research Association's *Review of Educational Research* issues on personnel services, the *Journal of Counseling Psychology's* "Review of Research in Counseling Psychology," and the *Annual Review of Psychology's* chapter on counseling psychology attests to their utility.

These reviews have probably made their greatest contribution in highlighting significant research and development activities that occurred during the period

GARRY R. WALZ is Associate Professor of Education and Director of the ERIC Counseling and Personnel Services Information Center (CAPS), and JAMES L. LEE is Assistant Professor of Education and Assistant Director of Research of CAPS. Both are members of the School of Education, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

This is the second in a series of ERIC CAPS Reports on Research.

covered by the review. Though they have often included commentary on the overall research effort, they have been less successful in this area for two reasons. First, they have not possessed nor had access to an efficient means of accounting for the major research activities during a given period. To a large extent, they have dealt not with primary research reporting (the original research report itself) but instead with a spin-off usually contained in another journal article. Secondly, the reviews have ordinarily dealt with only published materials that were readily available, such as books, journal articles, and widely disseminated reports. Thus, research which was the result of a funded project or was a dissertation would ordinarily not be included in most reviews until it received the visibility accorded a published article or book.

However adequate this usual practice is of citing and reviewing primarily published research materials for highlighting significant and exemplary research outcomes, it would appear less than adequate

as a basis for reviewing the overall research activity within the country regarding such factors as topics investigated, geographical area in which the research was done, and the frequency of different research designs and statistical analyses. It would seem that any attempt to review the extent and the emphasis of research in the personnel services must necessarily cover all completed and on-going research rather than review only the published reports. Not only may published reports be misleading with regard to the overall emphasis and activities but they also exhibit the usual publication lag of approximately two years between the completion of a research project and an article's publication of it.

#### ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH

The authors have sought to provide an additional link in the overall coverage of research activity by using *Research in Education (RIE)* to review the major emphases of both *completed* and *on-going funded* Office of Education (OE) research in the personnel services. The review encompasses all of those OE-funded research projects which have been completed and reported in *RIE* from January 1, 1967, through August, 1968, and all of those OE-funded research projects which have a termination date after January 1, 1968, and which are reported as on-going Projects in *RIE* but for which there is no final report yet available. The majority of the research reports covered by this review were processed for *RIE* by the Counseling and Personnel Services Information Center (CAPS), but all relevant research reports covered by *RIE* are included in this review. In subsequent re-

views, the authors will review dissertation research, and then derive a series of generalizations regarding the national research effort in counseling and the personnel services.

For the purposes of analysis, each report was submitted to a coding procedure which included all or part of the following areas:

1. The accreditation region in which the research was done;
2. The type of school or agency receiving the research grant;
3. The type of research being done, i.e., the specific nature of the research thrust as determined by its content and purposes;
4. The type of design used in the research;
5. The types of statistical analyses used;
6. The level and, where applicable, the nature of the sample studied.

The areas of research design and statistical analysis could not be applied to on-going research because these types of information were not available in the Project Resumes published in *RIE*.

From an examination of TABLES 1 and 2, it is apparent that close to 50 percent

TABLE 1  
Accreditation Regions: On-Going Research

North Central (NC)	18
Middle Atlantic (MA)	3
New England (NE)	2
Northwest (NW)	2
Southern (S)	9
Western (W)	3
Total	37

TABLE 2  
Accreditation Regions: Completed Research

School or Agency	NC	MA	NE	NW	S	W	Totals
School district		1					1
College or university	3		1	2	2	2	10
Private organization	1		1				2
Regional lab. & R.D. centers	5						5
State departments	1					2	3
Comm. or jr. college			1				1
Totals	10	1	3	2	2	4	22

of the OE-sponsored completed and on-going research was or is being undertaken in the North Central accreditation region. The other half of the research activity is widely dispersed among all the other regions but with approximately one fourth of the on-going research centered in the Southern region. In both the completed and on-going research, colleges and universities are the major sources for the research projects (see TABLE 3). Other

potential sources such as school districts and state departments are notable for their minimal involvement in OE-supported research.

There is wide dispersion of subjects and topics covered by both the completed and on-going research as evidenced by TABLES 4 and 5. It is difficult to discern any topical trends although, to some extent, it would appear that the North Central region emphasizes research on counselor preparation and characteristics, and the on-going research is more programmatic in emphasis, dealing with the effects of a program on a population. In addition, it would appear that vocational development research has a greater emphasis in the on-going than completed research, as is the case with research on characteristics of student population.

TABLES 6 and 7 provide information about the level and nature of the samples which have been or are being studied. The major sample emphasis in both the completed and on-going research is on

**TABLE 3**

Type or School or Agency Receiving the Grant: On-Going Research

Regional lab.-R. D. centers	1
Comm. or jr. coll.	3
School district	3
College or university	27
Private organization	2
State dept.	1
Total	37

**TABLE 4**

Type of Research: On-Going

Characteristics of student populations or subcultures	6
Program (the effect of a program on a population)	12
Counseling techniques and procedures	5
Counseling process (an examination of the relationship)	1
Vocational development	4
Methodology, instruments, and materials	5
Student personnel services	1
Counselor preparation and counselor characteristics	2
Computer technology (as applied to counseling & guidance)	1
Total	37

**TABLE 5**

Accreditation Region: Completed Research

Type of Research	NC	MA	NE	NW	S	W	Totals
Characteristics of student populations or subcultures	1			1			2
Program	1	1	2				4
Couns. techniques & procedures	1					3	4
Counseling process	1				2		3
Counseling role, elementary						1	1
Methodology, instruments, etc.	1			1			2
Student personnel services	1						1
Couns. preparation & charact.'s	4		1				5
Totals	10	1	3	2	2	4	22

**TABLE 6**

## Sample Level: On-Going Research

Elementary	5
Elementary (exceptional)	3
Secondary	6
Secondary (special)	3
Secondary (disadvantaged)	1
Higher ed. (incl. jr. coll.)	14
Adult	2
Counselors and teachers	3
Total	37

studying college student populations. There does, however, appear to be a broadening of research samples in the on-going research, with both the elementary and the secondary levels receiving more emphasis, as well as a new attention being

devoted to studies of adults and counselors and teachers.

Finally, TABLES 8 and 9 present the types of research designs and the major statistical analyses used in the completed research. Over half of the research has been experimental in nature. Some inconsistency, however, is apparent in the use of simple percentages and percentiles to examine differences between groups in some of the experimental studies.

An overall statement regarding completed and on-going research would suggest that research in the personal services is (a) predominantly centered within the North Central region, (b) experimental in design and with an apparently growing programmatic emphasis, and (c) primarily concerned with college student populations.

**TABLE 7**

## Accreditation Region: Completed Research

Sample Level	NC	MA	NE	NW	S	W	Totals
Elementary	3				1	2	6
Secondary	1	1	2	1	1	1	7
Higher ed. (incl. jr. coll.)	6		1	1		1	9
Totals	10	1	3	2	2	4	22

**TABLE 8**

## Accreditation Region: Completed Research

Design	NC	MA	NE	NW	S	W	Totals
Historical							
Survey	3					1	4
Experimental	4	1	2	1	2	3	13
Exploratory	3		1	1			5
Totals	10	1	3	2	2	4	22

**TABLE 9**

## Accreditation Region: Completed Research

Statistics	NC	MA	NE	NW	S	W	Totals
Percentages & percentiles	3	1	1		1	2	8
Correlations				1			1
t-tests	2						2
ANOVA & COANOVA	4			1		1	6
Totals	10	1	3	2	2	4	22

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In attempting to draw conclusions from the data presented above, we are mindful of the limited time period and the restricted coverage of research activities which were utilized in our analysis. Certainly any sweeping conclusions or broad generalizations are not in order. When we add the doctoral dissertation data, in a subsequent review, we will be a step further toward a more comprehensive coverage; and the accumulation for several years of the same data sources will provide the means to speak with some confidence about trends and emphases.

It does seem to us, however, that a number of questions are suggested by the data and therefore warrant discussion.

1. As has been indicated through the discussion, the North Central region (NC) is responsible for close to one half of the OE-funded research effort in school and college personnel services. This can be interpreted variously as another example of North Central leadership and a logical outcome of the pre-eminence of the North Central region in the field. It is a function of the "halo" effect where, because of the reputed quality of their preparation and research programs in the personnel services or other fields, they are favored in the funding program, or quality aside, that the North Central region is just more interested in doing research. Whatever the answer is, there is still the further question of the desirability of such a heavy concentration of the research effort in one region. What does this concentration of funded research in one region and the virtual exclusion of some other regions mean for the preparation of counselors with regard to their attitudes about research activities and experiences in them? Does a lack of funding exclude an area from undertaking certain types of research? These are questions we feel are important and which we will want to return to in future analyses.

2. In reviewing our data, it is interesting to speculate on the locus of priority regarding what types of research are funded by OE. Is the disproportionate emphasis on college student populations

and college student research services a funding agency bias, an inclination of researchers to work at the college level, or both of these? Perhaps the crucial question is whether the funding is or should be following a consensus on what the major issues are that confront the personnel services. Can the present emphasis be explained as akin to the sophomore psychology research syndrome—availability rather than suitability?

3. Presumably, funded research should provide the finest research produced by a field. It has senior staff, special resources, visibility, extended time—to name just a few advantages over the "bootstrapped," or the dissertation, research. In addition, it ostensibly can only be undertaken if it is approved by a body of professional peers who are adjudged to be objective and competent in their decision-making. We have not seen as appropriate to this investigation a review of the quality of the research we have tabulated. We are, nonetheless, somewhat haunted by the thought that if this is the best, what must be the state of the rest of the research effort in the field? There are enough irksome questions about the adequacy of the conceptualization, design, and statistical analyses in the *known* to make us uneasy about the *unknown*. Do we need more critical examination of our research? What form should our criticism and analysis of research take to improve performance rather than discourage the research that is now going on?

4. Finally, one has the lingering thought that what we are researching is not very different from what we were researching a decade ago. Does this indicate that the research concerns in the field are not really responsive to the local and national concerns in society? Certainly the tremendous emphasis on innovations in Title II projects and other programs has not found its way into evaluative research studies. Are we emphasizing demonstration and development at the expense of research on the outcomes of new programs? It would appear that whatever innovations we are developing in the personnel services, we are not using funded research monies to evaluate their utility.