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A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDE AND AWARENESS OF HIGH  
SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELORS TOWARD THE GENERAL  
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TEST AS AN EQUIVALENT  
OF OR ALTERNATIVE TO THE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.

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THE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

By

John J. Mackiel

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Adult and Continuing Education

Under the Supervision of Professor Kenneth Mattran

Lincoln, Nebraska

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TITLE

A Study of the Attitude and Awareness of High School Guidance  
Counselors Towards the General Educational Development Test As  
An Equivalent of or Alternative to the High School Diploma

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Problem

Nebraska Statutes 79-4, 147.01 through 147.04 R.R.S., enacted in 1943, provide the State Board of Education the responsibility for establishment, control and maintenance of the High School Equivalency Program. The declaration of responsibility as outlined in the act specifies that the "State Board is hereby authorized to adopt reasonable rules and regulations for the administration of the High School Equivalency Diploma."<sup>1</sup> (Section 79-4, 147.03). By authority of State Statute 79-4, 147.01, "the Commissioner of Education shall have the authority to issue a diploma of high school equivalency conveying all the significance and privilege of a regular high school diploma to any person who is not a high school graduate...."<sup>2</sup>

For over thirty years, the General Educational Development Tests have served as the measurement instrument in determining educational achievement for the purpose of issuing high school equivalency certificates. The national acceptance of the General Educational Development Tests (G.E.D.) as a valid measurement tool is indicated in the

policy statements of the sixty-one departments of education which administer the tests. The departments of education include those of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, the Canal Zone, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and five provinces of Canada - Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Saskatchewan. The preceding list indicates that the G.E.D. testing program occupies a position of strength as an accepted and reliable program for evaluating learning and competency equivalent to that gained through the regular high school program.

A brief overview of the history of the General Educational Development Tests serves to illustrate the stable, yet progressive nature of the program. In 1942 the high school level batteries of the General Educational Development Tests were introduced by the Examination Staff of the United States Armed Forces Institute. The basic rationale for the G.E.D. program was formulated by E. F. Lindquist whose intention was to develop a testing program to serve World War II veterans who had not graduated from high school. These servicemen were eligible for financial support for higher education under the G. I. Bill passed in 1944; yet many had been interrupted in their pursuit of a high school diploma and as a result did not have the necessary entrance qualifications required by institutions of higher learning. Therefore the Examination Staff of the United States Armed Forces Institute, working under an advisory committee

established and supported by the American Council on Education, the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the regional accrediting associations set out to help veterans resume their educational and vocational plans.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of this effort, the Veteran's Testing Service (VTS) was established by the American Council on Education in August 1945. The VTS acted "as a facility to make the G.E.D. tests available to civilian educational institutions for administration to veterans."<sup>4</sup> Due to the success of the G.E.D. tests as used by veterans wishing to earn a high school equivalency certificate to qualify for admission to institutions of higher learning or for vocational purposes, in 1947 state departments of education and colleges began extending the use of G.E.D. tests to all adult citizens. "By 1959, the number of non-veteran adults tested exceeded the number of veterans."<sup>5</sup> Because of the changing clientele to which the G.E.D. tests were being administered, the Commission on Accreditation officially changed the name of the Veteran's Testing Service to the General Educational Development Testing Service. The G.E.D. tests have served as valuable indicators in assisting millions of Americans who otherwise may have been denied a chance to advance educationally and vocationally.

According to Jerry W. Miller, Director of the Office on Educational Credit and the G.E.D. Testing Program, "... the G.E.D. is an alternative means of establishing that a person has learning and skills equivalent to the lasting

outcomes of a high school education attained through regular matriculation."<sup>6</sup> The desirability of such an alternative to the high school diploma may be examined from the vantage point of student needs and educational institution and employer preferences. Perhaps the most obvious indicator of the need for a viable alternative to the traditional approach of completing high school is the current drop-out rate. As Owen B. Kiernan states, "The fact that we continue to have almost one million high school drop-outs [nationally] each year gives credence to the fact that the standard offerings simply do not meet the needs of all students."<sup>7</sup> It has been noted that because schools are ineffective in meeting the needs of many students, two options exist: passively tolerate school or actively leave it. In Nebraska 5,533 high school students (grades 10-12) chose the latter option during the 1976-77 school year.

The G.E.D. alternative is supported by Dhanidina and Griffith in the statements summarizing their investigation of the costs and benefits of earning a high school equivalency certificate by means of the G.E.D. They conclude:

There is no convincing reason why every individual should complete his secondary education at a given age or within four years after completing elementary education. Since people have different time preferences with respect to consumption and investment, there will always be some individuals who will defer the completion of their secondary schooling. For such people, the availability of programs such as the G.E.D. furnishes an opportunity to attain their desired level of schooling at the time they prefer.<sup>8</sup>

Thus a recognition of individual student needs makes the G.E.D. testing program a desirable alternative to the existing high school "lockstep."

The second position from which to view the G.E.D. alternative is from that of the educational institution or employer to which the G.E.D. recipient applies. Amiel Sharon states,

...institutions of higher education, business and industry, civil service commissions, apprentice training programs and licensing boards widely accept certificates or diplomas or G.E.D. test scores as meeting high school graduation requirements.<sup>9</sup>

A stronger sentiment is expressed by Ann H. Duncan, Director of Personnel for the city of Livermore, California. She states her preference for new personnel who have successfully completed the battery of G.E.D. tests and cites the G.E.D. as "the best indicator of competency."<sup>10</sup> This acceptance of the G.E.D. is shared by unions and many other employers according to Dr. Harley Sorensen. "The G.E.D. is nationally standardized and assures a certain level of competency; criteria for awarding a diploma, on the other hand, vary from school to school with no guarantee of competency."<sup>11</sup> With the current trend toward competency based assessment of educational efforts, Aubrey Forrest notes:

An increasing number of educational institutions have come to realize the importance of carefully specifying the desired objectives of their educational programs and then assessing student achievement of the specified objectives.<sup>12</sup>

As was previously noted, the G.E.D. testing program has been



concerned with competency measurement since its conception in 1942. The contemporary nature of the G.E.D. alternative enhances its significance as a viable educational option.

Despite its acknowledged acceptability, the G.E.D. testing program has remained relatively obscure. A major reason for the G.E.D.'s failure to reach its intended population, according to Karl Borden, is the "passive nature of the G.E.D. option...without promotion, without general and widespread availability, it remains for the most part unknown and beyond the reach of many in our community."<sup>13</sup> Sharon further emphasizes the need for informing prospective applicants of the G.E.D. alternative and stresses the great amount of publicity needed on the G.E.D.<sup>14</sup>

New rules governing the age criteria for G.E.D. test candidates have added even greater urgency to the need for an informed public. In Nebraska, new policies and procedures for issuance of a High School Equivalency Diploma based on G.E.D. test results were enacted on February 1, 1978. Identified as Rule 20, the new policy specifies that young people, eighteen years of age and under, may be given the opportunity to take the G.E.D. tests if the following conditions are met: parental permission, a sixty day time period between withdrawing from school and writing the G.E.D. examination, a properly completed application, a letter stating the reason(s) for wanting to write the examination and a copy of the applicant's transcript of credits from the last high school attended indicating the date of withdrawal

from school. (Rule 20, Section 3, sub-paragraph c).

As a result of Rule 20, the potential for increased use of the G.E.D. test alternative is largely extended. Yet, the obvious discrepancy between the number of high school drop-outs in Nebraska during the 1976-77 school year (5,533) and the number of nineteen year old individuals who took the G.E.D. tests (37) to acquire a high school equivalency diploma during the 1976-77 school year, indicates that prior to the passage of Rule 20 a minimal number of drop-outs were utilizing the G.E.D. option. The changes in these figures as a result of the new ruling remain to be seen.

#### Statement of the Problem

Despite a favorable history during which the General Educational Development Testing Program proved its worth as an accepted and reliable measure of the major objectives of the secondary school program of general education, the G.E.D. testing program remains quite obscure. Sharon's research indicates that educational institutions may be responsible for perpetuating this obscurity. He submits that only six percent of the G.E.D. recipients included in his study had initially learned about the G.E.D. alternative through an educational institution.<sup>15</sup> The responsibility for acquainting potential candidates with the G.E.D. alternative falls to the educational counselor.

With the advent of Rule 20 and the increased number of young students to which the G.E.D. alternative is available,

the role of the high school counselor in informing and advising students of the G.E.D. testing program has become increasingly urgent. No longer is the option restricted to students over eighteen years of age; therefore, the G.E.D. must be properly interpreted by well-informed authorities so that its advantages are made known to those who can benefit.

Section one of this chapter gives support to the availability and desirability of the G.E.D. tests for furthering educational and vocational goals. The previous observations point out the changing G.E.D. test candidate population and the responsibility of counselors in informing and advising students of the G.E.D. alternative. Because the key factor in the dissemination of information and the direction of guidance is the attitude of the counselor, it is the purpose of this study to determine, in some useful way, the attitude and awareness of high school counselors toward the General Educational Development Tests (G.E.D.) as an equivalent of, or alternative to, the high school diploma.

#### Statement of Objectives

Specific objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the awareness of high school counselors regarding the General Educational Development (G.E.D.) alternative.
2. To assess high school counselors' professional and personal estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.

3. To determine if awareness and professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative seem to be affected by variables of sex, age, position of high school counselors, and classification of the school district in which employed.

4. To analyze and describe the information process related to the advisement and guidance of the G.E.D. candidate.

5. To describe the criteria used by counselors in recognizing the potential G.E.D. candidate.

6. To gather data that will assist counselors in evaluating their current knowledge of and attitude toward the G.E.D.; and assist them in critically viewing their present method of supplying clientele with information regarding the G.E.D. alternative.

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined here for clarity in determining the investigator's frame of reference;

Attitude Toward The G.E.D.: Receptiveness and acceptability of the General Educational Development Tests by Nebraska high school counselors, as measured by the G.E.D. Attitude Awareness Survey.

G.E.D. Test: The General Educational Development Test battery of five comprehensive examinations consists of the Writing Skills Test, the Social Studies Test, the Science Test, the Reading Skills Test and the Mathematics Test. The primary use of the tests of G.E.D. is to appraise the educational development of individuals who have not completed

their formal high school education.

Equivalent Of: The General Educational Development Test is a means of establishing that a person has learning and skills comparable to the lasting outcomes of a high school education attained through regular matriculation.

Alternative To: The General Educational Development Test is a viable option which exists for students poorly accommodated by the regular school program.

High School Diploma: The high school diploma attained through regular matriculation (grades 10 through 12), is often used as the entry level screening device for employment or promotion, meets requirements for state and local board admissions to licensing examinations, meets educational requirements for admission to institutions of higher education and for induction into the Armed Forces of the United States.

Traditional High School Graduate: Students who have received a high school diploma through the traditional approach of attending classes and completing a minimum number of credits.

#### Assumptions

1. High school counselors responding to the G.E.D. Attitude Awareness Survey have done so with candor and honesty.
2. High school counselors express views regarding the G.E.D. which can be measured by a survey instrument.

3. The G.E.D. Attitude Awareness Survey is an appropriate instrument for the measurement of high school counselor awareness and professional/personal estimation of the G.E.D. option.

4. The procedures used to identify the high school counselors selected for the study are valid and the counselors selected provide a representative sample.

5. The information process related to advisement and guidance of the G.E.D. candidate can be analyzed.

6. High school counselors utilize specific criteria in the recognition of the G.E.D. candidate.

#### Delimitations Of The Study

1. The population involved in the study is confined to the secondary school counselors of Nebraska during the 1978-79 school term.

2. This study concentrates on the high school counselor's attitude toward and awareness of the G.E.D. as an equivalent of/alternative to the high school diploma as measured by the G.E.D. Attitude Awareness Survey.

3. The method for the study is the survey method.

#### Limitations Of The Study

1. Conclusions for the study are applicable to Nebraska high school counselors during the 1978-79 school term.

2. The measurement of counselor attitude and awareness is subject to any weaknesses inherent in the G.E.D. Attitude Awareness Survey.

3. This study is subject to those weaknesses inherent in survey research.

### Significance Of The Study

Though the G.E.D. testing program is well-established as the foremost alternative in determining competency equivalent to that symbolized by the traditional high school diploma, its future significance will inevitably be affected by recent legislation (Rule 20) which expands the test candidate population to include individuals eighteen years of age and under. Because such students frequently seek the guidance of high school counselors in making decisions relative to discontinuing high school or seeking alternative paths to the high school diploma, the attitudes displayed and information supplied by the counselor concerning the G.E.D. test may determine the student's future course of action.

It is expected that the following study will be significant for these reasons:

1. In the past relatively little information has been obtained from counselors regarding their attitude toward and awareness of the G.E.D. as an equivalent of or alternative to the high school diploma.

2. It should assist practicing counselors and educators to evaluate and assess their own awareness of and

attitude toward the G.E.D.

3. It should indicate to high school administrators as well as G.E.D. Testing Program supervisors the need to maintain open and active communication with counselors regarding the G.E.D. as an equivalent of or alternative to the high school diploma.

4. It should provide high school counselors information that will assist them in supplying clientele with information regarding the G.E.D. alternative.



References

<sup>1</sup>Nebraska Eighty-fifth Legislature, First Session, Nebraska School Laws, Revised and Amended in 1977, Anne Campbell, Commissioner of Education (Hammons and Stephens Co., Fremont, Nebraska, 1977), p. 236.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Amiel T. Sharon, "The Non-High School Graduate Adult in College and His Success as Predicted by the Tests of General Educational Development," (Report presented to the American Council on Education, Commission on Accreditation of Service Experiences, Washington, D.C., 1972), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Jerry W. Miller, "Let Them Take The G.E.D. Test," (Paper presented to the Adult Education Research Conference, Toronto, Ontario, 1976), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Stephen K. Bailey, Francis U. Macy, and Donn F. Vickers, Alternative Paths to the High School Diploma (Reston, Virginia; The National Association Of Secondary School Principals, 1973), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup>Lutaf Dhanidina and William S. Griffith, "Cost and Benefits of Delayed High School Completion," Adult Education, XXV, No. 4 (Summer, 1975), p. 229.

<sup>9</sup>Sharon, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup>Ellen Polgar, "The California High School Proficiency Exam," (Paper presented to the Graduate School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley, 1976), p. 116.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Aubrey Forrest, "Competency-Based Assessment In Post-Secondary Education - Some Issues And Answers," North Central Association Quarterly, LII, No. 2 (Fall 1977), p. 322.

<sup>13</sup>Karl J. Borden, "Adult High School Diploma Programs: An Emerging Alternative," (Report presented to Massachusetts State Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Education and Extended Services, Boston, Massachusetts, 1973), p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>Sharon, p. 8.

## CHAPTER II

### SURVEY OF SELECTED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The General Educational Development Tests (G.E.D.) originated in 1942, and from that date until the present, the tests have served to provide a valid means of measuring the educational proficiency of the non-high school graduate. Recent developments in the age requirement for taking the G.E.D., the increasing drop-out rate, concern over educational options and alternatives to meet the needs of individual students and disillusionment with the high school diploma as an indicator of educational competency have prompted the response of numerous authors as evidenced in the articles and research which follow.

Related to each of these concerns is the need for communicating information about the G.E.D. to prospective clientele. This task falls to the high school guidance counselor who encounters the majority of prospective G.E.D. candidates.

In this section a survey of selected literature is presented. The literature focuses on issues related to the changing G.E.D. test candidate population and the

responsibility of counselors in informing and advising students of the G.E.D. alternative. For the sake of clarity, the review is organized under five topical headings which include: 1) historical perspective, rationale and purpose of the G.E.D., 2) desirability and availability of the G.E.D., 3) G.E.D.: a means of competency testing, 4) G.E.D. test candidate population, and 5) informing and advising of the G.E.D. alternative.

Consideration of the literature relative to these five topics lends credence to the nature of this study and to its design. Through the survey of literature, the following issues emerge:

1. The research indicates a favorable response by G.E.D. recipients, educational institutions and employers to the G.E.D. testing program.

2. Studies reveal the discrepancy between the number of non-high school graduates and those persons who have taken the G.E.D. test.

3. The literature presents a strong plea for more effective communication to inform and advise the potential G.E.D. candidate.

#### Historical Perspective, Rationale and Purpose of the General Educational Development Tests

The historical background, rationale and purpose of the General Educational Development Testing Program, as explored by various authors provides a framework for the

topics which follow. Though dates and names of those persons and agencies most instrumental in developing the G.E.D. Testing Program remain consistent throughout, the original impact of the project, and its present as well as future significance, are uniquely treated in each of the accounts by the respective authors. A comparison of the various reports contributes to a clearer understanding of the General Educational Development Testing Program.

As stated in The G.E.D. Manual published by the Commission on Educational Credit of the American Council on Education:

The G.E.D. Testing Program began in 1942 with the development, by the examination staff of the United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI), of a battery of tests designed to measure the major outcomes and concepts generally associated with four years of high school education. The tests were to be administered only to military personnel in order to assist World War II veterans to re-adjust to civilian life and to pursue higher educational and vocational goals. The USAFI examination staff was composed of civilian testing experts who worked with an advisory committee that was established with the support and cooperation of the American Council on Education, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and regional accrediting associations. The basic concept underlying administration of the G.E.D. Tests to military personnel and veterans - the assessment of high school graduation equivalence for individuals who did not complete a formal high school program of instruction - proved to be a significant factor for returning veterans in pursuing their educational goals.

The G.E.D. Testing Program was administered by the Veterans' Testing Service, which was established in 1945 under the policy direction and supervision of the Commission on Accreditation of Service Experiences of the American Council on Education. In 1947 the G.E.D. Tests were administered to nonveteran adults for the first time. The Veterans' Testing Service was located

in Chicago until 1958, when it was physically moved to Washington, D.C. By 1959 the number of nonveteran adults tested exceeded the number of veterans. In 1963, in recognition of this change, the Veterans' Testing Service was renamed the General Educational Development Testing Service.<sup>1</sup>

Niemi identifies the prominent educators who headed the committee to develop the testing program; namely Ralph Tyler, a specialist in curriculum and E. F. Lindquist, a testing specialist. According to Niemi, the task group worked from 1941 to 1943 to develop "on behalf of the military man, an alternative for the credit normally obtained from a civilian educational institution. In other words, they looked for a way whereby he could receive credit for his service training and experience."<sup>2</sup>

Though the original purpose of the G.E.D. Testing Program was related to the World War II veterans for whom the tests were designed, these purposes, as interpreted by the following authors, were to be extended to the civilian population as well. The Employment and Training Administration of Washington, D.C. views the original purpose of the G.E.D. Tests as "ascertaining whether an individual who has not graduated from high school has attained a sufficient level of educational development to allow him to compete in the job market with high school graduates."<sup>3</sup>

Likewise Niemi views the primary purpose of the G.E.D. Testing Program of 1942 as that of "appraising the standing of adults who have not completed their formal high school education; or more specifically, measuring as directly as

possible their attainment of some of the major objectives of the secondary school program."<sup>4</sup>

The positive results of the G.E.D. program as used by veterans were soon acknowledged by state departments of education and colleges. Polgar notes that in 1947 the use of the G.E.D. tests was extended to all adults aged 18 and older.<sup>5</sup>

Sharon observes that:

By 1959 the number of nonveteran adults being tested exceeded the number of veterans; (therefore) in recognition of this change, the Commission on Accreditation at its May 1963 meeting officially changed the name of the Veterans' Testing Service to the General Educational Development (G.E.D.) Testing Service.<sup>6</sup>

With the changing clientele and over a thirty year span of time since their conception, the G.E.D. tests have endured numerous equating projects and tests. In such a project conducted by the American Council of Education in 1961 and 1965, "no major changes necessitating significant revision of the G.E.D. as a measure of the outcome of formal high school instruction were found."<sup>7</sup>

The stability and durability of the G.E.D., especially in regard to the basic rationale for the program, is acknowledged by E. F. Lindquist who, reports Miller, "told me that if he had it to do over again, he wouldn't change a thing about the G.E.D."<sup>8</sup>

As described by the Utah State Board of Education, Salt Lake City Division of Adult Education and Training, today's G.E.D. Testing Program:

...provides adults with an opportunity to secure an evaluation of their educational maturity and competence which should prove of value in meeting requirements for employment, entry into training, promotion in business and industry, admission to college, or for personal satisfaction.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, the need for a viable alternative to the regular high school diploma is described by the New York State Education Department, Albany Bureau of General Continuing Education, which points out the bleak educational, career and employment futures of those who cannot find such an alternative.<sup>10</sup> Miller states:

The G.E.D. is itself an alternative means of establishing that a person has learning and skills equivalent to the lasting outcomes of a high school education attained through regular matriculation.<sup>11</sup>

"The basic rationale for the program," as Miller notes, "will remain unchanged. That rationale was formulated mainly by the renowned E. F. Lindquist in the early 1940's as he sought to develop a testing program to serve veterans after World War II."<sup>12</sup> Professor Lindquist describes this rationale as follows:

The first requirement for the development of the Test was that the Tests be entirely objective and virtually self-administering in character so that they might be satisfactorily administered and scored by individuals with little or no training in testing, and so that they might yield comparable results for all the thousands of men who might be tested in widely varying circumstances. The second requirement was that they be as short as possible, both for reasons of administrative expediency and because long tests might discourage servicemen from volunteering to take them. Another requirement was that they be simple in organization, partly for reasons given and partly that the results might be rapidly understood and interpreted both by the men themselves and by the educational authorities to whom they would eventually be reported. The fourth

requirement was that the organization of the Test correspond, in broad terms, to the organization of the high school curriculum. A fifth desideratum was that each Test should be broadly comprehensive in character...corresponding to the five major areas of high school instruction; the social studies, the natural sciences, the humanities, English, and mathematics. The Test should be of such character that they would not penalize the serviceman unfairly because of his lack of recent academic or classroom experience or because of the unorthodox or informal manner in which his education had been acquired. This meant to us immediately that these Tests could not be constructed of questions of the type which constituted the usual final achievement examination for high school courses. We felt that, for use with the informally educated or self-educated serviceman, the typical course examination places too much emphasis upon the detailed factual content of classroom instruction, upon the unique and arbitrary courses of study, and upon the shoptalk or technical vocabulary of the teacher-specialist in a given field. It is generally recognized that the lasting outcomes of a high school course are not the detailed descriptive facts which are taught - most of these are forgotten by the typical student within a short time after he completes the courses - but the broad concepts, the generalizations, attitudes, skills, and procedures that are based upon or developed through the detailed materials of instruction.<sup>13</sup>

The final assertion of Lindquist's commentary is of special significance because it focuses on the crux of the G.E.D. rationale. The New York State Department, Albany Bureau of Secondary Curriculum Development notes the reasoning behind this concept.

The G.E.D.T. cannot actually measure the total results of a high school education. They do, however, provide a widely accepted and valid means of comparing the educational development of adults with that of graduating high school seniors and of measuring some of the ultimate objectives of a general education. The emphasis in these tests is placed on intellectual power rather than detailed content; on the demonstration of competence in using major generalizations, concepts, and ideas; and on the ability to comprehend exactly,



evaluate critically, and to think clearly in terms of concepts and ideas... In examinations intended for adults with varied experiences, the emphasis in the testing should properly be on the major generalizations, ideas and intellectual skills which are long-term outcomes of a sound education.<sup>14</sup>

The historical background of the G.E.D., its rationale and purpose, as described in this section, illustrate a firmly established program for evaluation of high school equivalency. The progressive nature of the program is noted by various authors in reference to its continued expansion and growth. In the next section of this chapter, the G.E.D. test is examined in regard to its desirability and availability.

#### Desirability and Availability of the General Educational Development Tests

The facts and research reported by the authors in the previous section of this chapter indicate the longevity of the G.E.D. tests and their general acceptance as an instrument for determining high school equivalency. This impressive history and widespread recognition is not necessarily synonymous with desirability or indicative of the availability of the tests of General Educational Development. For data and opinions in this regard, the following authors are cited.

Desirability is frequently born of necessity; the need for a certain commodity establishes its importance and enhances its worth. The High School Equivalency Manual of the New York State Education Department describes the G.E.D. as

a means of satisfying a need.

In today's society the high school diploma has become a necessity not only for admission to college but for job satisfaction, retention and advancement. Each year an increasing number of adults take the G.E.D.T. in hopes of securing a high school equivalency diploma.<sup>15</sup>

Cervero reiterates this sentiment and adds statistical evidence to strengthen his statement:

Traditionally the high school diploma has been viewed by many Americans as a valuable stepping stone towards occupational success and economic security. However, there are over 57 million adults aged 16 and older who do not have a high school diploma and are not now enrolled in school. For those who would like to have the diploma, but who are not willing or able to participate in high school diploma programs for adults, the State Departments of Education offer a high school equivalency certificate. In order to obtain the certificate, an adult must pass the General Educational Development (G.E.D.) Test.<sup>16</sup>

The desirability of the G.E.D. alternative is also discussed in a work by Bailey, Macy and Vickers entitled Alternative Paths to the High School Diploma. The authors state that "for most young dropouts and adults with interrupted high school educations, it is arduous or impossible to spend the class time required to accumulate the necessary units for a high school diploma."<sup>17</sup> For this reason and others as diverse as humanity itself, individual needs must play a key role in determining educational alternatives. According to Dhanidina and Griffith:

There is no convincing reason why every individual should complete his secondary education at a given age or within four years after having completed elementary education. Since people have different time preferences with respect to consumption and investment, there will always be

some individuals who will defer the completion of their secondary schooling. For such people, the availability of programs such as the G.E.D. preparatory program furnishes an opportunity to obtain their desired level of schooling at the time they prefer.<sup>18</sup>

Not only is desirability associated with necessity, it also connotes worth and quality. Thus, it is not enough to justify the existence of the G.E.D. on the basis of need alone, but its degree of excellence must also be established. Reliability and validity are two characteristics by which the merits of tests are commonly judged. Niemi asks and answers the pertinent question, "Is the G.E.D. a reliable and valid test? The answer is "Yes." ...alternative forms of the test have been established, and statistics for these forms indicate high reliability and comparability."<sup>19</sup> The G.E.D. test validities, as noted by Sharon, "are all in the .30's and are all significant at the .01 level. Correlations of this magnitude ... compare favorably with those of SAT verbal and mathematics."<sup>20</sup> Fischer concludes that "the validity of the G.E.D. as an indication of a person's proficiency must be emphasized.... The G.E.D. is a viable alternative for people who want access to jobs or training which require a high school diploma."<sup>21</sup>

As was previously noted, the long life of the G.E.D. has provided many opportunities for testing its credibility and acceptance. The fact that it has withstood the test of time speaks to its desirability as a testing instrument. Miller explains;

... G.E.D. will continue to be the major program for credentialing adults at the high school level. It is a proven mechanism with credibility and acceptance. It is cost effective in terms of the masses that need this service....<sup>22</sup>  
Yes, let all those who can benefit take the G.E.D.

The true measure of desirability of an educational testing tool is its effect on the lives of human beings who are recipients of the tangible outcomes. In the case of the G.E.D., positive results of studies have been evidenced in regard to higher education opportunities, career choice, success in business, industry and military service.

In a classic study by Sharon, "the effects of the G.E.D. on the non-traditional students were far-reaching."<sup>23</sup>

The author notes:

The most direct impact of the tests was that they provided the candidate access to formal higher education. All but two of thirty students interviewed indicated that the tests' biggest impact was that they made college enrollment possible.

The impact of the G.E.D. on the students went beyond admission to college. About one out of six students were influenced by the tests to choose a major, and about the same number stated that the tests influenced them in choosing a career. Other effects included ability to obtain a job, possibility of earning a higher income, and feelings of self-confidence and accomplishment.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly favorable results are noted by Nelson in his follow-up appraisal of selected G.E.D. test examinees at McLennan Community College in Waco, Texas. Nelson states:

One obvious conclusion was that some respondents were bolstered in their original goals. Still others, through their acquisition of a high school equivalency certificate were convinced that they should reconsider their goals.<sup>25</sup>

In a second study by Sharon "a number of significant results emerged" to add to the list of benefits received by those who have taken the G.E.D. examinations. One of the most impressive findings was that 72 percent of the G.E.D. students remained in college during the period surveyed.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the G.E.D. appeared to be a reliable indicator of success in college as noted by Sharon, "High school dropouts who score satisfactorily on the G.E.D. examinations are likely to earn college grades comparable to those earned by high school graduates who enroll in college."<sup>27</sup> In summary the research states, "The results of this study suggest that the G.E.D. tests are useful for the admission and guidance of college candidates who have not formally completed high school."<sup>28</sup>

As the first section of this chapter points out, the General Educational Development Tests were originally established to aid veterans in readjusting to civilian life and pursuing higher educational and vocational goals. Though the testing program has been extended to include non-veterans, the opportunities and benefits for veterans continue. In fact, the G.E.D. tests have become an even more desirable tool for the veteran both while in the military service and also in post service life. Beusse explains these benefits as follows:

The positive relationship between educational credentials and attainment of success in both military and civilian life indicates the importance of the high school equivalency program. The USAFI G.E.D. program is performing a valuable service by

providing non-high school graduate servicemen with the opportunity to obtain high school equivalency. These high school G.E.D. credentials have the potential to yield tangible benefits to the individual either as a career serviceman or a civilian.<sup>29</sup>

Some of the specific findings of the Beusse study show that veterans who attained the G.E.D. equivalency "were more likely to be employed in higher paying, more prestigious occupations than non-high school graduates who did not receive G.E.D. certification."<sup>30</sup> It was also noted that G.E.D. holders were "more successful in finding jobs" and the "mean weekly earnings of successful G.E.D. participants were significantly higher than those who failed or did not participate."<sup>31</sup>

Not only were job obtainment and income related to G.E.D. certification, Beusse also notes that post-service educational activities were affected.

A higher percentage of G.E.D. holders enrolled in a school or formal training programs than non-G.E.D. holders. Also, of those veterans who continued their formal education after separation from the service, G.E.D. holders were more likely to have enrolled in some form of higher education than veterans without high school certification.... In general, the data indicate the existence of a "credentials effect." G.E.D. holders were found to attain a higher level of success in military service life than high school graduates without G.E.D. equivalency.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to the positive responses of higher education and the military toward the G.E.D., there are many other facets of the employment and education spectrum that view these tests as a desirable indicator of high school equivalency. Sharon states:

Institutions of higher education, business and industry, civil service commissions, apprenticeship training programs, and licensing boards widely accept certificates or diplomas or G.E.D. test scores as meeting high school graduation requirements.<sup>33</sup>

Because the G.E.D. is frequently compared to the high school diploma, and because it is professed to measure the outcomes and concepts generally associated with four years of high school education, its desirability must be tested by matching G.E.D. recipients to high school graduates. A study based on this comparison was conducted by Byrd.

G.E.D. recipients and the traditional high school graduate were compared to (1) determine if there was a significant difference in their reading level (2) to determine if there was a significant difference in their grade point average in English and (3) to determine if there was a significant difference in their grade point average in mathematics.... There was no significant difference in the three compared areas.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to the positive findings of the study in regard to its favorable comparison with the high school diploma, Byrd also asked the subjects of the study to indicate their personal feelings relative to the G.E.D. He points out, "All subjects felt that the G.E.D. was of great benefit to them and other non-high school graduates should have the opportunity to take the test."<sup>35</sup>

The preceding expression of approval for the G.E.D. by the recipients themselves is perhaps the highest indicator of the desirability of the testing instrument. In the Beusse study of military personnel previously noted, the G.E.D. holders felt their high school equivalency certificate

brought them a higher level of overall benefits particularly in regard to acceptance into higher education and training programs.<sup>36</sup>

Sharon's study to determine the validity of the G.E.D. for admission of non-high school graduates to higher education also elicited the response of students to the G.E.D. program, and found the overall reaction to be extremely favorable.<sup>37</sup> As he explains, "The following quotes might summarize the general feelings of the students better than any statistical summary:"

"I am teaching in a grade in high school that I, myself, never attained."

"The G.E.D. was a dream come true. I doubt if I would have given serious thought to attending high school for even the one year required to earn sufficient credit for a diploma. The opportunity to receive a diploma this way has definitely been the ticket to success for many others also."<sup>38</sup>

It seems that once the desirability of the G.E.D. is established, it is then necessary to examine the availability of the testing program; for without easy access, all of the advantages are of little avail to those persons who most require the benefits of the G.E.D. certificate.

Information provided by the American Council on Education as well as various state departments of education indicates that "the General Educational Development test is used by all fifty states as a basis upon which to grant high school completion credentials."<sup>39</sup>

Sharon's discussion of G.E.D. testing sites is even more explicit in pointing out the availability of the tests.



The G.E.D. tests are administered primarily at official G.E.D. centers established by state departments of education. By authorization of the Commission on Accreditation, the tests are administered to veteran patients at VW hospitals and centers. The tests are also administered through the Commission Office to inmates and patients in all federal correctional and health institutions and to American civilian citizens overseas and foreign nationals.<sup>40</sup>

In addition Sharon notes that the visually handicapped are furnished with special editions of the test in large type or on magnetic tape, and Spanish speaking residents of the country are provided with versions of the G.E.D. test in their native language.<sup>41</sup> The Policies and Centers handbook explains that a French edition is also available and that, in addition to all fifty states and the District of Columbia, the G.E.D. is also administered in U.S. territories, and nine Canadian provinces and territories.<sup>42</sup> The handbook outlines, on a state-by-state basis, the location of testing centers and lists forty-five testing sites for the G.E.D. in Nebraska.<sup>43</sup>

In the military sphere the Department of Defense makes the G.E.D. testing program available. As Beusse reports, "Several million military personnel have attained high school equivalency by successfully passing the battery of high school G.E.D. tests while in the military service."<sup>44</sup>

It is apparent from the literature that the G.E.D. test is both a desirable and available method for non-high school graduates to obtain high school equivalency. The numerous references to both tangible and intangible benefits

gained by G.E.D. certificate holders give credence to the merits of the testing program.

### G.E.D.: A Means Of Competency Testing

The term "competency" has accrued new significance in recent years. Educators, students, parents, tax payers and employers all have a vested interest in knowing that they themselves, or those with whom they are concerned, have certain requisite abilities. Though competency is sometimes shrouded in ambiguity, there are various measurement tools which quite clearly distinguish whether or not the examinee possesses necessary capabilities. The General Educational Development Test is viewed by many to be a good indicator of competency. In the following section, the research and opinions of several authors are examined to determine the reasons for the concern over competency, proof that the G.E.D. measures competency, and reactions of institutions to the G.E.D. as a competency measuring device.

In an article entitled, "The Competency Based Movement And Curricular Changes," Cawelti offers a brief overview of recent developments in the concern over competency. He states:

During the past several months, actions have been taken by legislators, state boards of education, state departments of education and local school boards which require that certain minimum competencies be required before students can be graduated from high school.<sup>45</sup>

Cawelti's report also notes that each year an increasing number of states enact legislation to mandate some form

of minimal competency activity. "Thus, while in the last few decades the trend had been more and more towards simply earning credits and attending as a basis for graduation, the third requirement of competencies is rapidly being added."<sup>46</sup>

In part, the demand for competency testing has come about from the strikingly obvious skill inadequacies evidenced by students after they leave high school. As Lant explains: "The education establishment has been thrown increasingly on the defensive because of worsening conditions in the schools and increased student skill deficiencies."<sup>47</sup>

It seems that many of the loudest complaints are being voiced by employers who find their prospective employees possess a high school diploma but lack many basic skills. Polgar affirms this fact in her study and notes:

The desire for assurance of competence comes in part from the business community. Ten years ago an employer had a degree of confidence that if a prospective candidate had a high school diploma, this guaranteed that the individual had certain skills. Such is not the case today. The mere possession of a diploma is no assurance that its bearer can read, write or compute adequately. It is not only employers who seek this guarantee - they are joined by officials of post-secondary institutions, parents, and taxpayers in general.<sup>48</sup>

Inequality of method and differing standards for measuring achievement are only two of the pressing concerns inherent in the competency issue. Innumerable questions can be raised in this regard, some of which are voiced by Miller, Director of the General Educational Development Test, who asks:

How much validity and reliability is there in the assessment procedures utilized in the traditional classroom? Is accumulation of modular credits over a period of four years a better measure of high school competency? What about variation in testing techniques among teachers in the same school? The same system? Among states? What about reliability and validity of more personalized assessment techniques? How are the standards established?<sup>49</sup>

In the midst of the quandry over student skill deficiencies and disparity concerning assessment procedures, proponents of the G.E.D. are optimistic. As the Polgar study points out, high school diplomas vary from school district to school district, while "the G.E.D. is nationally standardized and assures a certain level of competency...."<sup>50</sup>

The G.E.D. has not always entertained high regard but it appears to be gaining a greater following in light of the current dissatisfaction with the regular high school diploma system. Fischer explains:

For many years a person who has passed the G.E.D. test has been considered less than equal in knowledge and ability to a person who has received a regular high school diploma. But today, when students are suing school systems for not enabling them to read on a specific level, where high school graduates cannot read or need remedial assistance in college or training programs, the ability to pass the G.E.D. test may be a better indication of a person's ability than a high school diploma.<sup>51</sup>

The manner in which the G.E.D. evaluates the competency of an examinee may be its unique feature and the one that most distinguishes it from the regular high school diploma program. Though explained in greater detail in the first section of this chapter, the following excerpt from Sharon's study bears repeating:

The emphasis in the G.E.D. tests is placed on intellectual power rather than detailed content; on the demonstration of competence in using major generalizations, concepts, and ideas; and on the ability to comprehend exactly, evaluate critically, and to think clearly about concepts and ideas.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, the G.E.D. is the same for all who take it, and it consistently aims to demonstrate the competence of the examinee in using concepts, ideas and generalizations. Nelson summarizes Sharon's research and adds statistical proof to the assertion that the G.E.D. recipient is competent in the skills which are measured by the tests.

...it clearly established that G.E.D. recipients were indeed comparable to the standard high school graduate. In fact, the G.E.D. tests were administered to a selected group of high school seniors over a three year period and approximately 20 percent of the seniors failed in each of the years of testing.<sup>53</sup>

The study goes on to note that the G.E.D. is considered a reliable indicator of the recipient's competency to pursue further educational studies in institutions of higher learning.<sup>54</sup> Additional praise for the G.E.D. as a competency measure comes from the American Council on Education whose committee "found the test was a valid measure of the general outcome of a high school program and a good predictor of success in college."<sup>55</sup> The committee further explains:

The G.E.D. has been extensively used for entrance into American colleges and universities in lieu of high school graduation. Although a large number of local studies have been completed by colleges of the success of non-high school graduates who gained admission on the basis of the G.E.D., no broad national study has been done.<sup>56</sup>

The report indicates that the primary focus of most studies has been on comparing the grades of high school graduates with those of non-high school graduates. The latter appear to be slightly lower during the first year of college.<sup>57</sup> A study of overall grade averages conducted by Sharon resulted in more positive findings however. "High school dropouts who score satisfactorily on the G.E.D. examinations are likely to earn college grades comparable to those earned by high school graduates who enroll in college."<sup>58</sup>

In a study entitled, "A Comparison of the Educational Success of G.E.D. Recipients and Traditional High School Graduates," Byrd refers to Sharon's research and points out some specific findings:

Most of the 30 participants studied by Sharon had grade point averages between B and C. Their course performance in college can be described as fair. Half of the students had higher grade point averages than the mean grade point average of all students in their college.<sup>59</sup>

For higher education, the significance of the G.E.D. tests lies primarily in their general acceptance as an admittance ticket for non-high school graduates to college. The G.E.D. test scores must meet the level required by each state department of education. The extensive use of the G.E.D. in higher education is evidenced in a CASE survey of approximately 2,200 colleges. The survey revealed that "over 1,600 of the institutions studied accept satisfactory G.E.D. test scores as evidence of ability to undertake college work."<sup>60</sup>

Not only has the high school diploma traditionally been the entrance key to higher education, it has also opened the door to the employment world. According to Hill, Adult Education Specialist for the Nebraska State Department of Education, "92 percent of the jobs available in Nebraska are closed to persons who do not have a high school diploma."<sup>61</sup> It is apparent that the high school diploma will remain the touchstone for determining eligibility for many jobs. As Miller states:

The high school credential - whether attained through regular matriculation or G.E.D. - is often used as the entry level screening device for employment purposes. The high school credential more often than not may be a realistic and fair requirement.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the need for an "entry-level screening device," there has been visible disillusionment within the business community over the worth of the high school diploma. This sentiment is apparent in such statements as Sorenson's: "A lot of people in the business community have decided that the diploma means nothing."<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the G.E.D. certificate has taken on added significance.

Although no comprehensive nation-wide survey has been made of the value of the G.E.D. with respect to job success, the equivalency diploma or certificate is generally recognized as a predictor of an employee's potential.<sup>64</sup>

Research findings, as reported by Miller, continue to support the capability of the G.E.D. test to measure skills which an examinee possesses. Miller explains:

There is a considerable body of research which, stated in its least complimentary form,

has not invalidated the G.E.D....the most respected testing services in the nation - the Educational Testing Service and the American College Testing Program have looked at the program, and ...ETS is taking steps to assure its continued reliability and validity.<sup>65</sup>

As director of G.E.D., Miller emphasizes that, "precautions must be taken to assure that only persons are credentialed who have competencies equivalent to or superior to the regular high school graduate."<sup>66</sup> Such precautions are necessary in order to maintain the distinguished character of the G.E.D. Duncan and Sorensen are two vocal advocates whose kudos for the G.E.D. add emphasis to its reputation. Duncan, Director of Personnel for the City of Livermore, California, "would prefer new personnel with the following credentials in order of preference: 1. G.E.D. - perhaps the best indicator of competency and 2. the regular high school diploma."<sup>67</sup>

According to Sorensen, this preference for the G.E.D. is shared by unions and other employers. He explains:

Employers tend to advise adult job applicants lacking a high school diploma, they would be better off to earn a G.E.D. certificate than go to adult school for a regular diploma. This suggestion reflects their increasing distrust of the regular diploma as a guarantee of competency.<sup>68</sup>

The literature indicates there is a general concern with competency and that many in the business and education fields are not satisfied with the regular high school diploma as an indicator of skill possession. The G.E.D., however, has proven to be a consistent and reliable testing device for



measuring competency. Institutions of higher education and employers report the reliability of the G.E.D. in indicating the competence of certificate recipients who enter college and the business community.

### The G.E.D. Test Candidate Population

It is difficult, if not presumptuous, to assign individuals to a group on the basis of a single common experience and to discuss the concerns and interests of the group as if they were shared by each individual therein. Nevertheless, when dealing with a relatively large number of people, it is necessary to examine the macrocosm in order to recognize and meet the needs of the microcosm. Such is the case of the group commonly referred to as dropouts. The following statistics point out the magnitude of the population lacking high school diplomas. Though the facts are somewhat repetitive, the manner in which the various authors present this information provides insight and emphasis to the problem.

Speaking in general terms, Byrd states:

According to the Encyclopedia of Education, less than half of the adult population in the United States completed a high school education, despite the rapid growth in school enrollment and educational opportunities.<sup>69</sup>

In an article in which the title itself reflects concern ("National Challenge: 54,000,000 Adults With Less Than A High School Diploma") Jhin expresses near disbelief in his exclamation, "Just imagine, the wealthiest nation in the world still having 44 percent of its population with less

than a high school diploma!"<sup>70</sup>

Presenting statistics that not only reflect the number of persons without high school diplomas but also the age level of these individuals, Bailey, Macy and Vickers and Dhanidina and Griffith, respectively, report their findings:

More than 40 percent of Americans over 22 do not have a high school diploma. A large percentage of students - some 900,000 annually - continue to drop out of high school before graduation.<sup>71</sup>

Over 57,677,000 American adults aged 16 and older who are not now enrolled in school have not earned a high school diploma despite the fact that a high school credential is a prerequisite for higher education and many types of employment.<sup>72</sup>

The national statistics concerning citizens without diplomas are disturbing, but perhaps of even greater concern are the figures which represent the number of Nebraskans missing diplomas. Hill points out:

More than half of the adults in 25 Nebraska counties never finished high school...in another 57 of the states 93 counties, between 40 and 50 percent haven't got a diploma. The remaining 11 counties, including Douglas, Lancaster and Sarpy, report that a fourth to a third of their adults haven't graduated.<sup>73</sup>

The immediate source that continues to replenish the supply of persons without diplomas is the group of students who drop out of high school each year. According to the Nebraska State Department of Education report "Statistics and Facts About Nebraska Schools," during the 1976-77 school year, 5,260 high school students dropped out.<sup>74</sup> Borden notes:

While there has certainly been a significant increase in the number of youths graduating from high school, nevertheless, there remains a very large portion of our youth who drop out, and who

are thus added to an already gigantic number of people who are without their secondary school credentials.<sup>75</sup>

A statistical conception of the size of the population of non-high school graduates does not provide real insight into the characteristics and needs of the number of this group. For information to assist in identification of the current and potential G.E.D. population, the findings of numerous authors are cited. An appropriate introductory statement to preface the varied opinions which follow is offered in a publication provided by the New York State Department of Education to potential G.E.D. instructors. Concerning the G.E.D. population, it states:

There may be a wide range in ages, abilities, previous experience and socio-economic backgrounds. There will be traits that are common to all. Most students will be insecure and will need reassurance. Many will have reading deficiencies, and their study habits are likely to be poor. Some will be fatigued when they come to class. They may become quickly discouraged and drop from the program if they do not find success.<sup>76</sup>

A somewhat differing opinion of the non-high school graduate is offered by Beusse, who cites research which indicates that the non-graduate is frequently a victim of unfortunate circumstances. He states:

The prevailing view has been that non-high school graduates (or dropouts as they are often called) are lacking in initiative, emotional stability, and perseverance. However, as Wiener (1968) points out, many of the so-called dropouts would be better characterized by the term "push-outs." That is, many non-graduates fail to complete high school for reasons other than lack of ability or motivation. Economic and family problems sometime leave very few alternatives to dropping out.<sup>77</sup>

Sharon's research also indicates that economic and social factors are among those most frequently given by dropouts as reasons for leaving high school. The responses he received to his question, "Why did you drop out of school?" in order of frequency mentioned include: financial difficulties (e.g. need to obtain a job, earn money, make a living, help support one's family), boredom, disinterest, domestic problems, joining the armed services, frustration with the school system, lack of motivation, immaturity, emotional problems, and lack of enough credits to graduate.<sup>78</sup>

This list of reasons for not completing high school covers a wide range of problems. It is interesting to note that as societal concerns and needs change with the time so has the typical membership of the G.E.D. population.

In a study conducted by the New York State Department of Education, it was discovered that the G.E.D. population has changed quite noticeably since the program began.

In the 1940's and 50's examinees were primarily high school dropouts who had acquired basic academic skills. In the 1960's the number of minority disadvantaged examinees with no prior formal high school experience has increased. Many of this population often enter the test without necessary verbal skills and adequate basic skills to pass the G.E.D.T.<sup>79</sup>

It is also significant to note the common characteristics of the "typical" non-high school graduate who obtains a G.E.D. certificate. Byrd describes him as follows:

The average non-high school graduate in college was a 28 year old male, who learned about the G.E.D. in the armed services. The G.E.D. recipient had little or no problem "adjusting,"

he was more conservative toward certain social issues than those of the general college student body. His education consisted of ten years of formal education. His plans were to obtain a bachelor's degree and engage in a business career.<sup>80</sup>

Several studies point out similar "conservative" qualities which distinguish the non-high school graduate who later completes his education. Frequent reference is made to the improvement of self-concept as noted by Backman, Green and Wirtanen:

The dropouts who later gained diplomas showed signs of moderate improvement along a number of dimensions: self esteem, negative affective states, happiness, physical symptoms, need for self development and self-utilization, social values and ambitious job attitudes.<sup>81</sup>

Devlin's study indicates that a higher level of motivation is exhibited among individuals who complete their schooling through the G.E.D. program as compared to high school graduates in their age group.<sup>82</sup> From such findings as these, Beusse determines, "the G.E.D. participant may be characterized by above-normal motivation which may also manifest itself in above-average earnings."<sup>83</sup>

Because of the great diversity among the G.E.D. population, including both potential test candidates and those who have received their high school equivalency certificates, there are few unchallengable conclusions that can be drawn. However, proof does exist that "age is not relevant to G.E.D. success" and "the psychology of an individual student is a predominant factor for G.E.D. success."<sup>84</sup> For many non-high school graduates, the psychology of hope is the

secret of their success. As Mezirow, Darkenwald and Knox explain:

There is a kind of dignity to the human condition that prompts an impoverished loser who has never won a bet to damn the odds and invest something in the future. The quality is hope. A long shot is an act of faith.<sup>85</sup>

Having examined the number of potential G.E.D. test candidates and some of the characteristics of this group, it is now important to review the literature which discusses the motives of persons who take the G.E.D. and the needs the test fills for the population it serves. A statement contained in the introduction to the G.E.D. Study Guide states:

Over the past two centuries, the American educational system has provided the opportunity for millions of Americans to obtain a high school education. Yet substantial numbers of Americans have been unable, through circumstances beyond their control, to take advantage of this educational opportunity to earn a high school diploma.<sup>86</sup>

In addition to those who want to stay in school but are unable to do so, there are some students for whom the regular high school program is not appropriate. Bailey, Macy and Vickers explain:

In a society as diverse and complex as ours, no institution can effectively serve all people. By the same token, schools should not be judged failures if all students do not meet with immediate academic success. Most students respond well to what educators have come to describe as the traditional approach, while others require alternatives in non-traditional categories. The standard offerings simply do not meet the needs of all students.<sup>87</sup>

The two previous statements identify differing populations of non-high school graduates who, ironically, have a

mutual need; namely to have a means of obtaining a high school equivalency certificate. This need is a vital and real one as the following case studies point out;

A melter in the electric furnace department of a steel company tried to enroll in a three credit metallurgy course at a university. He couldn't. He was not a high school graduate.

A 35 year old hydraulic repairman had a good knowledge of his job, was skilled in getting results, got along well with people, and seemed management oriented. He would perhaps be a good candidate for first-line supervision. He did not have a high school diploma.<sup>88</sup>

For many, Wilson explains, "...G.E.D. may represent their 'last gamble on education.'"<sup>89</sup> Though, as one author notes, the "motives for enrolling/undertaking (the G.E.D. tests) are typically mixed and often poorly articulated,"<sup>90</sup> Sharon's study indicates the primary motives are easily discernable. Of the thirty subjects he interviewed, half stated "they took the tests specifically in order to be able to go to college."<sup>91</sup> Sharon goes on to report, "Others took the tests because they were urged to take them by parents or relatives or because they originally wanted a high school equivalency certificate for vocational and social reasons."<sup>92</sup>

The New York Department of Education found that "status and personal satisfaction may be the sole motivation for some" who take the G.E.D. tests, while others may consider personal advancement or entrance to institutions of higher learning their primary motive.<sup>93</sup>

The Policy Institute in Central New York has recognized that despite the unique needs of individuals, many have

common motives for wanting a high school diploma. With this rationale in mind, they have identified "several separate, though necessarily overlapping, categories of potential clients."<sup>94</sup> These include: adults, veterans, minorities, dropouts and potential dropouts, young parents and students in school. Within the adult group, the researchers found there was concern with the distance, rigidity, threatening or patronizing nature of educational opportunities offered.<sup>95</sup> "The high school equivalency exams...have emerged as a valiant attempt to keep educational opportunities alive and various for those disabled by and disenchanted with the formal educational system."<sup>96</sup>

Though "uniquely entitled by law to educational benefits...there is concern about (veterans') reluctance to fit into traditional educational structures."<sup>97</sup> Studies indicate:

Of 5,000,000 men discharged from the armed services between August 1964 and June 1971, roughly 750,000 lack high school credentials. Only one in six of these has participated or is now participating in education and training under the G.I. Bill.<sup>98</sup>

Minorities, as previously indicated, make up a large number of the young dropout population. "Statistics and first hand observations indicate that blacks figure prominently in each of the general 'categories'" established by the New York Department of Education. The authors see these students as "searching for stimulation in the present and security in the future."<sup>99</sup>



The primary need of the group termed "dropouts and potential dropouts" is counseling, according to the New York study. The authors express distress at the inadequacy of the counseling services available to assist this large group of needy students."<sup>100</sup> Not only is guidance necessary for the purpose of informing the dropout of the G.E.D. alternative, but also to offer support in carrying out this objective. As Sharon notes:

Although a non-high school graduate may be aware of the G.E.D. program, he may not necessarily ever take the tests. The experience of dropping out of high school may have shaken his confidence and without encouragement it may be difficult for such a person to obtain a high school equivalency certificate.<sup>101</sup>

Regarding the category of "students in school," Bailey, Macy and Vickers state:

For every high school student who signals dissatisfaction with established institutions by dropping out, there is at least one counterpart who, while remaining to graduate, could be better served by more educational options.<sup>102</sup>

The authors elaborate on the problems of students in school.

Less publicized, but a very real problem throughout the country, are the students who remain in school unable to find themselves or what they need. They include a few gifted students who are unchallenged, particularly in the senior year, and larger numbers of average students, turned off or yet to be turned on.... A growing realization of these needs has led various educational systems to experiment with a number of alternatives to the existing "lockstep."... High school equivalency examinations (one such alternative).<sup>103</sup>

The opinions and research of the many authors quoted in this section may best be summarized in the observations made by Dovner and Eve. They see "the lockstep parade of compulsory public education" as being "rather harsh on participants who don't stay in step."<sup>104</sup> Nonetheless, they are willing to make two assumptions with which most educators would agree: "1. many non-high school graduates want to earn a high school diploma; 2. school officials want to help these people reach that goal."<sup>105</sup> Because these two basic premises appear to be true, the G.E.D. tests exist as a means of serving both ends.

Informing and Advising of the  
G.E.D. Alternative

The previous sections of this chapter have exposed the historical background of the General Educational Development Tests, discussed the availability and desirability of the G.E.D., identified the G.E.D. as a means of competency testing while revealing the attitudes of employers and educational institutions toward the equivalency tests, and identified the G.E.D. test candidate population. The literature has indicated that the G.E.D. tests have a strong and reputable background. They are easily accessible and have proven to be a desirable means of competency testing; moreover their worth is acknowledged by employers and institutions of higher education. In describing the large and diverse population of non-high school graduates, the authors have indicated that

the G.E.D. may be, for many, the key to future educational, career and personal success. There remains, however, the task of acquainting the potential G.E.D. candidate with the G.E.D. test - a task which requires insight into the specific needs of the individual and guidance to assist the candidate in undertaking the necessary steps to obtain a high school equivalency certificate. The final section of this chapter explores the literature dealing with informing and advising the potential candidate of the G.E.D. alternative.

Despite the fact many non-high school graduates are in need of a program which will allow them to obtain a high school certificate and in spite of the fact such a program exists in the form of the General Educational Development Tests, there has been a void in bringing these two elements together. Miller explains, "G.E.D. is testing far less than the number currently dropping out of school."<sup>106</sup> Borden expresses a similar sentiment, "The G.E.D.... is falling woefully and miserably short of the mark."<sup>107</sup> This observation is also made by Sharon, who attempts to identify the probable cause of the problem. He states: "Although the G.E.D. program is well known to educators, it is relatively unknown to the general public, especially to those who may be helped most by taking the examinations."<sup>108</sup>

Communication seems to be the major key to correcting the problem. Miller offers the following suggestions for publicizing the G.E.D.:

G.E.D. obviously needs to do more to encourage additional numbers to take advantage of the program. ... Candidate information brochures for all three language editions have recently been published. The Commission on Educational Credit has authorized the development of a G.E.D. Guidance and Information Service to include materials and diagnostic procedures for adult educators to use in helping students prepare for the exams. The package will include use of the printed word and the electronic media to motivate people to become engaged with the program.... G.E.D. needs to reach more non-high school graduates than it is currently.<sup>109</sup>

An example of the obscurity of the G.E.D. and its need for exposure is described by Deskin as he relates an instance that occurred in the Allegheny Landholm Steel Corporation in Pennsylvania.

The local high school had been offering General Educational Development programs for some time; however, the facts indicated that only a very small<sup>110</sup> percentage of industrial workers had ever enrolled.

Deskin tells of the information campaign implemented in the plant:

...the intent of the training department was made known to all employees. This was accomplished by means of the in-plant newspaper, bulletin boards, and an article in the community newspaper. The program was called "second chance." Within one week of the publicity releases, the training department had enrolled 45 employees in the program.<sup>111</sup>

Like Miller, Sharon, and Deskin, Borden is critical of the failure of the G.E.D. to reach its intended population; but in addition to the need for informing the potential candidate, he also sees the necessity of training and preparation programs. Regarding the G.E.D. Borden states:

By itself, without promotion, without general and widespread availability, and, most importantly, without specific training and preparation programs to back it up, (the G.E.D.) remains for the most

part unknown and beyond the reach of those adults in our country who need it.<sup>112</sup>

The need to inform potential G.E.D. candidates of the high school equivalency option also carries with it the responsibility of providing a clear and realistic picture of the stringent requirements of the test. The High School Equivalency Administrators Manual warns:

Public relations and advertisement have made it appear that the G.E.D.T. provides an easy way to obtain an equivalency diploma. Counselors in employment services, personnel directors and social workers encourage adults to take the test without realizing the proficiency necessary.<sup>113</sup>

With these needs and problems in mind, several authors furnish recommendations for improving the service offered to potential G.E.D. candidates. Sharon found as a result of his study that publicity must be a primary concern. He recommends a "greater amount of publicity on the G.E.D. be aimed at those segments of the civilian population that are most likely to profit from taking the tests by continuing their education."<sup>114</sup>

Sharon also recommends "colleges... encourage non-high school graduates to take the G.E.D. and to present satisfactory scores as evidence of ability to undertake college level work."<sup>115</sup> These recommendations are substantiated by the plea of a G.E.D. certificate recipient who states: "Please keep the G.E.D. going and advertise. A lot of peoples' lives are messed up from one mistake. G.E.D. makes it so much easier to go back to school."<sup>116</sup>

In research conducted by Nelson, several recommendations for further study and analysis emerged. Nelson states:

Those segments of the population including individuals and business/industry, most likely to profit from the G.E.D. program should be further studied. In depth research to determine methodologies of informing, educating and acquiring affirmative attitudes toward the G.E.D. program... should be pursued.<sup>117</sup>

The responsibility for putting such recommendations as these into action falls to a number of people in positions which touch the lives of the potential G.E.D. candidate. The need for evaluative expertise is described in the following statement:

With this trend toward high school equivalency testing, there is an increasing need to have a means of predicting individual success on the G.E.D. In many cases, the counselee needs the confidence afforded him by a positive statement of his chances of passing the tests.<sup>118</sup>

Cervero also comments on the need for greater insight in foretelling how a candidate will fare on the G.E.D. examination. He declares, "Institutions whose responsibility is to prepare adults to pass the G.E.D. test lack an efficient method by which to predict their students' probable performance on the G.E.D."<sup>119</sup>

Lant describes a method initiated by the State of Florida for the purpose of assisting potential G.E.D. candidates in identifying the probability of their success:

Beginning this fall (1977), all Florida students 16 years of age and older are eligible to take the G.E.D. test.... What they must do to qualify, however, is participate in both pre and post test career planning and counseling sessions. A parent must be present at the former. To insure

that only competent individuals qualify to take the G.E.D., academic ability, job skills, and social maturity are taken into consideration.<sup>120</sup>

The approach described by Lant seeks to identify those students who will succeed in the G.E.D. program. The counseling program he describes is somewhat similar to that suggested by Brant. She justifies the need for this approach as follows:

One goal of many adult basic education students is to earn a high school equivalency certificate by demonstrating adequate skills on the G.E.D. Consequently an important function of adult basic education programs becomes providing counseling for students concerning their readiness to achieve certain levels on the G.E.D. tests.<sup>121</sup>

Still another concern among those who are working to upgrade the procedures for informing and advising the G.E.D. candidate is the attrition rate in G.E.D. programs. Wilson explains:

Adult educators have expressed much concern over the need to reduce attrition in G.E.D. programs. Recognition of the student's self-described personal-logical profile could be an important consideration in the attempt to improve retention.<sup>122</sup>

Wilson refers to two groups of G.E.D. students, the persisters and the non-persisters, and states that "if the non-persister is to be retained, he will need more understanding and support."<sup>123</sup>

Cervero and Cunningham address the matter of support for the G.E.D. student. In a study to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional television for G.E.D. preparation, the research concluded, "Besides television instruction, the major aspect of the instructional network was the

teacher-counselor, who was the hub of the support network."<sup>124</sup>

The task of the instructor in the high school equivalency program is outlined by the New York State Department of Education as follows:

The instructor must analyze the characteristics of the students in his class to guide him in his planning. His plans must take into account the needs of his students individually as well as the class as a whole. His approach to the students, the methods to be used in class and the pace at which he will work with his class should be based on the analysis.<sup>125</sup>

Dowling and Lash note that it is easier to predict G.E.D. success for a group than for individuals. They state, "We have found that the psychology of a student is a predominant factor for G.E.D. success."<sup>126</sup>

Considering the literature presented in this section, the tasks of informing and advising appear to require knowledge of the G.E.D. program, expertise in communicating facts about the program to the intended population, and guidance of individual candidates to participate in the G.E.D. testing program. The dissemination of information to those who can profit from the G.E.D. alternative, followed by professional assistance to direct the G.E.D. candidate to acquire a high school equivalency certificate is the responsibility of all persons concerned with the G.E.D. alternative.



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124 Ronald Cervero and Phyllis M. Cunningham, "An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Instructional Television for G.E.D. Preparation," (Paper presented to the Adult Education Research Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1977), p. 12.

125 New York State Department of Education, High School Equivalency, Part I: Theory and Design of the Program, p. 6.

126 Dowling and Lash, p. 93.



## CHAPTER III

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

#### Introduction

The intent of the preceding two chapters has been to point out several considerations relative to the desirability, availability and utilization of the General Educational Development Tests. It was indicated that recent legislation (Rule 20) has increased the number of young students to which the G.E.D. alternative is available.

The study is based on the premise that the high school guidance counselor is instrumental in informing and advising students of the G.E.D. alternative. The assumption is that the counselor's attitude toward and awareness of the G.E.D. directly affects the manner and means by which he/she disseminates information concerning the G.E.D. and guides or directs students toward or away from the tests.

Therefore, the purpose of this study, restated, has been to determine the attitude and awareness of high school counselors toward the General Educational Development Tests (G.E.D.) as an equivalent of or alternative to the high school diploma. Information obtained from high school counselors will in turn be made available to these and other

counselors to assist them in evaluating their current knowledge of and attitude toward the G.E.D., and to assist them in critically viewing their present method of supplying clientele with information regarding the G.E.D. alternative.

This study was designed to examine the responses of randomly selected high school counselors toward a wide range of questions which focused on the counselor's awareness of the G.E.D. tests, their personal and professional estimation of the G.E.D. option, the manner in which students are advised of the G.E.D. tests, and the criteria used by counselors in recognizing the G.E.D. candidate. Several variables pertaining to various demographic characteristic groupings were compared. The intent was to determine if differences in perception between counselors existed when variables of age, sex, position and classification of school district in which employed were examined.

It was hoped that by requesting counselor responses and comparing these responses between the various groups mentioned above that tools could be provided high school counselors, and other educators, to evaluate their own conceptions of the G.E.D. option. In addition, it was believed that the information obtained from this study could be used by high school administrators as well as G.E.D. testing program supervisors to determine how well these two groups are working together to serve their common client, the G.E.D. candidate. Finally, the greatest use of the information obtained from this study could be made by high school

counselors who could use the literature and study findings to assist them in supplying clientele with information regarding the G.E.D. alternative.

### Definition of the Population Sample

The population for the study included all Nebraska high school (grades ten through twelve) guidance counselors. From the total population of 619 (as indicated by the Nebraska State Department of Education, Student Personnel Services), a random sample of sixty individuals was selected to participate in the survey. Using a table of random numbers compiled by the RAND Corporation, consecutive numbers were first assigned to each individual counselor in the population.<sup>1</sup> Corresponding numbers were then taken from the table of random numbers until the desired number of sixty participants was obtained. Sixty was determined to be an adequate, realistic sample size. "Descriptive research typically uses... 10-20 percent of the accessible population for the sample."<sup>2</sup>

### Type of Study

Because this study deals with the attitudes and awareness of Nebraska high school guidance counselors toward the General Educational Development Tests, the method used to collect the information was the telephone survey. As defined by Kerlinger:

Survey research studies large and small populations by selecting and studying samples chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence, disturbance, and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables.<sup>3</sup>

The data collected from high school guidance counselors should reflect their perception and use of the G.E.D. tests and should consequently serve as a basis from which to analyze the influence of the counselor's attitude and awareness on the utilization and success of the G.E.D. as an equivalent of or as an alternative to the high school diploma.

#### Instrumentation

To fit the purpose of this study, a survey instrument was designed to determine the attitude and awareness of high school guidance counselors toward the G.E.D. as an equivalent of or alternative to the high school diploma. Face validity of the instrument was assumed and verified by the graduate committee and the committee chairman, a recognized authority in the field. Questions for the instrument were composed to:

- 1) assess the awareness of high school counselors regarding the G.E.D.;
- 2) assess the high school counselor's personal and professional estimation of the G.E.D. as an equivalent of or alternative to the high school diploma;
- 3) determine the information process related to the advisement and guidance of the G.E.D. candidate;
- 4) determine the criteria used by counselors in recognizing the potential G.E.D. candidate; and
- 5) determine if personal and professional estimations of the G.E.D. alternative are affected by variables of sex, age,

counseling position and classification of the school district in which the counselor is employed.

Counselors were asked to respond to twenty questions. Questions one through nine were designed to determine the individual counselor's awareness of the G.E.D. These questions were objective in nature and related to the major purpose of the G.E.D. test, the areas of competency measured by the test, the scoring process used in evaluating test results, prerequisites for taking the G.E.D. test, location of G.E.D. preparatory classes and testing centers, and verification received for successful completion of the G.E.D. test. A point was assigned to each response which indicated the participant's awareness of the G.E.D. test. Thus, the number of points accumulated by each respondent was indicative of the degree of awareness the counselor possessed concerning the G.E.D. A total score of seven to nine indicated the respondent possessed a high degree of knowledge concerning the G.E.D. tests. The term "fully aware" was assigned to respondents in this group for purposes of displaying data on tables which appear in Chapter IV. A total point score of four to six showed the respondent was somewhat aware of the tests and a score of zero to three indicated the counselor was not aware of the G.E.D. tests.

To assess the counselor's professional estimation of the G.E.D., questions ten through fourteen were formulated. These questions were related to the counselor's opinion of

the usefulness and validity of the G.E.D. as compared to the high school diploma for entrance to college. The questions sought to determine if and when the counselor recommended the G.E.D. to clients. As in questions one through nine, a total score was compiled. A score of five indicated high professional estimation; three to four as a total score represented moderate estimation and zero to two indicated a low professional estimation of the G.E.D.

The intent of question fifteen was to determine the criteria used by counselors in recognizing the potential G.E.D. candidate. Nine descriptions of counselees were given, after which the counselor was to respond by ranking from one to four the likelihood of suggesting the G.E.D. to that particular counselee. A response of one indicated very likely, two indicated somewhat likely, three indicated somewhat unlikely and four indicated very unlikely.

A second question which was concerned with the potential G.E.D. candidate was question nineteen. This question dealt with the advisement of numbers of males and females relative to the G.E.D.

In an effort to determine the information process related to the advisement and guidance of the G.E.D. candidate, and to determine the personal opinion of high school counselors toward the G.E.D. as an alternative to or equivalent of the high school diploma, questions fifteen through twenty required a descriptive response on the part of the counselor.

Following the survey questions, each counselor was asked to provide personal data including age, sex, position, and classification of school district in which employed.

Of major concern in the development of the survey instrument was the method of eliciting counselor response. Because the study was seeking to discern counselor awareness of the G.E.D. and the professional and personal attitude of guidance personnel toward the test, it was essential that an open, spontaneous response be obtained from those surveyed. The telephone interview assured direct communication with the interviewee and an immediate response, unaffected by outside influences or passage of time.

The original draft of the survey was administered in a pilot study to ten counselors in the Omaha Public School District. The ten subjects were contacted by phone to obtain their responses to the survey questions. The subjects were contacted one week later in a personal interview at their respective schools to again elicit their responses to randomly selected questions from the survey. A comparison of each subject's responses to the telephone and personal interview questions indicated consistency in the responses given.

As a result of feedback from the pilot study respondents, and subjective assessment of any problem areas in the format of the survey instrument, appropriate alterations and revisions were made. (See Appendix B - revised questionnaire.)

### Collection of Data

When the final survey instrument was completed, a visit was made to the Nebraska State Department of Education, Lincoln, Nebraska, where the Office of Student Personnel Services provided a computer print-out of the names of Nebraska high school guidance counselors and their respective district schools. Using this listing and the table of random numbers compiled by the RAND Corporation, consecutive numbers were assigned to each individual counselor. Corresponding numbers were taken from the table of random numbers until the desired number of sixty participants was obtained.

A postcard explaining the nature and purpose of the study was addressed to each of the sixty participants (see Appendix C). The postcards were mailed five days in advance of the scheduled telephone survey call.

A schedule of telephone contacts was devised and the telephone numbers of school districts were obtained from the Northwestern Bell Telephone Company. A WATS line was utilized in making the survey calls. Each call required approximately fifteen minutes of telephone time and all calls were made within a two week time period (February 12 to February 26, 1979).

All sixty participants, as selected by the random sample, were available and willing to respond to the survey questions.



### Treatment of the Data

As the telephone questionnaires were completed, each participant's responses were examined and assigned an awareness score (zero through nine) and a professional estimation score (zero through five) as described in the section of this chapter entitled "Instrumentation." Each questionnaire was re-checked to verify the accuracy of the awareness and professional estimation scores.

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed in two parts due to the distinct difference in the type of questions asked and answers given. The first part (questions one through fifteen) was conducive to examination using mathematical indicators of significance. The second portion of the questionnaire (questions sixteen through twenty) included open-ended questions which required a more subjective process of evaluation and descriptive analysis.

A non-parametric measure of significance was chosen to analyze part one of the questionnaire results. This technique was chosen largely for its straightforwardness, relative simplicity and widespread acceptability as a measure of significance.

The chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test is undoubtedly the most important member of the non-parametric family. This test can be used with data which are only nominal in strength.<sup>4</sup>

In an effort to explore possible significant relationships, the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) was used to compare sex of

counselors versus awareness of the G.E.D.; the age of counselors versus awareness; the sex of counselors versus professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative; the age of counselors versus professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative; counselor awareness versus professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative; counselor position versus awareness; counselor position versus professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative; counselor awareness versus classification of school in which employed, and counselor professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative versus classification of school in which employed.

The results of the computer analysis of data were subsequently organized into tables and figures. These were designed to present the statistical responses of the population in conjunction with the questions of the survey instrument.

The second part of the analysis process was also descriptive in nature. However, this process was largely a subjective one, involving a reading of the comments elicited from participants to the open-ended questions and a consideration of their meaning relative to the objectives of the study.

### Summary

In this chapter a rationale was given for the development of the attitude and awareness questions included on the original survey instrument. The pilot test was discussed

along with resulting changes for the final instrument. An explanation was given for the format of the study which was a telephone survey consisting of twenty questions designed to determine the attitude and awareness of high school counselors toward the G.E.D. as an equivalent of or alternative to the high school diploma. A description of the collection of data from the sample Nebraska counselor population was given and the treatment of data was explained.

The findings of the survey will be presented in Chapter IV along with discussion based on the findings. To facilitate comparisons between and among population groups, tables and figures are used. Descriptive analysis furnished insight into responses to open-ended questions.

References

<sup>1</sup>Donald Ary, Lucy Cheser Jacobs and Asghar Razavieh, Introduction to Research in Education (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.), The Table of Random Numbers is listed in Appendix A.6, p. 366.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>3</sup>Fred N. Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.), p. 410.

<sup>4</sup>Sidney Siegel, Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (New York: McGraw Hill Co., Inc.), p. 291.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research was defined in Chapter I as follows: To determine the attitude and awareness of high school counselors toward the General Educational Development Tests (G.E.D.) as an equivalent of, or alternative to, the high school diploma. It was suggested that information obtained from high school counselors would be used to assist counselors and educators to evaluate and assess their awareness of and attitude toward the G.E.D. and assist them in supplying clientele with information regarding the G.E.D. alternative.

Six specific objectives were listed which provided the foundation on which the study was based:

1. To assess the awareness of high school counselors regarding the General Educational Development (G.E.D.) alternative.

2. To assess high school counselors' professional and personal estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.

3. To determine if awareness and professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative seem to be affected by

variables of sex, age, position of high school counselors, and classification of the school district in which employed.

4. To analyze and describe the information process related to the advisement and guidance of the G.E.D. candidate.

5. To describe the criteria used by counselors in recognizing the potential G.E.D. candidate.

6. To gather data that will assist counselors in evaluating their current knowledge of and attitude toward the G.E.D.; and assist them in critically viewing their present method of supplying clientele with information regarding the G.E.D. alternative.

To explore the data obtained from the study, the following null hypotheses were examined:

1. There is no significant difference between the sex of counselors and their awareness of the G.E.D. alternative.

2. There is no significant difference between the age of counselors and their awareness of the G.E.D. alternative.

3. There is no significant difference between the sex of counselors and their professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.

4. There is no significant difference between the age of counselors and their professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.

5. There is no significant difference between counselors' awareness of the G.E.D. alternative and their professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.

6. There is no significant difference between the position of counselors and their awareness of the G.E.D. alternative.

7. There is no significant difference between the position of counselors and their professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.

8. There is no significant difference between the classification of the school district in which counselors are employed and their awareness of the G.E.D. alternative.

9. There is no significant difference between the classification of the school district in which counselors are employed and their professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.

### Findings of the Study

The findings of the study in relationship to the six specific objectives detailed above and the nine null hypotheses advanced are presented in this chapter. The chi-square test (as described in Chapter III) is utilized to explore the significance of the data obtained from questions one through fourteen of the study. Straight-forward analysis is used to establish the findings of questions fifteen through twenty. It is hoped that the findings presented will be useful to counselors,

administrators, and others interested in the General Educational Development (G.E.D.) tests.

To present the data, the chapter is divided into three major sections. The first section displays the quantitative findings by means of tables. The second section displays the overall responses of survey participants to the survey questions and provides a description of these responses in relation to the variables of sex, age, counseling position, and classification of the school district in which the counselor is employed. The third section furnishes a description of the responses of participants to the open-ended questions of the survey.

### Hypotheses Testing

In this section of the chapter, the nine null hypotheses, previously advanced, are tested. The variables of sex, age, counseling position and classification of the school district in which the counselor is employed are compared to the counselors' awareness of the G.E.D. alternative and the counselors' professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative. Quantitative findings are displayed by means of tables.

Table 1 represents a comparison between the sex of counselors and their awareness of the G.E.D. test. The chi-square test was used and the .05 level was chosen as the minimum level of significance. The table indicates a larger number of male respondents were aware of the G.E.D. than



were female respondents. The results of the chi-square test indicate there is a significant difference between the sex of counselors and their awareness of the G.E.D. alternative. Thus, the null hypothesis, there is no significant difference between the sex of counselors and their awareness of the G.E.D. alternative, is rejected at the .05 level of significance.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF THE SEX OF COUNSELORS VERSUS THEIR  
AWARENESS OF THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE  
USING THE CHI-SQUARE STATISTIC

	Fully Aware	Somewhat Aware	Not Aware	Total
Male	12	19	9	40
Female	0	15	5	20
Total	12	34	14	60

$$x^2 = 7.815 \quad \text{d.f.} = 2 \quad P > .05$$

Table 2 shows an age versus awareness comparison. The purpose of this test was to determine if counselors in any particular age category were more aware of the G.E.D. than those counselors in other age groups. The ages of the counselors interviewed ranged from 21 to 60 years. The results of the chi-square test indicate no significant difference exists between the age groups interviewed and

their awareness of the General Educational Development tests. Hypothesis number two is therefore accepted.

TABLE 2  
COMPARISON OF THE AGE OF COUNSELORS VERSUS THEIR  
AWARENESS OF THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE  
USING THE CHI-SQUARE STATISTIC

	Fully Aware	Somewhat Aware	Not Aware	Total
51 - Over	4	4	1	9
41 - 50	1	14	3	18
31 - 40	7	11	7	25
21 - 30	0	5	3	8
Total	12	34	14	60

$$x^2 = 11.216 \quad d.f. = 6 \quad P < .05$$

Table 3 displays a comparison of the sex of counselors and their professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative. The results of the chi-square test indicate that there is no significant difference between the two groups concerning their professional estimation of the G.E.D. The third null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Table 4 shows a comparison between the age of counselors and their professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative using the chi-square test. Approximately forty-one percent of the total number of respondents fell within

the age group of 31 - 40 years and thirty percent were included in the 41 - 50 year old group. The test results indicate there is no significant difference between the factors of age and professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative. Hypothesis number four is therefore accepted.

TABLE 3

COMPARISON OF THE SEX OF COUNSELORS VERSUS THEIR PROFESSIONAL ESTIMATION OF THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE USING THE CHI-SQUARE STATISTIC

	High Professional Estimation	Moderate Professional Estimation	Low Professional Estimation	Total
Male	4	20	16	40
Female	3	8	9	20
Total	7	28	25	60

$$X^2 = .6514$$

$$d.f. = 2$$

$$P < .05$$

TABLE 4

COMPARISON OF THE AGE OF COUNSELORS VERSUS THEIR  
PROFESSIONAL ESTIMATION OF THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE  
USING THE CHI-SQUARE STATISTIC

	High Professional Estimation	Moderate Professional Estimation	Low Professional Estimation	Total
51 - Over	0	6	3	9
41 - 50	2	4	12	18
31 - 40	4	15	6	25
21 - 30	1	3	4	8
Total	7	28	25	60

$$x^2 = 10.491 \quad \text{d.f.} = 6 \quad P < .05$$

Having compared the factors of sex and age versus awareness and professional estimation, a comparison of awareness versus professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative was conducted using the chi-square test. The purpose of this comparison was to determine if counselors who are fully aware of the G.E.D. test hold a different professional estimation of the test than those who are somewhat aware or not aware of the test. Table 5 indicates there is no significant difference between these two factors. Hypothesis number five is therefore accepted.

TABLE 5

COMPARISON OF COUNSELORS' AWARENESS OF THE G.E.D.  
ALTERNATIVE VERSUS THEIR PROFESSIONAL ESTIMATION  
OF THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE USING THE  
CHI-SQUARE STATISTIC

	Fully Aware	Somewhat Aware	Not Aware	Total
High Estimation	1	4	2	7
Moderate Estimation	8	15	5	28
Low Estimation	3	15	7	25
Total	12	34	14	60

$$x^2 = 2.715 \quad \text{d.f.} = 4 \quad P < .05$$

Table 6 displays the categories of counseling positions versus the awareness of counselors using the chi-square test. Thirty-three percent of the respondents held positions as one of a number of full-time counselors in a school setting, and fifty-two percent occupied a position as the only school counselor in their building. The chi-square test indicated there was no significant difference between the position of the counselor and the counselor's awareness of the G.E.D. alternative. Hypothesis number six is therefore accepted.

TABLE 6

COMPARISON OF THE POSITION OF COUNSELORS AND  
THEIR AWARENESS OF THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE  
USING THE CHI-SQUARE STATISTIC

	Fully Aware	Somewhat Aware	Not Aware	Total
Full Time Counselor - 1 of #	5	14	1	20
Part Time Counselor	0	2	0	2
Director	1	5	1	7
Only School Counselor	6	13	12	31
Total	12	34	14	60

$$x^2 = 10.252 \quad \text{d.f.} = 6 \quad P < .05$$

In Table 7, the categories of counseling positions are compared to the counselor's professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative. Again, using the chi-square test, the resulting statistics indicate there is no significant difference when these two variables are compared. Hypothesis number seven is therefore accepted.

Table 8 displays the classification of school districts (A - D) in which the counselor respondents were employed and compares school district classification versus counselor awareness of the G.E.D. alternative. The purpose

of this comparison was to determine if counselors employed by districts with larger populations differed in their awareness of the G.E.D. option from those counselors employed by districts with lesser populations. The chi-square test indicates there is no significant difference. Hypothesis number eight is therefore accepted.

TABLE 7

COMPARISON OF THE POSITION OF COUNSELORS AND THEIR PROFESSIONAL ESTIMATION OF THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE USING THE CHI-SQUARE STATISTIC

	High Professional Estimation	Moderate Professional Estimation	Low Professional Estimation	Total
Full Time Counselor - 1 of #	1	11	8	20
Part Time Counselor	1	1	0	2
Director	0	4	3	7
Only School Counselor	5	12	14	31
Total	7	28	25	60

$$X^2 = 6.454$$

$$d.f. = 6$$

$$P < .05$$

TABLE 8

COMPARISON OF THE CLASSIFICATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT  
IN WHICH EMPLOYED VERSUS COUNSELORS' AWARENESS  
OF THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE USING  
THE CHI-SQUARE STATISTIC

	Fully Aware	Somewhat Aware	Not Aware	Total
Class A	3	14	2	19
Class B	6	7	2	15
Class C	2	10	6	18
Class D	1	3	4	8
Total	12	34	14	60

$$x^2 = 11.051 \quad \text{d.f.} = 6 \quad P < .05$$

Table 9 shows a classification versus professional estimation comparison using the chi-square test. There is no significant difference between the variables of district classification in which the counselor is employed and the counselor's professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative. Hypothesis number nine is therefore accepted.



TABLE 9

COMPARISON OF THE CLASSIFICATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT  
IN WHICH EMPLOYED VERSUS COUNSELORS' PROFESSIONAL  
ESTIMATION OF THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE  
USING THE CHI-SQUARE STATISTIC

	High Professional Estimation	Moderate Professional Estimation	Low Professional Estimation	Total
Class A	1	9	9	19
Class B	2	9	4	15
Class C	3	7	8	18
Class D	1	3	4	8
Total	7	28	25	60
	$\chi^2 = 3.169$	d.f. = 6	$P < .05$	

Table 10 displays the overall awareness of counselors regarding the G.E.D. alternative. Of the sixty survey participants, twenty percent were fully aware of the G.E.D. alternative; fifty-seven percent were somewhat aware; and twenty-three percent were not aware of the G.E.D. alternative.

Overall professional estimation of counselors regarding the G.E.D. option is shown in Table 11. Forty-seven percent of the counselors surveyed held a moderate professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative. A low estimation of the G.E.D. alternative was held by forty-two percent of the respondents and eleven percent held a high

professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.

TABLE 10  
OVERALL AWARENESS OF COUNSELORS  
REGARDING THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE

Fully Aware	Somewhat Aware	Not Aware	Total
12	34	14	60

TABLE 11  
OVERALL PROFESSIONAL ESTIMATION OF COUNSELORS  
REGARDING THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE

High Professional Estimation	Moderate Professional Estimation	Low Professional Estimation	Total
7	28	25	60

Questionnaire Response Analysis: Part I

The findings presented in this section of Chapter IV are based on the responses of a random sample of sixty Nebraska high school counselors. Histograms of relative frequency are used to display the findings and they are discussed in relation to the variables of sex, age, counseling position and classification of school district in which the counselor is employed. Fourteen figures are used

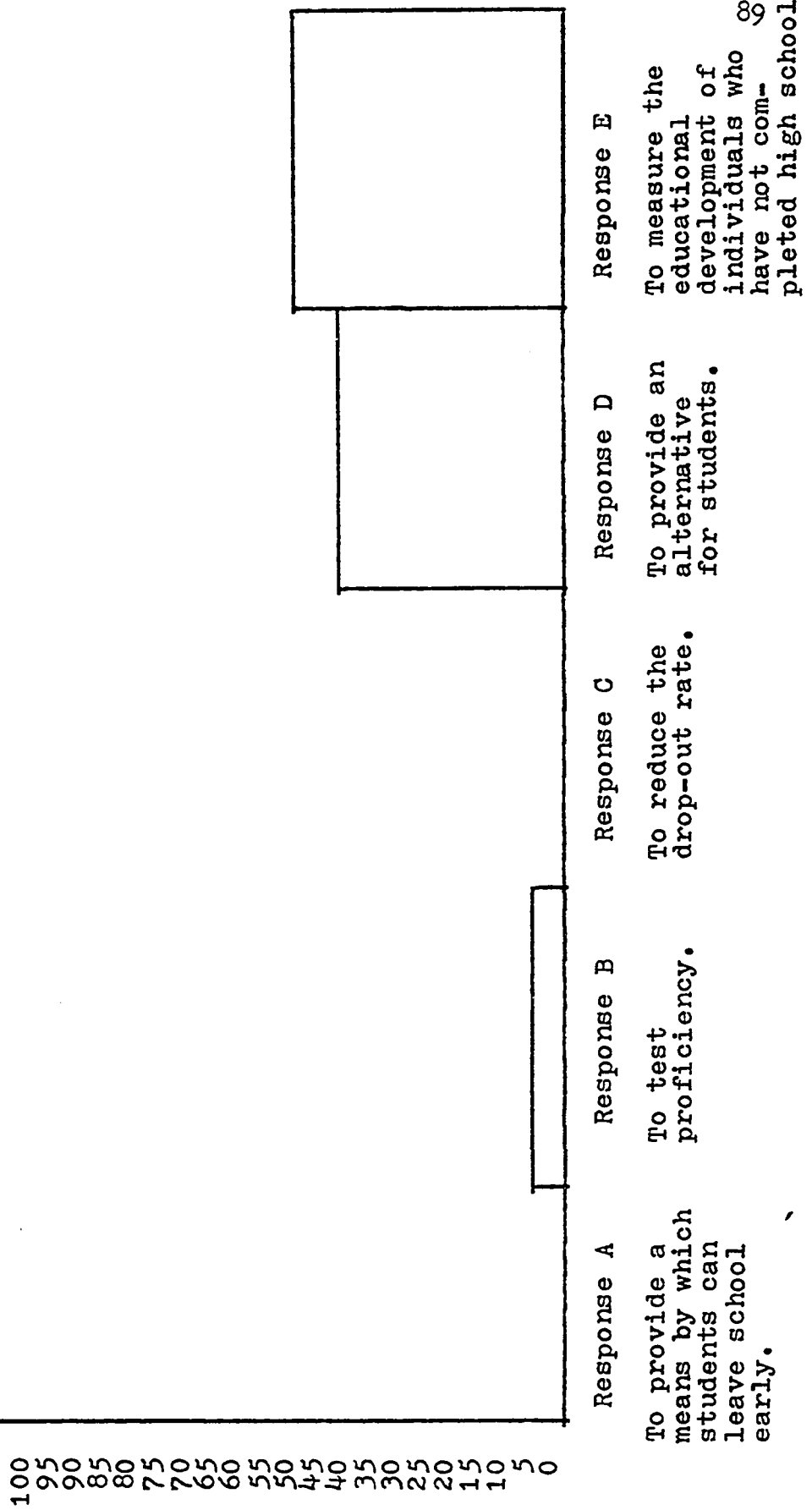
to display the findings and each is discussed as it is presented. Each of the figures furnishes a graphic picture of the participants' overall responses to one of the fourteen questions contained within the first section of the survey instrument.

Figure 1 displays the participants' responses to question one of the survey. In this question, five possible purposes for the General Educational Development Test were read to the counselor. After each purpose, the counselor was to indicate with the response of "yes" or "no" whether he/she believed it to be the major purpose of the G.E.D. Of the sixty counselors surveyed, fifty percent indicated the major purpose of the G.E.D. is "to measure educational development of individuals who have not completed high school" (Response E). Forty-one percent stated the major purpose of the G.E.D. is "to provide an alternative for students - this alternative being to stay in school or leave" (Response D). Only one counselor indicated the major purpose of the G.E.D. is "to reduce the drop-out rate" (Response C). Four of the sixty counselors surveyed stated the major purpose of the G.E.D. is "to test proficiency" (Response B). None of the respondents indicated the major purpose of the test is "to provide a means by which students can leave school early" (Response A).

To further clarify the overall counselor responses as indicated in Figure 1, these responses are examined

FIGURE 1  
 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE MAJOR PURPOSE  
 OF THE G.E.D.

OVERALL RESPONSE



according to the variables of sex, age, counseling position and school classification. In regard to the major purpose of the G.E.D., it is noted that male and female counselors differed in the most popular response selection. Fifty-five percent of the male respondents indicated the major purpose of the G.E.D. is "to measure educational development of individuals who have not completed high school" (Response E). The majority of female counselors (50%) chose the major purpose of the G.E.D. as "providing an alternative for students - this alternative being to stay in school or leave" (Response D).

When categorized by age, an equal number of respondents in the 31 - 40 age group (48%) selected choices D and E as the major purpose of the G.E.D. test. In all other age groups represented, the highest percentage of participants chose option E as the major purpose of the G.E.D. test.

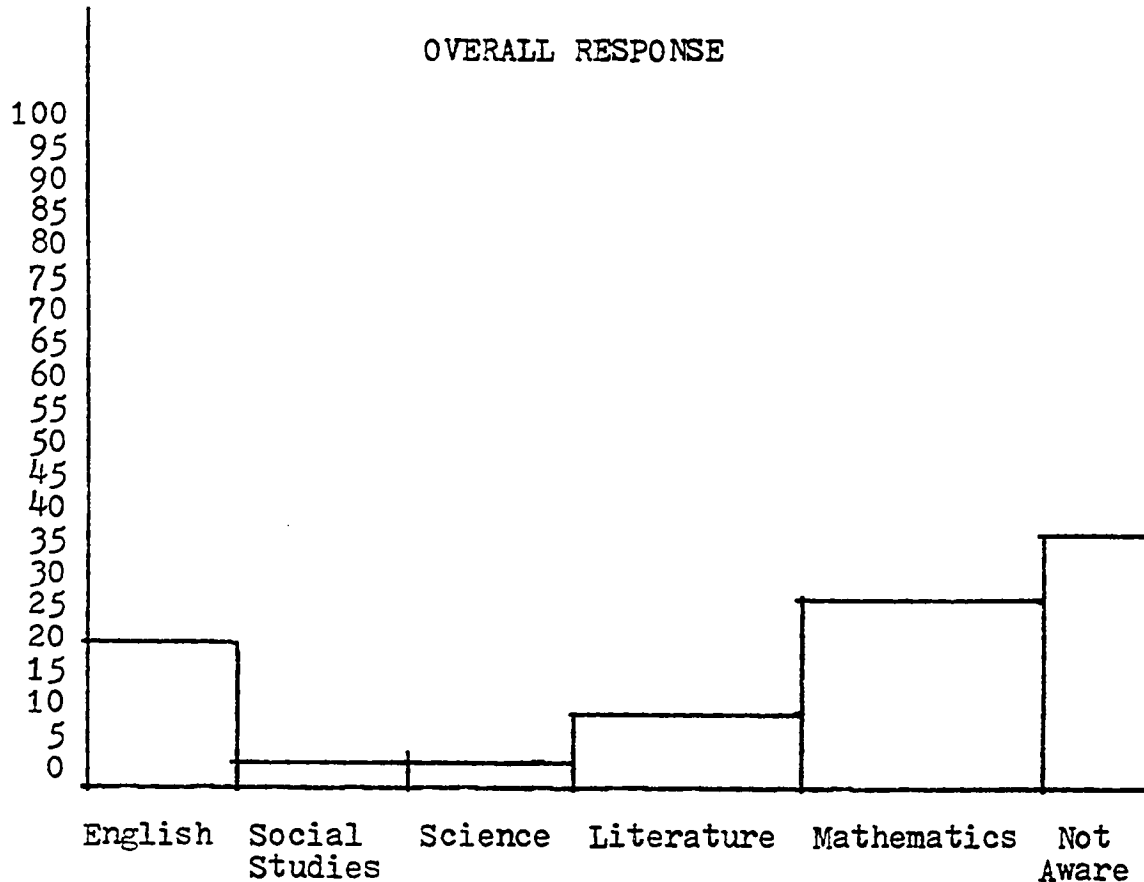
Counseling position constitutes another breakdown by which participants' responses are examined. The largest group represented is that of the only counselor in the school. Fifty-five percent of the respondents in this category indicated their belief that the major purpose of the G.E.D. is to provide an alternative for students (Response D). Full-time counselors (one of X number in the school) represent the second largest group of those questioned. In this group fifty-five percent selected measurement of educational development (Response E) as the major purpose of

the G.E.D. Counseling directors offered the highest percentage of agreement of any group in response to this question with eighty-six percent selecting response E as the major purpose of the General Educational Development test.

Respondents' answers are also compared according to the classification of school district in which each is employed. It is noted that survey participants employed by Class A and B school districts selected response E most frequently. Counselors in Class C schools selected response D more often than E, and those in Class D districts chose responses D and E an equal number of times.

Figure 2 displays the respondents' answers to question two of the survey. In this question, counselors were asked, "Of the five areas of competency measured by the General Educational Development Test, which area do you feel is most difficult for students?" Of the sixty counselors surveyed, thirty-seven percent were not aware of the competency areas. The majority of those counselors who identified a particular subject area chose either the mathematics or the English area. Twenty-eight percent stated mathematics was the most difficult for the G.E.D. student, while twenty-two percent suggested that English was the most difficult.

FIGURE 2

RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE MOST  
DIFFICULT COMPETENCY AREA

When answers to question two are examined according to the sex of the survey respondent, it is noted that a nearly equal percentage of males and females are unaware of the competency areas measured by the G.E.D. test. (38% male, 35% female). Twenty-five percent of the male respondents believed English to be the most difficult competency area and an equal percentage chose the mathematics area as most difficult. In comparison, a higher percentage of females (35%) indicated the mathematics area was the most difficult, while a lower percentage of females (15%) than males (25%)

selected English as the most difficult competency area for G.E.D. students.

In the age group categories, there is a disproportionate percentage of participants noted in the 41 - 50 age group who were not aware of the competency areas measured by the G.E.D. tests. In this age group fifty-five percent of the respondents were not aware of the test areas. The second highest percentage of those participants who were unaware of the competency areas is noted in the 21 - 30 year old group with thirty-eight percent responding they were not familiar with the subject areas tested by the G.E.D.

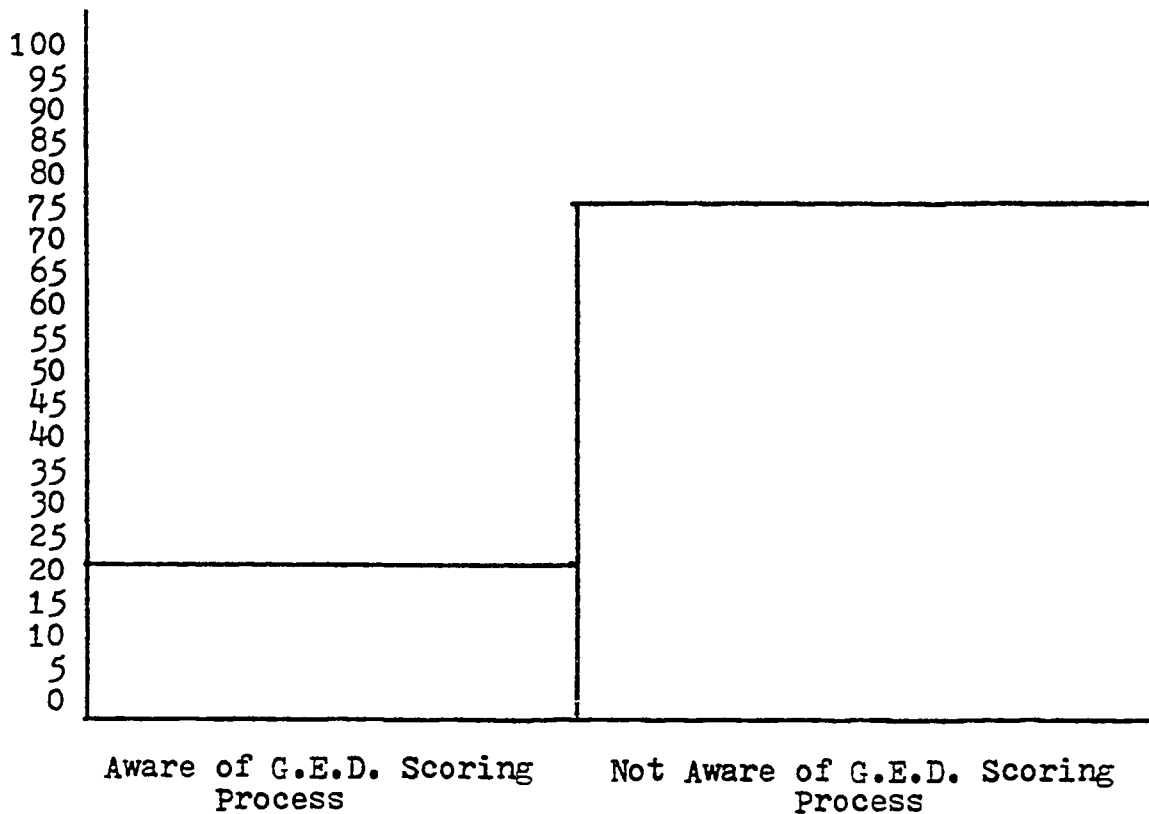
Considering the counseling position of the survey participants and their responses to question two, it is significant to note that fifty percent of the full-time counselors interviewed were not aware of the competency areas being measured by the G.E.D. test. A surprisingly high percentage (43%) of the counselors in the capacity of director of guidance were also unaware of the subject areas tested.

In matching counselors' responses to the classification of the school district in which they are employed, fifty percent of the counselors in Class D districts were found to be unaware of the G.E.D. competency areas. Counselors in Class B districts represented the lowest percentage (26%) of those respondents who were not aware of the competency areas tested by the G.E.D.



Question three of the survey asked counselors to express their opinion of the scoring process used in evaluating G.E.D. test results. The purpose of this question was to determine if counselors were aware of the scoring process. Figure 3 displays the overall response of the survey participants to question three and indicates that seventy-seven percent of the respondents were not aware of the scoring process.

FIGURE 3  
RESPONDENTS' AWARENESS OF THE G.E.D. SCORING PROCESS  
OVERALL RESPONSE



In order to determine some of the more definitive characteristics of the sizable group of counselors who were unaware of the scoring process referred to in question three, the variables of counselors' sex, age, position and classification of school district in which employed are again discussed. A comparison of male and female participants' responses shows that a striking ninety-five percent of the female respondents were not aware of the scoring process. Sixty-seven percent of the male counselors were not aware of this process.

An examination of the age groups of the counselors interviewed reveals that counselors at both ends of the age spectrum were significantly unaware of the scoring process for evaluating G.E.D. test results. Within the 21 - 30 age group one hundred percent of the respondents were unaware and in both the 41 - 50 and 51 - Over age groups, seventy-eight percent of the participants were not aware of the scoring process. Of the counselors surveyed, those within the 31 - 40 age group were most aware of the scoring process with thirty-two percent indicating familiarity with this evaluation process.

Examination of the participants' counseling position and corresponding answers to question three indicates that counselors in the capacity of director showed the highest awareness (43%) when compared to other groups; while the part-time counselors surveyed were totally unaware of the scoring process.

When categorizing counselors' responses according to the classification of the school district in which they are employed, it is noted that in Class A districts, ninety-five percent of the counselors were not aware of the scoring process. Consideration of participants' responses indicates counselors' awareness of the scoring process was greater in the districts with lower classification status (C and D).

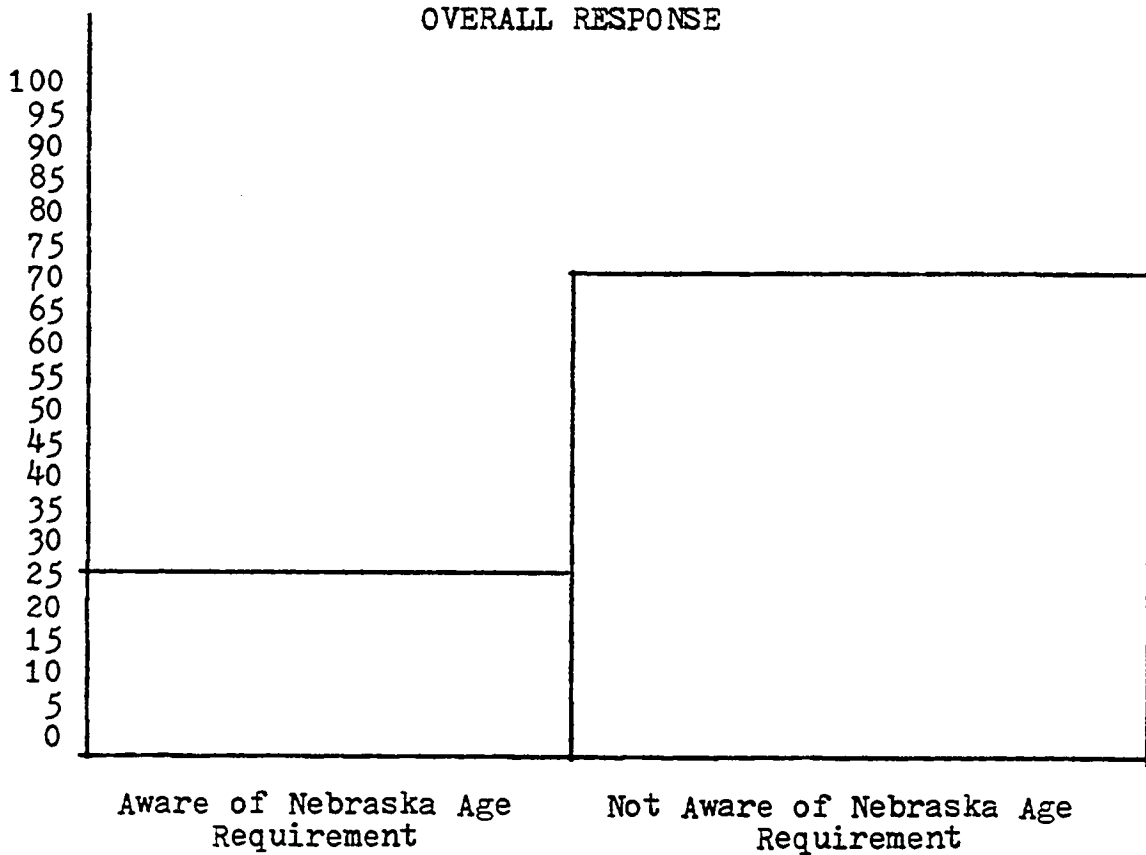
Figure 4 displays the respondents' answers to question four of the survey: "What is the minimum age at which a student is allowed to take the G.E.D. test?" It was the purpose of this question to determine if Nebraska counselors are familiar with the recent policies and procedures relative to the change of age requirements for those who wish to take the G.E.D. test (Rule 20). As indicated by Figure 4, the majority of counselors (73%), were not aware of the recent enactment of Rule 20.

Of the male counselors surveyed, sixty-five percent were not aware of the recent ruling established by the state. An even higher percentage of female counselors (90%) were unaware of Rule 20.

The age group breakdown of respondents shows the highest percentage of counselors who were unaware of the minimum age regulation to be the 41 - 50 year old age group, with eighty-three percent of the membership being unaware. The 21 - 30 group is next with seventy-six percent not aware; followed by the 31 - 40 group with seventy-two percent not

FIGURE 4

RESPONDENTS' AWARENESS OF THE MINIMUM  
AGE TO TAKE THE G.E.D. TEST



aware. The group which shows the least discrepancy between the number of counselors who were aware and unaware of Rule 20 is the group aged 50 - Over, with forty-four percent of its members being aware and fifty-six percent of them unaware of the recent state ruling.

Of note in the comparison of responses to question four and the corresponding counseling position of the respondent is the higher percentage of awareness among counseling directors (57%) as compared with counselors in

other positions. It is also noteworthy that part-time counselors were unaware of the minimum age requirement relative to Rule 20.

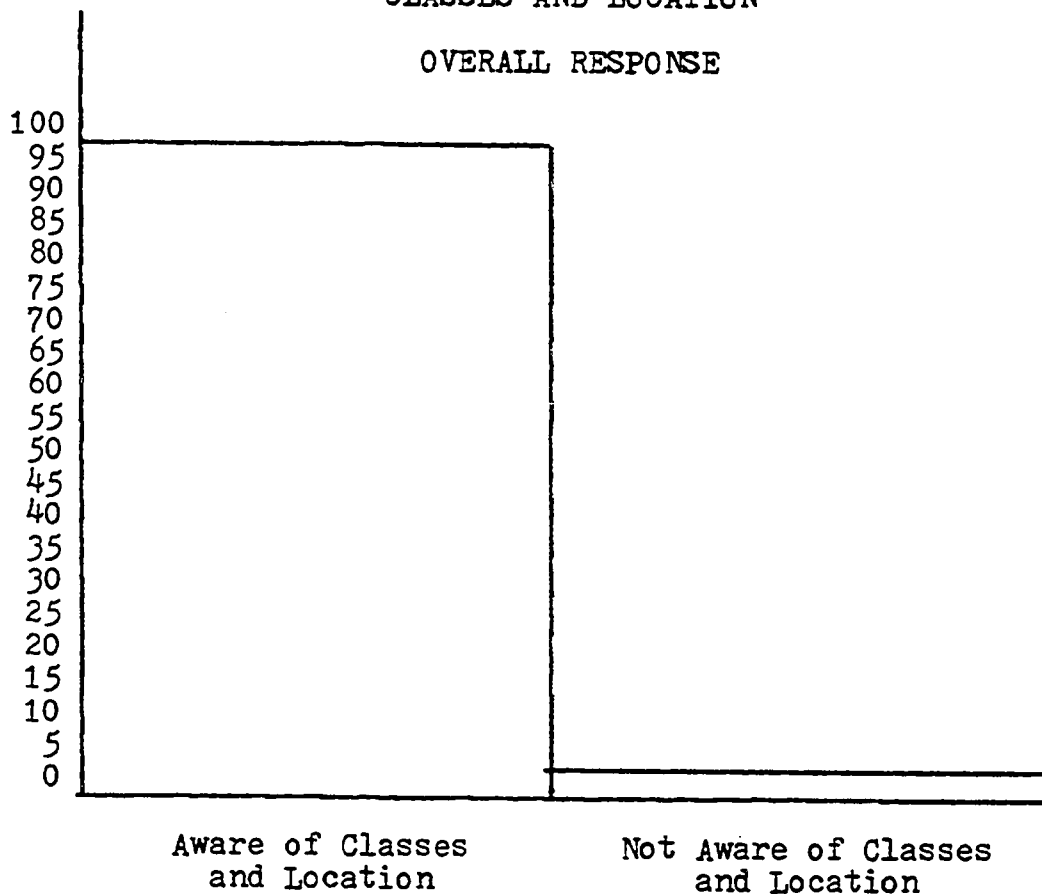
Interesting findings are revealed when counselors' awareness of recent state rulings on age requirements for taking the G.E.D. test are compared to the classification of the school district in which the counselor is employed. A significant sixty-seven percent of the counselors in Class B districts were aware of Rule 20. In other district classifications, respondents showed a lower percentage of awareness. In the Class D group, all the counselors interviewed were unaware of Rule 20.

Question five of the survey asked the respondents to indicate whether or not "there are G.E.D. preparatory classes offered in or nearby (their) community? And, if so, where?" The intent of the question was to determine if counselors were familiar with this pertinent information relative to the G.E.D. and therefore able to offer the information to a prospective G.E.D. candidate. Figure 5 shows the majority of counselors (97%) were acquainted with the G.E.D. preparatory classes and their location.

In response to question five of the survey, all female counselors (100%) indicated knowledge of the G.E.D. preparatory classes and their location. Ninety-five percent of the male respondents were also aware of this information.

Of the two respondents who were unaware of the G.E.D. preparatory classes and their location, one counselor was a

FIGURE 5

RESPONDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF G.E.D. PREPARATORY  
CLASSES AND LOCATION

member of the 31 - 40 age group and the other belonged to the 21 - 30 age group.

Because the majority of respondents were knowledgeable of the G.E.D. preparatory classes and their location in the community, it is significant to note the positions of the two counselors who did not possess this information. Of the two counselors who were unaware, one maintained a director's position and one was the only counselor in the school.

School district classification and respondents' answers to question five shows that in Class B and D, all

respondents were aware of the preparatory classes and their locations. It is noted that one counselor in Class A and one in Class C did not possess this information.

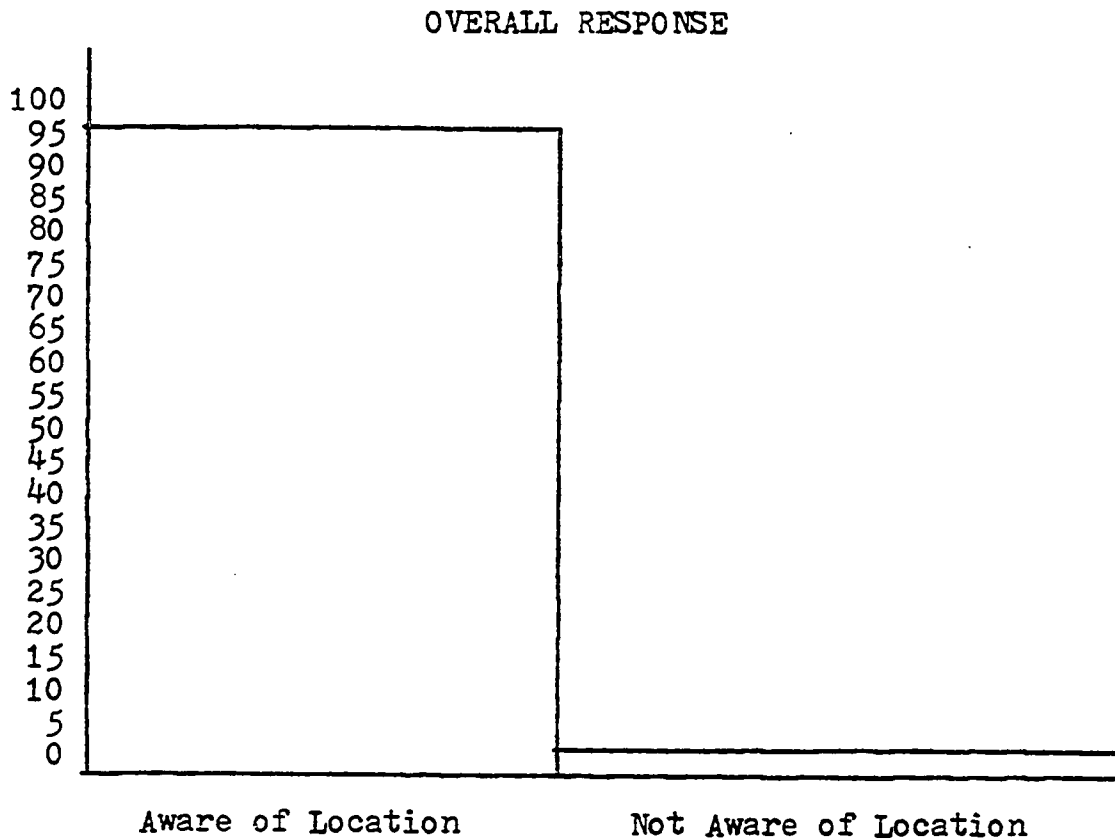
Question six of the survey asked counselors: "Where is the nearest G.E.D. test center?" As Figure 6 indicates, ninety-seven percent of the survey participants possessed knowledge of the location of the nearest test center in their community. In comparing the responses of survey participants to questions five and six using the variables of sex, age, position and classification, all statistics are consistent for these two questions. That is to say, all counselors who were aware of the offering and location of G.E.D. preparatory classes in their community (Question five) were also familiar with the location of the nearest G.E.D. test center (Question six). These two locations were frequently, but not always, the same. Likewise, the respondents whose answers indicated they were unaware of the information required in question five were also unaware of the information required for answering question six. Figure 6 below indicates the overall group response to question six.

Question seven is the third and last question in the series relating to G.E.D. test centers. In this question, respondents were asked if they had personally been in contact with the G.E.D. test center referred to in question six. Figure 7 shows that, including the two counselors who indicated they were unaware of the location of the nearest test center, thirty percent of the sixty counselors had not

personally been in contact with the test center. Seventy percent of the respondents stated they had personally contacted the test center.

FIGURE 6

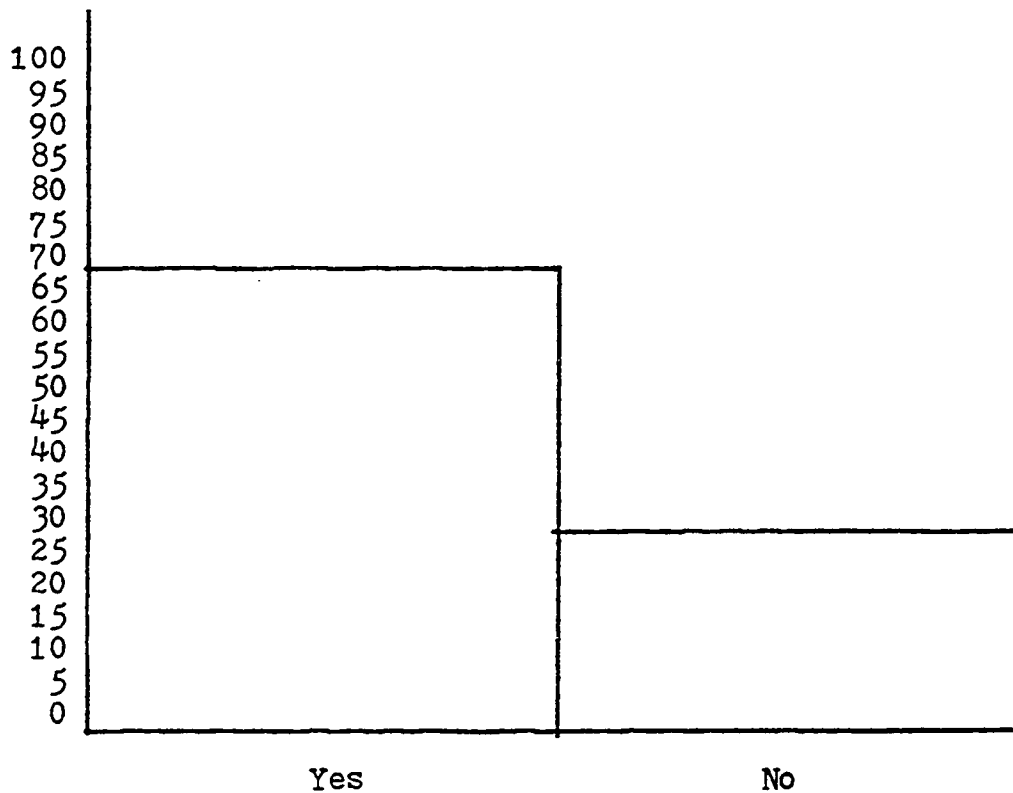
RESPONDENTS' AWARENESS OF THE LOCATION OF  
NEAREST G.E.D. TEST CENTER



When male and female responses to question seven are compared, it is noted that the majority of both groups had made personal contact with the G.E.D. test center, though a higher percentage of male counselors (73%) had made this contact than had female counselors (65%).



FIGURE 7  
 RESPONDENTS' PERSONAL CONTACT WITH G.E.D. TEST CENTERS  
 OVERALL RESPONSE



In age group comparisons, the 21 - 30 year old counselors had the highest percentage of respondents who answered "no" to question seven. Fifty percent of the counselors in this group had not contacted a G.E.D. test center. It should be noted, however, that an equal percentage of counselors in this group had contacted a test center. In both the 41 - 50 and 31 - 40 age groups seventy-two percent of the respondents had personal contact with the G.E.D. test center, while twenty-eight percent had not. The highest number of "yes" responses to question seven was given

by the 51 - Over age group with seventy-eight percent of these counselors indicating personal contact with a G.E.D. test center.

It was also noted that the highest percentages of counselors who had personal contact with a G.E.D. test center occupied positions as counseling directors (86%) and full-time counselors (one of X number in the school) (85%). Part-time counselors and those who are the only counselor in their buildings had the highest number of "no" responses to question seven. Fifty percent of the part-time counselors had not personally contacted the G.E.D. test center and forty-two percent of those counselors who held the only counseling position in their building had not contacted the test center.

Examination of school district classification in regard to question seven reveals that counselors employed by Class A districts had the highest percentage of personal contacts with G.E.D. test centers (89%). It is significant to note that as the size of the district decreases, so does the number of counselors who had personal contact with the G.E.D. test center. In Class D, only twenty-five percent of the counselors had made this contact.

Question eight of the survey was designed to identify the respondents' knowledge of the current state regulations governing the qualifications of prospective G.E.D. candidates. The question asked of counselors was: "What conditions is a

student required to meet before taking the G.E.D. examination?" Through their responses, counselors indicated they were or were not aware of the state regulations. These regulations as set forth by the Nebraska Department of Education state:

All applicants must have been a resident of Nebraska thirty (30) days immediately preceding the date of application, or the final period of high school attendance during which credit was earned toward graduation was in a Nebraska high school.

1. A properly completed application form 12-003.
2. A handwritten letter from you stating the reason(s) for wanting to write the examination.
3. An official transcript from the last high school attended stating the official date of withdrawal from school, the official date you would have graduated, and your birthdate.
4. A notarized letter from your parent(s) or guardian including all of the following items:
  - a. Reason(s) for withdrawal from the regular school program.
  - b. The identity of the school official who served as counselor previous to termination from the school program.
  - c. Reason(s) for wanting to write the examination early.
  - d. Agreement to interview with the Chief Examiner of the State High School Equivalency Testing Program if requested.
  - e. Direct permission to write the High School Equivalency Examination and the address and telephone number where a parent may be reached.

There will be at least a 60-day waiting period between officially withdrawing from school and writing the G.E.D. examination unless a letter from the last school attended requesting a waiver is presented.

The above information needs to be sent to the Nebraska State Department of Education by a 17 year old who wishes to take the G.E.D. Test.

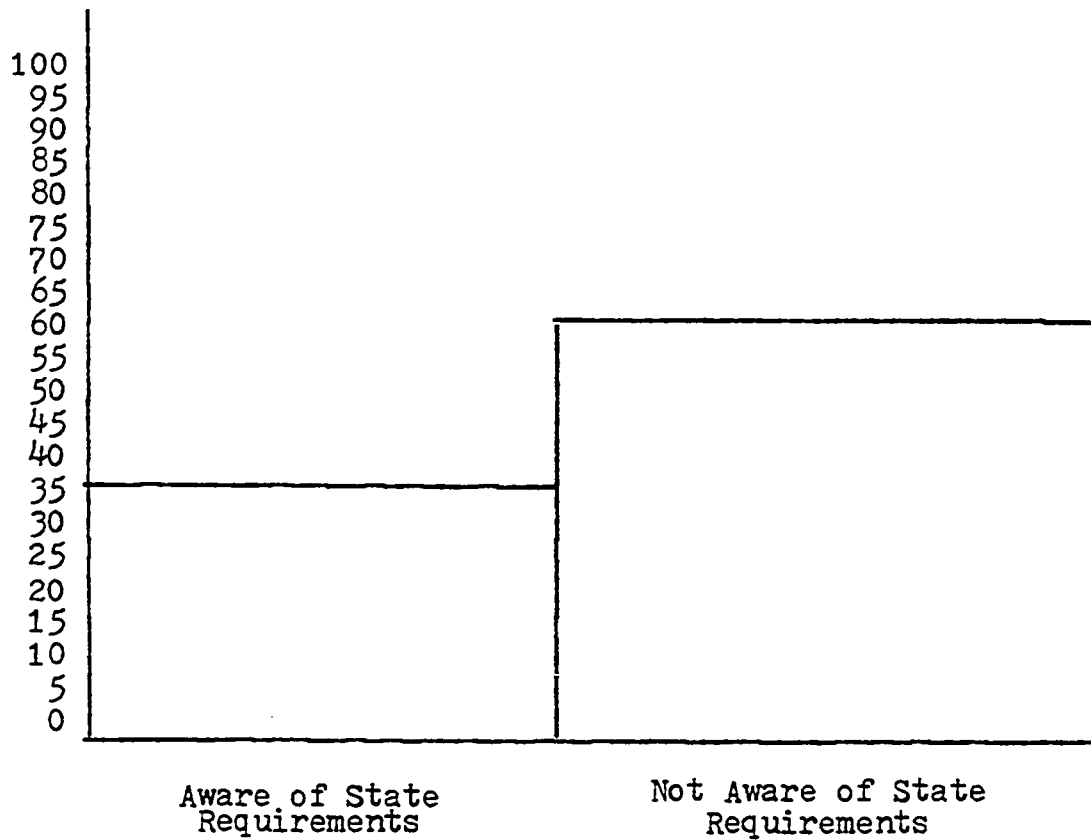
Figure 8 displays the overall responses of survey participants and indicates that sixty-three percent of the counselors interviewed were not aware of the current

requirements and guidelines established by the State of Nebraska.

FIGURE 8

RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF CONDITIONS  
FOR TAKING G.E.D. EXAM

## OVERALL RESPONSE



In response to question eight, seventy-five percent of the female counselors surveyed were not aware of the current state regulations governing the qualifications of the G.E.D. test candidate. Male respondents showed a greater awareness, though fifty-seven percent of this group also were not aware of the state requirements.

It must be noted that the 50 - Over age group had the largest number of members who were aware of the current state regulations. Sixty-seven percent of the counselors in this category indicated awareness. In contrast, the group with the lowest percentage of members who were familiar with the current state regulations was the 21 - 30 age group with eighty-seven percent of its members indicating they were not aware of the information required in question eight.

A review of the counselors' job positions shows that of the counselors surveyed, full-time counselors (one of X number in the school) were the most aware of recent regulations. Of significance is the large percentage (86%) of counselors holding a director's position who were unaware of the recent state requirements. All of the part-time counselors were unfamiliar with the guidelines.

Of the categories of school district classifications outlined, those counselors in districts with D and A classifications were most aware of the conditions a student must meet before taking the G.E.D. examination. Fifty percent of the counselors in Class D schools expressed awareness. In Class A schools, forty-two percent of those interviewed were aware of conditions for taking the G.E.D. exam. Class C respondents displayed the lowest level of awareness with seventy-eight percent unaware of current regulations.

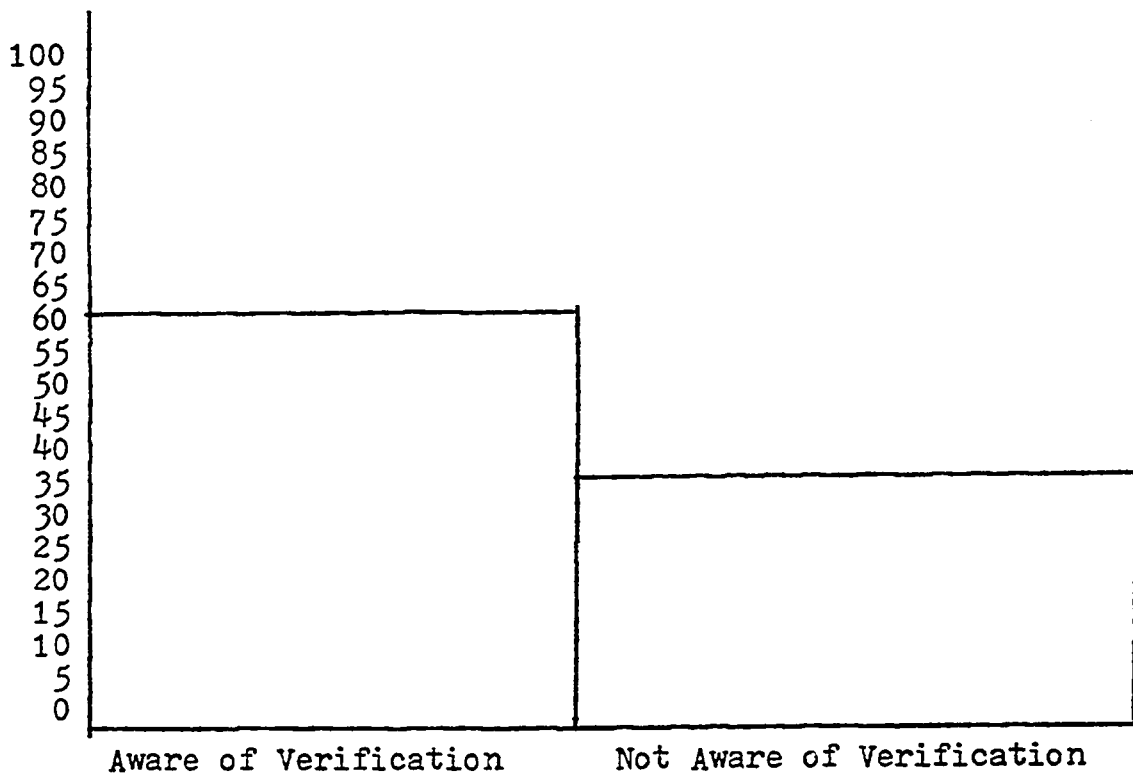
Question nine of the survey had as its purpose to determine counselors' awareness of the verification process used once an individual passes the G.E.D. test. Survey

participants were asked to respond to the following question: "Once an individual passes the G.E.D. test, what does he/she receive as verification that he/she passed?" Figure 9 indicates that the majority of the total number of survey participants were aware of the verification process which involves receipt of a state certificate and possibly a district diploma. (The latter certification is contingent upon the individual school district's policy.) As noted by Figure 9, sixty-three percent of the counselors were aware, while thirty-seven percent were not aware of the certification procedure.

FIGURE 9

RESPONDENTS' AWARENESS OF VERIFICATION  
FOR PASSING THE G.E.D.

## OVERALL RESPONSE



In comparing the responses of male and female counselors to question nine, it may be noted that five percent more of the males questioned were aware of verification than were the females.

Matching the age of the respondent to the answer given to question nine shows the highest percentage of counselors displaying awareness of the verification process were members of the 41 - 50 age group. Seventy-two percent of these counselors indicated awareness. The second and third highest percentages of awareness were shown by the 51 - Over and 31 - 40 age groups, respectively. In the 21 - 30 age group, an equal number of counselors were noted in the "aware" and "not aware" categories.

An examination of the counseling position of survey respondents indicates that of the part-time counselors interviewed, all were aware of verification. Seventy-five percent of the full-time counselors (one of X number in the school) were aware of certification for passing the G.E.D. test. It is significant to note that in comparison to the part-time and full-time counselors, a lower percentage of the counseling directors and those who are the only counselor in their school were aware of the verification procedures (57% and 55% respectively).

Survey responses indicate the highest percentage of counselors who were aware of the verification process were employed by Class B and A schools. Seventy-three percent of the counselors in Class B schools were aware of verification

and sixty-eight percent of the counselors in Class A schools displayed awareness. The highest percentage of counselors who were unaware of verification is noted in schools with D classification, where sixty-three percent of the counselors were unaware.

Questions ten through fourteen, of the survey were designed to measure the respondents' professional estimation of the G.E.D. test. As noted in Chapter III, a point system was utilized to compute the total score for the five questions. A score of 0 - 2 indicated that the counselor held a low estimation of the tests; 3 - 4 indicated a moderate estimation and a total of 5 points signified a high professional estimation.

Question ten relates to the counselor's opinion of the G.E.D. as a device for entering college and asks: "Do you believe an individual would have any difficulty entering a public Nebraska college or university with this verification?" Figure 10 displays the overall response of survey participants to this question. The data shown below indicate seventy-three percent of the sixty Nebraska counselors interviewed believed an individual would not have difficulty entering a public college or university with G.E.D. verification. Twenty percent of the respondents felt the G.E.D. certificate recipient would have difficulty entering a public Nebraska college or university and seven percent did not offer an opinion on this matter.





would have difficulty entering public colleges and universities. This phenomenon is due to the fact that a higher percentage of females (15%) than males (2%) offered "no opinion" in response to question ten.

The unanimous endorsement of the G.E.D. by members of the 51 - Over age category is noteworthy when studying the responses to question ten. One hundred percent of the respondents in this age group agreed the G.E.D. certificate would enable its bearer to enter a public college or university without difficulty. The 41 - 50 and 31 - 40 age groups also had a high percentage of respondents (72% and 76% respectively) who agreed with this opinion. In the 21 - 30 age group, however, the same percentage (37%) of respondents believed the G.E.D. recipient would have difficulty entering college as those who believed the recipient would not have entry problems.

Though fifty percent, and over, of the respondents representing each counseling position felt the G.E.D. recipient would not have difficulty entering a public college, the highest percentages belong to part-time counselors and full-time personnel who are one of X number of counselors in their building. It is significant to note the category of counseling director had the lowest percentage of respondents who believed the G.E.D. certificate holder would have no difficulty entering college.

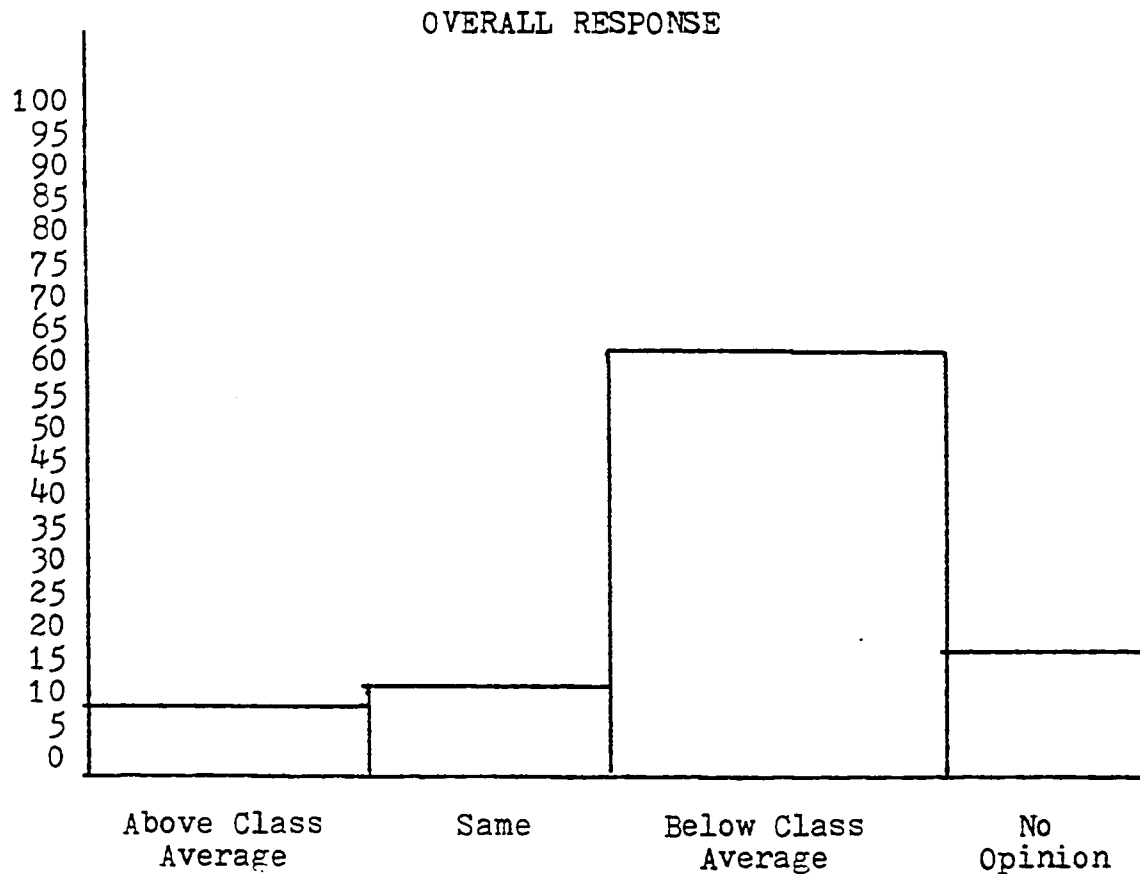
In comparing school classification and responses to question ten, it is again noted that over fifty percent of

the counselors in each school district classification indicated belief that the G.E.D. recipient would have no difficulty entering a public college. Of those who did express concern that difficulty would be encountered by the G.E.D. student, the lowest percentage (10%) were employed in Class A schools and the highest percentage (28%) were counseling in Class C schools.

Question eleven of the survey, like question ten, was designed to elicit the counselors' professional estimation of the G.E.D. test as an equivalent of or alternative to the high school diploma. In question eleven, survey participants were asked how they would generalize the G.E.D. student's performance in relation to other college freshmen in the same class. The overall responses of the counselors are indicated in Figure 11. These responses are grouped in the following categories: performance above class average, performance the same as class average, performance below class average, or no answer. Figure 11 indicates that of the sixty counselors surveyed, sixty-three percent believed the G.E.D. students' performance would be below the performance of other college freshmen in the same class. Twelve percent of the respondents believed the G.E.D. students' performance would be the same as other college freshmen and eight percent believed performance would be above the class average. Seventeen percent of the participants did not offer an answer to this question.

FIGURE 11

RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF G.E.D. STUDENT'S  
PERFORMANCE VERSUS OTHER COLLEGE FRESHMEN



A comparison of male and female responses to question eleven reveals that female participants were slightly more skeptical of the G.E.D. student's performance versus that of other college freshmen. Sixty-five percent of the female counselors believed the G.E.D. student would perform below the class average. Sixty-three percent of the male respondents shared this opinion. Five percent of the male counselors felt the G.E.D. student would perform above the class average. None of the female survey participants

indicated that she held this belief.

In the age group breakdown, members of the 41 - 50 group were most obviously of the opinion that G.E.D. students would perform below the class average when compared to other college freshmen in the same class. Seventy-two percent of the eighteen members of this group responded as such. The highest percentage (25%) of counselors who indicated belief the G.E.D. student would perform above the class average was the 21 - 30 age group.

A noteworthy finding is revealed in the examination of responses according to counselors' position. It is exposed that counselors holding the position of director had the highest percentage of responses (71%) indicating belief that the G.E.D. student would perform below other college freshmen. Respondents employed as the only counselor in the school showed the highest percentage (13%) of those interviewed who believed the G.E.D. student would perform above the class average.

Like the counseling directors in the above paragraph, Class A district counselors indicated a low opinion of the performance of G.E.D. college freshmen. Sixty-eight percent expressed belief that G.E.D. students would perform below the class average. Class C counselors were those who responded most favorably to the G.E.D. students' performance with twenty-two percent indicating belief that the G.E.D. student would perform above the class average in college.

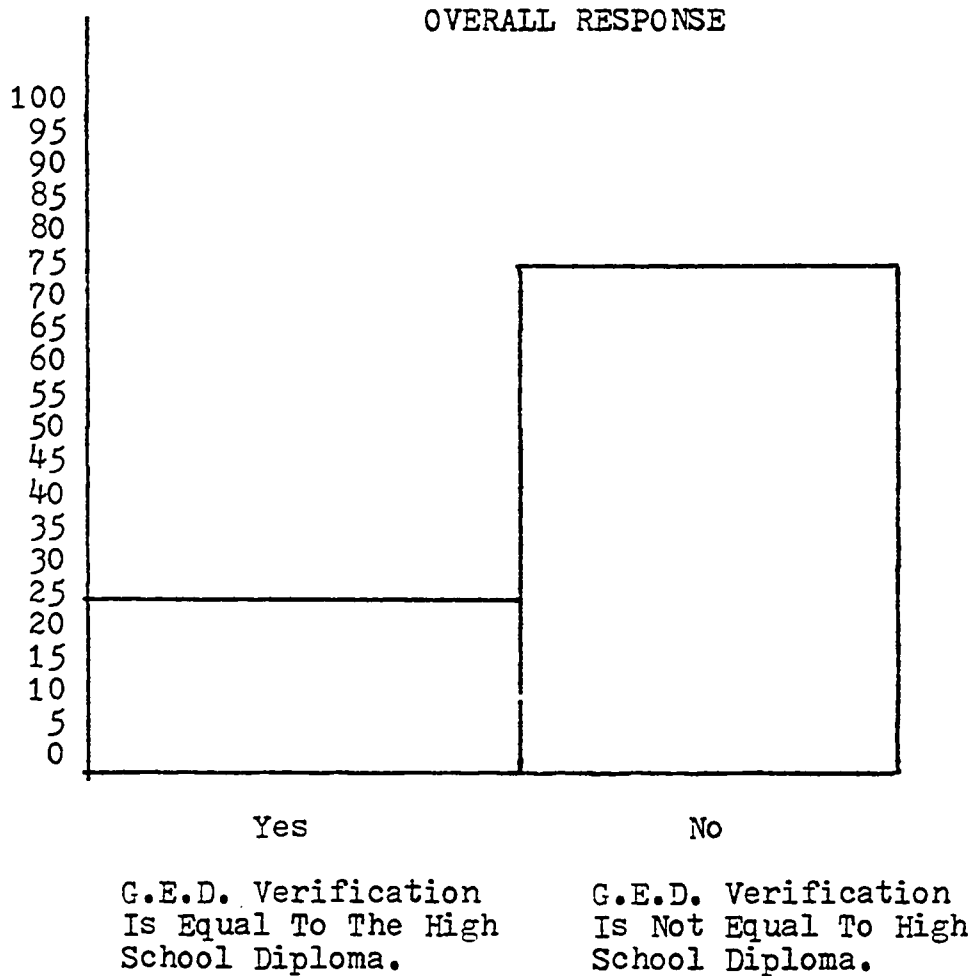
Of significance in determining the high school counselor's professional estimation of the G.E.D. is the way the counselor views the G.E.D. certificate or verification in comparison to the high school diploma issued by the schools. Question twelve of the survey asked counselors to state whether or not they believed the verification for passing the G.E.D. to be equal to the high school diploma given by their school. Survey participants answered with either a "yes" or "no" response to this question. Three-fourths of the total number of sixty counselors participating in the study (75%), stated they did not believe the G.E.D. verification to be equal to the high school diploma. One-fourth (25%) expressed belief that the two were equal.

A slightly higher percentage of female than male counselors indicated they believed the G.E.D. verification is not equal to the high school diploma issued by their school (80% female, 72% male).

An age group probe of survey participants indicates the highest percentage (89%) of those who viewed the G.E.D. verification as unequal to the high school diploma are members of the 51 - Over age group. The 41 - 50 age group also shows a high percentage of answers indicating G.E.D. verification is not equal to the high school diploma. The group revealing the highest percentage of respondents who believed the G.E.D. verification is equal to the high school diploma is the 21 - 30 age group. Thirty-eight percent of this group gave an affirmative response to question twelve.

FIGURE 12

RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF G.E.D. VERIFICATION  
EQUAL TO HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA



It is noted that survey participants who held positions as full-time counselors (one of X number in the school), those who were the only counselor in their school and those who were counseling directors were most adamant in their belief that the G.E.D. is not equal to the high school diploma offered by their schools. Fifty percent of the part-time counselors shared this belief while the other half

believed G.E.D. verification to be equal to the high school diploma.

It is significant to note that in response to question twelve, counselors employed by schools at both ends of the classification spectrum most frequently responded that the G.E.D. is not equal to the high school diploma. Eighty-seven percent of the counselors in Class D schools held this opinion and eighty-four percent of those in Class A schools agreed. The highest percentage of respondents who felt the G.E.D. verification equals the high school diploma were employed in Class B districts (40%).

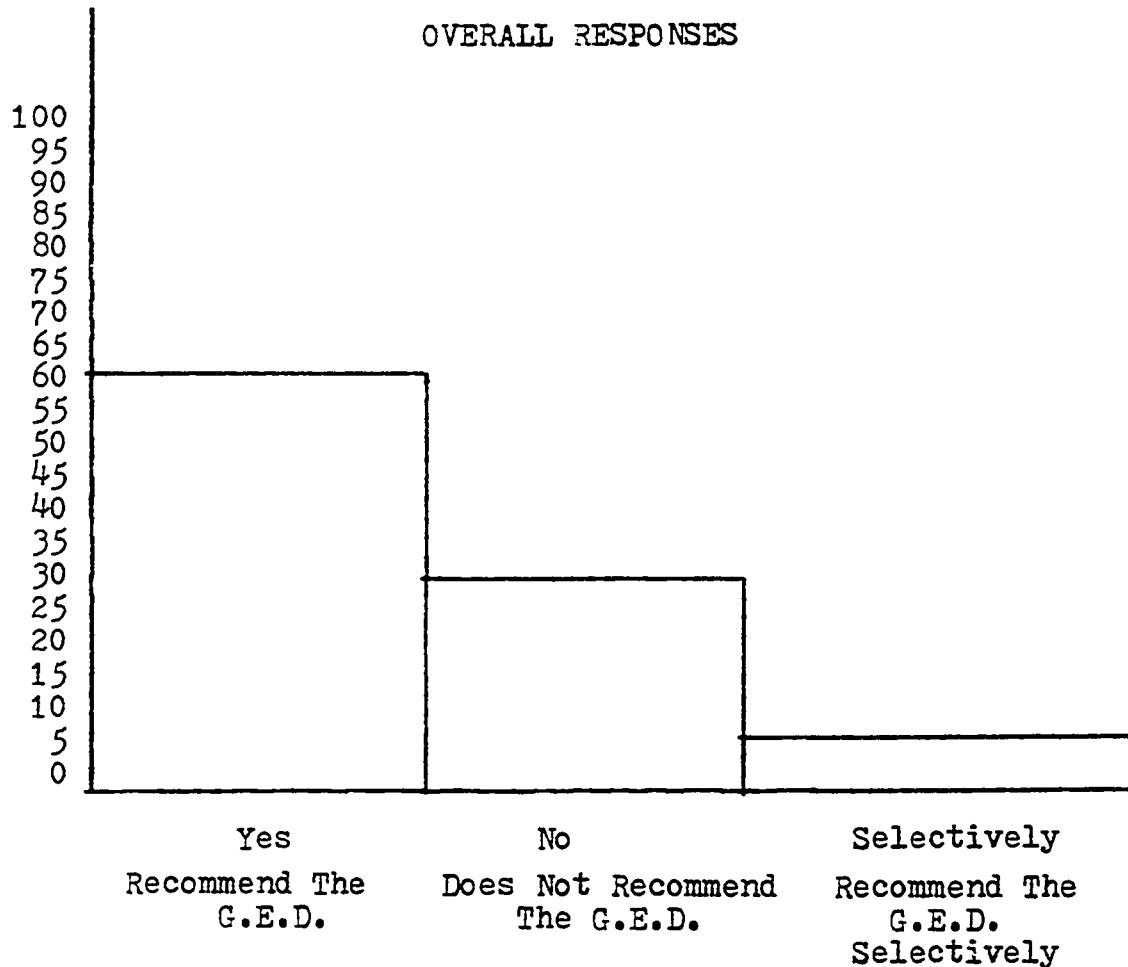
Question thirteen of the survey asked the counselor participants if they recommend the G.E.D. as an option or alternative to students. This question was designed to determine if counselors actually present the G.E.D. to their counselees as being an option or alternative worthy of trial. Responses to question thirteen are categorized by "yes," "no" and "selectively." The last category represents those responses in which counselors detailed specific circumstances in which they recommend the G.E.D. to clients.

Figure 13 displays the overall response of the sixty survey participants and reveals that sixty-two percent of those interviewed stated they do recommend the G.E.D. as an option or alternative for students. Thirty percent indicated they do not recommend the G.E.D. and eight percent of the respondents recommend the G.E.D. selectively to students.



FIGURE 13

## RESPONDENTS' RECOMMENDATION OF G.E.D.



In regard to question thirteen, an examination of the personal characteristics of the survey respondents reveals that the highest percentage of counselors who recommend the G.E.D. to students are women counselors (75% compared to 55% of the male respondents). Ten percent of the male counselors stated they selectively recommend the G.E.D. to students, while five percent of the female counselors recommended the G.E.D. selectively.

Those counselors who belong to the 51 - Over age group most often recommend the G.E.D. to students (78%). In the 41 - 50 and 21 - 30 groups only fifty percent of the respondents in each category stated they recommend the G.E.D., though in the latter group, eleven percent made selective recommendations.

When counselors' positions are compared to their responses to question thirteen, it is noted that part-time and full-time counselors (one of X number in a school) most frequently recommend the G.E.D. test to students. Of those counselors who are the only counselor in their school, fifty-eight percent recommended the G.E.D. It is also significant that in the category of counseling directors, less than half (43%) stated they recommend the G.E.D. as an option or alternative to students.

A classification grouping of respondents' answers reveals the counselors who least recommend the G.E.D. are those employed by Class A school districts (31% stated they do not recommend the G.E.D., 11% explained they make the recommendation selectively). Counselors in Class B districts most frequently recommend the G.E.D. followed closely by counselors in Class D and C schools.

Question fourteen of the survey is related to question thirteen in that survey participants were asked to identify the circumstances which usually exist before a G.E.D. recommendation is made. Figure 14 represents the

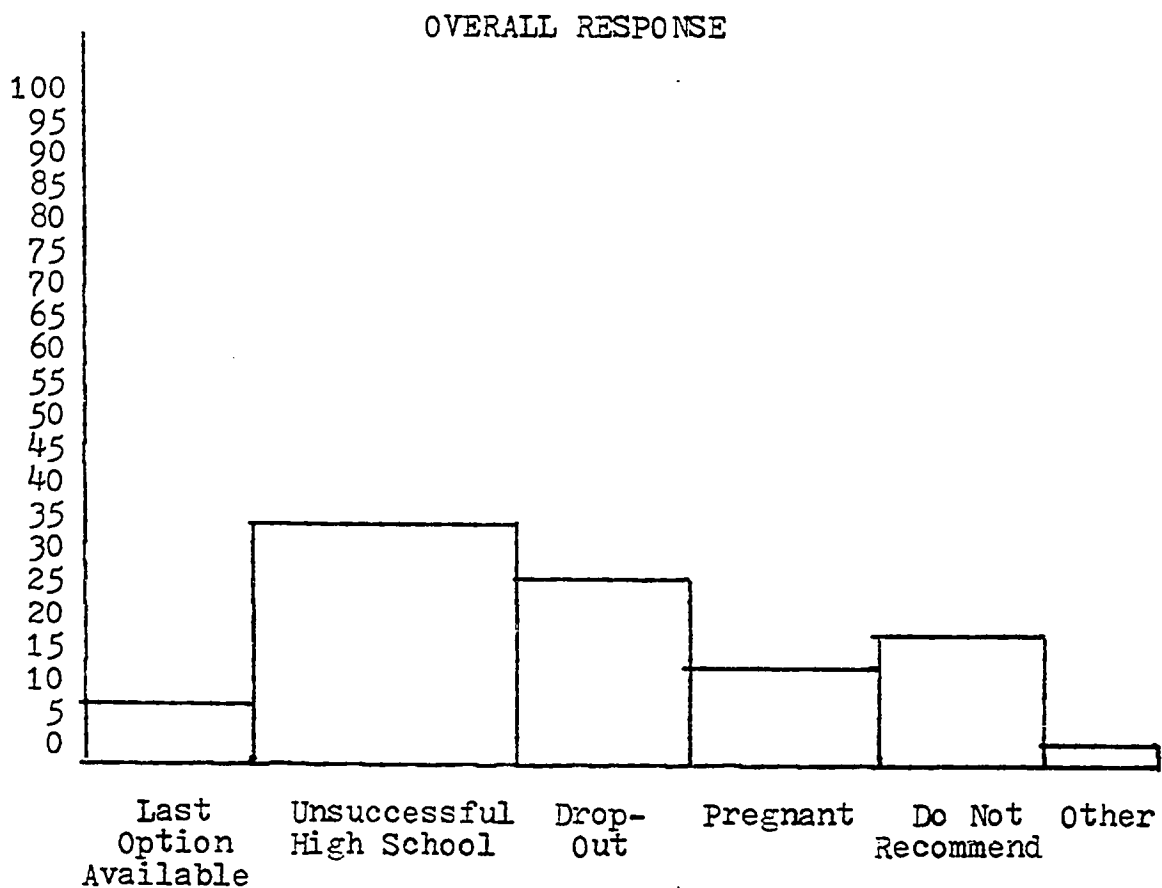
overall responses of counselors to this question and indicates the most frequent condition which exists before recommending the G.E.D. is a student's unsuccessful high school experience. Of the counselors surveyed, thirty-five percent cited the preceding reason for recommending the G.E.D. Other circumstances explained by respondents include: dropping out (27%), pregnancy (12%), and the last option available (7%). Sixteen percent of the counselors stated they do not recommend the G.E.D. under any circumstances and three percent mentioned other factors unrelated to those previously listed.

In regard to the circumstances for recommending the G.E.D. as discussed in question fourteen of the survey, both male and female counselors most frequently stated that an unsuccessful high school experience provided the circumstance for recommending the G.E.D. to their clients. Significantly, thirty-four percent of both the male and female groups gave this response. The second most popular response by both groups was "dropping out" (27% male, 25% female). Twenty percent of the female counselors cited the circumstance of pregnancy for their primary reason of recommending the G.E.D.; only seven percent of the male respondents mentioned this circumstance.

In the age group categories of responses, fifty-six percent of the members of the 51 - Over age group stated that dropping out was the circumstance which warranted recommend-

ing the G.E.D. Of the counselors in the 41 - 50 age group, the highest percentage (33%) stated they did not recommend the G.E.D. Fifty-two percent of the respondents in the 31 - 40 age group cited the unsuccessful high school experience of their counselees as being the primary circumstance for recommending the G.E.D. Counselors in the 21 - 30 age group were nearly split between the two most popular responses: "unsuccessful high school experience" and "dropping out."

FIGURE 14  
CIRCUMSTANCES FOR RECOMMENDING THE G.E.D.



A study of participants' responses to question fourteen, based on their counseling position, shows half of the full-time counselors (one of X number in the school) recommended the G.E.D. for students dropping out of school. Of the other three categories: directors, part-time counselors and only counselors in their school, the highest percentage in each group recommended the G.E.D. to students who were not experiencing success in the high school situation. Of significance is the comparatively large number of counselors who stated they do not recommend the G.E.D.

Examination of school district classification and the responses of counselors employed in each district indicates that the highest percentage of counselors in A and B schools recommended the G.E.D. for the same two reasons: unsuccessful high school experience (Class A 32%, Class B 33%) and dropping out (Class A 32%, Class B 40%). The majority (33%) of the survey participants in Class C schools responded they do not recommend the G.E.D. It is noteworthy that respondents employed in Class D districts most frequently recommended the G.E.D. to students who were pregnant. Fifty percent of this group cited the condition of pregnancy as the reason for recommending the G.E.D.

#### Questionnaire Response Analysis: Part II

As was previously noted at the beginning of Chapter IV, the chapter is divided into three major sections to

present the data. The first section, entitled "Hypothesis Testing," presented the findings relative to the nine null hypotheses by means of tables. Variables described in the null hypotheses were analyzed in comparison to the respondents' answers to questions one through fourteen of the survey instrument which were designed to determine counselors' awareness and professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative. Responses to these questions were displayed by means of histograms and described in the second section entitled, "Questionnaire Response Analysis; Part I." The third major section, which follows, furnishes a description of the responses of participants to the open-ended questions of the survey.

The first question in this section is question fifteen of the survey, in which counselors were asked to respond to descriptions of potential G.E.D. candidates. As each description was read, the respondent was to indicate the likelihood of suggesting the G.E.D. to that particular counselee by stating whether it would be (1) very likely, (2) somewhat likely, (3) somewhat unlikely or (4) very unlikely that he/she would recommend the G.E.D. to that counselee. Because counselors were limited in their response choices, the responses to this question are examined by means of Table 12. This table is followed by a summary of the findings as noted.

TABLE 12

DESCRIPTION OF POSSIBLE COUNSELEES AND THE  
LIKELIHOOD OF RECOMMENDING THE G.E.D.

## OVERALL RESPONSE

	V.L.	S.L.	S.U.	V.U.
Average Student Dissatisfied With School	0	5%	27%	68%
Above Average Student Dissatisfied With School	0	8%	17%	75%
Below Average Student Dissatisfied With School	2%	12%	36%	50%
Average Student Expelled For Behavior Problems	3%	30%	35%	32%
Above Average Student Expelled for Behavior Problems	10%	23%	27%	40%
Below Average Student Expelled for Behavior Problems	17%	36%	30%	17%
Average Student Dropping Out To Get A Job	40%	41%	17%	2%
Above Average Student Dropping Out To Get A Job	29%	38%	18%	15%
Below Average Student Dropping Out To Get A Job	45%	38%	12%	5%

The data, as displayed on Table 12 indicate that, of the descriptions of possible counselees given, the majority of counselors interviewed would "very likely" recommend the G.E.D. to a below average student dropping out to get a job.

The table also shows it would be "very unlikely" that the respondents would recommend the G.E.D. to either the average or above average student dissatisfied with school.

Questions sixteen and seventeen of the survey are closely related. Question seventeen asked the survey participants to estimate the number of students to whom they mentioned the G.E.D., or advised of the G.E.D. during the first semester of the 1978 - 79 school term. Question eighteen asked, of the number advised, how many students followed this advice (were enrolled in G.E.D. preparatory classes and/or took the G.E.D. test). In the five month period described in question seventeen, a total of 318 counselees were advised of the G.E.D. by the sixty counselors participating in the study. This total indicates, on the average, each counselor in the survey would have advised 5.3 students to take the G.E.D. Of the 318 students who were advised of the G.E.D., a total of 176 counselees were in the process of pursuing G.E.D. preparatory classes or taking the G.E.D. examination, as determined by respondents' answers to question eighteen. This number shows that for every three students who were advised of the G.E.D., approximately 1.8 followed the advice by taking preparatory classes and/or the G.E.D. test.

Question eighteen of the survey had as its purpose to analyze and describe the information process related to the advisement and guidance of the G.E.D. candidate. Five



methods of informing and advising were presented to counselors. After each method, the respondents indicated with a "yes" or "no" answer whether or not they used this method of informing and advising students of the G.E.D. Table 13 displays the methods as detailed in the survey instrument and shows the number of counselors indicating use of each particular method. Data appearing on Table 13 suggest most counselors explain the G.E.D. program to those counselees who request information. Ninety-seven percent of the counselors responded with "yes" to this part of question eighteen. Ninety-five percent of the counselors interviewed refer students to the G.E.D. testing program officers and eighty-two percent discuss the G.E.D. program with parents/guardians of prospective G.E.D. candidates. Of the sixty counselors surveyed, forty-two

TABLE 13

METHODS OF INFORMING AND ADVISING STUDENTS  
OF THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE

OVERALL RESPONSE

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Explain the G.E.D. to all your counselees	5%
Explain the G.E.D. to those counselees who request information	97%
Provide printed materials concerning the G.E.D.	42%
Refer students to the G.E.D. testing program officers	95%
Discuss the G.E.D. program with parents/guardians of prospective G.E.D. candidates	82%

---

percent provide printed materials concerning the G.E.D. Five percent explain the G.E.D. to all their counselees.

As a means of further detailing the picture of the prospective G.E.D. candidate, question nineteen of the survey asked counselors if they advise more males or females and why. Table 14 shows the responses of survey participants. Of the sixty counselors surveyed, forty-two percent stated they advise more male counselees concerning the G.E.D. Eighteen percent advise more female counselees and forty percent indicated they advise the same number of males and females in regard to the G.E.D.

TABLE 14  
 MORE MALES OR FEMALES ADVISED OF  
 THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE  
 PART I  
 OVERALL RESPONSE

More Males Advised	More Females Advised	Same Number of Males and Females
42%	18%	40%

Part two of question nineteen asked the respondents to suggest why they believe they advise more males or females. Of those counselors who stated they advise more males, the reasons were primarily related to one or more of the following: 1) disillusionment with school and tendency to drop out, 2) the need or desire to get a job or enter the

military service, and 3) school programs lacking or not meeting student needs.

The following statements of counselors interviewed serve as examples of the general consensus of those who believe they advise more males of the G.E.D.

There seems to be more disillusionment on the part of males with school.

Males seem more prone to dropping out of school.

Males are the ones who are dropping out in my situation.

Males ask about the G.E.D. for military entrance.

In many cases, it's a matter of the boys getting jobs, there seems to be more of a necessity for boys than girls in this area.

Males tend to be less conforming to high school life. There are more options in terms of work and employment.

Males seem to be more itchy about not wanting to spend time in school and getting out on their own.

Males are bogged down with expenses, car, insurance, etc. and drop out to get a job.

We, as a school, desperately lack programs in vocational education, and males will tend to drop out quicker than females.

Of those counselors who stated they advise more females than males, the majority cite pregnancy as the primary reason. Another reason mentioned is female need for independence. The statements below reflect these opinions.

I advise more females, usually because of pregnancy.

The female cry for the G.E.D. comes as a result of responsibility for a family.

Pregnancy and/or early marriage.

I advise more females about the G.E.D. because they tend to want to leave home, live on their own at an early age and realize they need a diploma.

The final question of the survey asked counselors to express their personal opinion of the G.E.D. as an alternative to or equivalent of the high school diploma. The responses

of survey participants may be grouped into five basic categories for means of analysis. These categories, as indicated in Table 15 below, include: personally not in favor, acceptable as an alternative - not equivalent, acceptable for older individuals - not high school students, personally in favor, and undecided. The percentage of respondents in each category is indicated on the table below and representative comments from the first four groups are detailed.

TABLE 15

RESPONDENTS' PERSONAL OPINION OF THE G.E.D. ALTERNATIVE  
OVERALL RESPONSE

Personally Not In Favor	Acceptable Alternative- Not Equivalent	Acceptable for Older- Not High School	Personally In Favor	Undecided
30%	12%	13%	23%	22%

Personally Not In Favor

There are better alternatives than the G.E.D., e.g. the two-track system. It's like second class citizenship as far as I'm concerned. It doesn't do much to raise the student's image of himself.

Too easy...standards should be raised.

Hate to see it (G.E.D.) put on the same level as the high school diploma. It's a second-rate diploma.

Doesn't measure the same characteristics as the high school diploma. The G.E.D. doesn't show the persistency of graduating with a high school diploma.

An employer would pick the student with the high school diploma. It says, "Here is a guy who stuck it out."

### Acceptable Alternative - Not Equivalent

It's an alternative to the high school diploma, but not equal to or equivalent of.

It's great in lieu of, but can never replace the high school diploma.

It's the greatest thing as an alternative but it is not equivalent.

It's the best alternative we've got, but it is not equal to the diploma.

### Acceptable for Older Individuals - Not for High School Students

I still don't think it's made for high school students. It's for adults.

The G.E.D. has lost the purpose of its original intent. I believe it to be for the adult, not the student.

I'm glad it exists, but wish it was not used so much by the younger people.

It has served a worthwhile purpose for many older people in this community.

The G.E.D. does not belong in the high school setting. It is an adult tool and should be used as such for those eighteen and over only.

### Personally in Favor

The G.E.D. is very good. It is not cheapening the diploma. There is much more work involved in it than the students seem to think.

I think it is the only good alternative kids in this area have. It provides them with chances they might not otherwise have had.

For what it is meant to do, the G.E.D. is super! With a little encouragement, students will go on to school or jobs and this provides them with the opportunity.

An excellent program provided it is administered with discretion. It is definitely useful. Students are able to go on to school, jobs, etc.

The G.E.D. serves a very valuable purpose for those who have a change in attitude after dropping out.

The G.E.D. is an asset in the guidance program for individuals who are having difficulty finding themselves and for one reason or another are experiencing problems in the traditional program.

This chapter has displayed the data collected in the study. The organization of the data has been patterned

after the design of the survey instrument and based on the six specific objectives of the study and the nine null hypotheses which were discussed at the beginning of this chapter. The chapter was divided into three major sections, entitled "Hypothesis Testing," "Questionnaire Response Analysis; Part I" and "Questionnaire Response Analysis; Part II." The first section presented the findings relative to the nine null hypotheses by means of tables. In the section, "Questionnaire Response Analysis; Part I," the variables described in the null hypotheses were analyzed in comparison to the respondents' answers to questions one through fourteen of the survey instrument which were designed to determine counselors' awareness and professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative. Responses to these questions were displayed by means of histograms and respondents' answers were described in terms of the variables of sex, age, counseling position and classification of school district in which employed. The third section, entitled, "Questionnaire Response Analysis; Part II," furnished a description of the responses of participants to the open-ended questions of the survey. No attempt has been made to formulate conclusions or to make recommendations. In Chapter V a brief summary of this study will be given as well as conclusions and recommendations resulting from the study findings.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### The Study

The purpose of this study was to determine, in some useful way, the attitude and awareness of high school counselors toward the General Educational Development Tests (G.E.D.) as an equivalent of, or alternative to, the high school diploma. From the information obtained from the study, recommendations will be made relative to assisting counselors and educators in evaluating their current knowledge of and attitude toward the G.E.D., and assisting them in critically viewing their present method of supplying clientele with information regarding the G.E.D. alternative.

Chapter II of this study presented a review of literature pertaining to the G.E.D. tests. Through the survey of literature, the following issues emerged: the research indicated a favorable response by G.E.D. recipients, educational institutions and employers to the G.E.D. testing program; studies revealed the discrepancy between the number of non-high school graduates and those persons who have taken the G.E.D. test; and the literature presented a strong plea for more effective communication to inform and advise

the potential G.E.D. candidate. These three issues form the basis on which the study was conducted.

The research problem was stated as: A study to determine the attitude and awareness of high school counselors toward the General Educational Development Tests (G.E.D.) as an equivalent of, or alternative to, the high school diploma. The following six objectives were developed as guides for use in designing and conducting the study:

1. To assess the awareness of high school counselors regarding the General Educational Development (G.E.D.) alternative.
2. To assess high school counselors' professional and personal estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.
3. To determine if awareness and professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative seem to be affected by variables of sex, age, position of high school counselors, and classification of the school district in which employed.
4. To analyze and describe the information process related to the advisement and guidance of the G.E.D. candidate.
5. To describe the criteria used by counselors in recognizing the potential G.E.D. candidate.
6. To gather data that will assist counselors in evaluating their current knowledge of and attitude toward the G.E.D.; and assist them in critically viewing their present method of supplying clientele with information regarding the G.E.D. alternative.



In addition to the six objectives listed above, nine null hypotheses were examined:

1. There is no significant difference between the sex of counselors and their awareness of the G.E.D. alternative.

2. There is no significant difference between the age of counselors and their awareness of the G.E.D. alternative.

3. There is no significant difference between the sex of counselors and their professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.

4. There is no significant difference between the age of counselors and their professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.

5. There is no significant difference between counselors' awareness of the G.E.D. alternative and their professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.

6. There is no significant difference between the position of counselors and their awareness of the G.E.D. alternative.

7. There is no significant difference between the position of counselors and their professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.

8. There is no significant difference between the classification of the school district in which counselors are employed and their awareness of the G.E.D. alternative.

9. There is no significant difference between the classification of the school district in which counselors are employed and their professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative.

#### The Sample Population Surveyed

Participants in the study were selected from the total population of Nebraska high school counselors by a random sampling technique. The random sample included sixty individuals.

#### Study Methods and Procedures

The method used to collect the information for the study was the telephone survey. This method was selected because the study was seeking to discern counselor awareness and professional and personal estimation of the G.E.D. in the most open, spontaneous manner possible. The telephone interview assured direct communication with the interviewee and an immediate response, unaffected by outside influences or passage of time. All sixty counselors, as chosen through the random sample, were contacted and willingly participated in the survey.

The survey instrument was developed in conjunction with the six objectives mentioned earlier in this chapter. Post card notification was sent in advance of the interview call to acquaint the study participant with the purpose and

intent of the research.

Analysis of the data and interpretation of the data was facilitated by the use of a computer. The chi-square statistic was used where appropriate to determine levels of significance. The .05 level of significance was chosen as the minimum level of significance.

### Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study are examined in relation to the six specific objectives and the nine null hypotheses previously detailed in this chapter. A major hypothesis considered in this study involved counselors' awareness of the G.E.D. (see objectives one and three, and null hypotheses one, two, five, six and eight). In essence, the two questions asked in the study were: 1. "Are Nebraska high school counselors aware of the General Educational Development (G.E.D.) alternative?" and 2. "Do factors of sex, age, counseling position and classification of school district in which employed affect the awareness of counselors concerning the G.E.D.?"

Questions one through nine on the survey were designed specifically to reveal the respondents' awareness of the G.E.D. Responses were scored by points which were accumulated to indicate that the survey participant was either fully aware, somewhat aware, or not aware of the G.E.D. The overall response of the counselors surveyed was

shown in Chapter IV, Table 10. The data indicated that the majority of Nebraska high school counselors participating in the study were "somewhat aware" (as defined in Chapter III) of the General Educational Development Tests.

In tests directed toward investigation of the second question above, the chi-square statistic was used to make the awareness comparison to each of the four variables listed above; and the .05 level of significance was chosen as the minimum level of significance. Of the five awareness comparisons made, as displayed by Tables 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8 in Chapter IV, the sex versus awareness comparison revealed a significant difference when the chi-square test was used. No significant difference was found between counselors' age, position or school district classification when compared to awareness of the G.E.D.

Figures 1 through 9 served two purposes in the study; first, to identify the characteristics of counselors who displayed awareness and/or lack of awareness concerning the G.E.D.; and secondly, to point out specific information about the G.E.D. of which counselor participants were not aware. Information furnished by analyzing the data revealed the characteristics of those counselors who were most aware and those who were not aware of the G.E.D. tests. From this information, a composite picture of the counselor who was most aware of the G.E.D. and the counselor who was least aware of the G.E.D. may be drawn. The counselor who was most

aware possessed the following characteristics: male, 51 - Over age group, counseling director, employed by Class B district. Characteristics of the counselor who was least aware of the G.E.D. include: female, 21 - 30 age group, only counselor in the school, employed by Class D district.

The profiles of the counselor who was most aware of the G.E.D. alternative and the counselor who was least aware of the G.E.D. alternative furnish a basis for speculation as to the possible reasons for awareness or lack of awareness. The sex and age of the most aware counselor are two factors which may provide an explanation for awareness. The G.E.D. was conceived in 1942 and was originally intended to serve the educational needs of military personnel (see Chapter II). It was during this time that the G.E.D. received much publicity, whereas in recent years, it has remained somewhat obscure. A male, aged 51 or over would have likely been exposed to the military during the period in which the G.E.D. was developed.

There is also reason to assume that a counselor in the position of director would be most likely to possess awareness of the G.E.D. alternative because his status as director signifies he is a source of information to other counselors and to students. Moreover, the counseling director is frequently the liason between the school and community agencies, employers and the state department, thus he may have greater exposure to educational alternatives and the need for such programs as the G.E.D.

The fact that the counselor who was most aware is employed by a Class B school district might be explained on the basis of the district size. The Class B school is unique in that it is large enough to require a multitude of alternatives to meet various educational needs of students. Yet, it is not as stratified or specialized as the Class A district in which counselors may not be as aware of all educational alternatives due to their specialized responsibilities.

It is significant to note that the counselor who is least aware of the G.E.D. alternative possesses characteristics which are, for the most part, in direct contrast to those of the most aware counselor. This counselor is female; at the opposite end of the age spectrum; and employed by a Class D school district. The fact this counselor occupies a position as the only counselor in the school and is unaware of the G.E.D. alternative may be explained as a result of the only counselor having complete responsibility for the counseling needs of the entire student body. Under such circumstances the G.E.D. alternative, which may be appropriate for a minimum number of students in the school, may be overshadowed by other concerns which apply to the majority of students.

It is important to point out that though reasons for a counselor's lack of awareness of the G.E.D. alternative may be assumed, these reasons do not serve as excuses. Some

students in all school districts have a need for the educational alternative offered by the G.E.D. and it is the responsibility of counselors, male and female, of all ages and positions, to possess awareness of the G.E.D. option.

Questions one through nine of the survey dealt with basic facts about the General Educational Development Tests. Specifically, these questions were related to the major purpose of the test, the five competency areas measured, the scoring/evaluation process, the current state regulations concerning age and prerequisite conditions for taking the test (Rule 20), location of G.E.D. preparatory classes and test centers and G.E.D. certification. Counselors who were familiar with these basic facts about the G.E.D. were deemed to possess the quality of awareness with which this part of the study was concerned. Those questions which the majority of counselors were unable to answer with an appropriate response, were significant to the purpose of this study because they indicate areas in which more information needs to be supplied to counselors and/or areas in which counselors need to become more knowledgeable of the G.E.D. The questions on the survey of which the majority (50% or more) of counselors were not aware include:

1. Major purpose of the G.E.D. (50% not aware)
3. Scoring process used in evaluating G.E.D. test results. (77% not aware)
4. Nebraska age requirement (Rule 20). (73% not aware)

8. Prerequisite conditions for taking the G.E.D.  
(63% not aware)

The second major hypothesis of this study involved counselors' professional estimation of the G.E.D. (see objectives two and three, and null hypotheses three, four, five, seven and nine). The questions considered in this part of the study were: 1. "What is the professional estimation of Nebraska high school counselors concerning the General Educational Development Tests?" and 2. "Do factors of sex, age, counseling position and classification of school district in which employed affect the counselor's professional estimation of the G.E.D.?"

Questions ten through fourteen on the survey were designed specifically to reveal the respondents' professional estimation of the G.E.D. As in part one, involving awareness, responses were scored by points which were accumulated to indicate that the survey participant held a high estimation, a moderate estimation or a low estimation of the G.E.D. The overall response of the counselors surveyed was shown in Chapter IV on Table 11. The data indicated the majority of Nebraska high school counselors held a "moderate professional estimation" (as defined in Chapter III) of the General Educational Tests.

In tests designed to explore the second question above, the chi-square statistic was used to make the comparison between professional estimation and the variables of



sex, age, counseling position and school district classification. In addition, a test comparison was made to determine if there was a significant difference between counselors' awareness of the G.E.D. and counselors' professional estimation of the G.E.D. Tables 3, 4, 5, 7 and 9, as displayed in Chapter IV, indicated no significant difference between the variables compared.

Figures 10 through 14 served to identify the characteristics of counselors who held a high professional estimation of the G.E.D. as well as the characteristics of counselors who held a moderate or low estimation of the G.E.D. Analysis of the data revealed the characteristics of those counselors who held high, moderate and low estimations of the G.E.D. From this information a composite picture can be drawn. Thus, the counselor who held a high professional estimation relative to the G.E.D. was: female, 51 - Over, full-time counselor (one of X number in the school) and employed by a Class D school district. The counselor who held a low professional estimation of the G.E.D. was: male, 41 - 50, counseling director and employed by a Class A school district. It may be noted at this point that seventy-five percent of the counselors surveyed believed G.E.D. certification is not equal to the high school diploma.

Observations of the counselor who has a low professional estimation of the G.E.D. alternative bear discussing. It may be noted that this counselor is of an age and position which reflect some time and experience in the traditional

educational system. It seems likely that a counseling director would promote the system of which he has been a part and that this counselor's professional estimation of educational alternatives would be low. Moreover, the Class A district in which the counselor is employed, would likely be established on the "lock-step" and therefore the counselor employed by this district would be expected to adhere to the traditional program rather than an alternative. The findings of the professional estimation section of this study also have implications for further research as indicated in the "Recommendations for Further Research" section of this chapter.

The opinions expressed by counselors in response to question twenty provided insight into their personal estimation of the G.E.D. Table 15 in Chapter IV, displayed the number of counselors who personally approved of the G.E.D. tests and also showed the categories of counselors who accepted the tests as an alternative - but not equivalent of the high school diploma and those who approved of the G.E.D. for older individuals but not high school students. The data also indicated that fifty-one percent of the counselors surveyed were personally not in favor of the G.E.D. alternative or were undecided as to their personal opinion regarding the G.E.D. The personal opinion of counselors, in conjunction with their professional estimation of the G.E.D. tests, is significant in determining the manner and means by

which they present information about the G.E.D. to their student counselees.

Questions fifteen through twenty of the survey instrument were descriptive in nature. The intent of questions fifteen and nineteen was to identify the potential G.E.D. candidate as viewed by the high school counselor. These questions were based on objective six of the study; to describe the criteria used by counselors in recognizing the potential G.E.D. candidate. Table 12 displayed in Chapter IV, showed the findings of question fifteen and identified the most likely G.E.D. candidate as the "below-average student, dropping out to get a job." The counselee whom survey participants would be least likely to advise of the G.E.D. was the "above-average student, dissatisfied with school." The nine descriptions of counselees were all based on actual characteristics of students who would be likely candidates to qualify for the G.E.D. exam under the current state guidelines. It is interesting to note, however, that the candidate chosen by the majority of counselors as the one they would suggest the G.E.D. to was the student who traditionally has been considered G.E.D. material, i.e. the dropout, below-average, wanting to get a job.

The responses to question fifteen receive further support and additional clarification from the responses to question nineteen. In this question, survey participants were asked if they advise more males or females concerning

the G.E.D., and they were then to offer their opinions as to why. Table 14 in Chapter IV displayed the responses to this question and the respondents' opinions as to why they advise more males or females were detailed. Again the traditional reasons of dropping out, getting a job and disillusionment and/or academic problems in school were given for advising males, while the primary reason for advising females of the G.E.D. was pregnancy. It is apparent that the majority of counselors participating in the survey viewed the G.E.D. in the traditional manner. Moreover, male/female roles and expectations appeared firmly established by cultural and social attitudes which might have a direct bearing on the advisement of students to take or not to take the G.E.D. examination.

Questions sixteen, seventeen and eighteen were based on objective four, the purpose of which was to analyze and describe the information process related to the advisement and guidance of the G.E.D. candidate. A statistical reference point was provided by questions sixteen and seventeen as counselors were asked to estimate the number of students to whom they mentioned, or advised of the G.E.D. during the first semester of the 1978-79 school year. The number 318 was accumulated from the sixty respondents. As described in Chapter IV, this number represented the total advisements made by survey participants to their respective counselees; thus, each counselor advised an average of 5.3 students to take the G.E.D. exam.

In order to evaluate this information, an assumption will be made: If, as questions fifteen and nineteen indicated, the dropout is most frequently viewed as a potential G.E.D. candidate, then it may be assumed most or all of those students whom counselors advised of the G.E.D. were dropouts or potential dropouts. At this point, reference is made to Chapter I of the study in which the most recent statistics concerning Nebraska dropouts indicated that during the 1976-77 school year, 5,533 students dropped out of high school. Because the time period described in question sixteen was half a school term, the number 5,533 will be divided by two to determine the number of dropouts in the time period referenced in the question. The resulting figure is 2,766.5. From the total population of six hundred Nebraska counselors, a sample of sixty was drawn and the average number of advisements (5.3) was based on that number. If each of the six hundred high school counselors in Nebraska advised 5.3 counselees to take the G.E.D. (as this study indicates), the total number of advisements per semester would be 3,180 which exceeds the number of dropouts (2,766.5 per semester).

Referring again to Chapter I of this study, it is noted that during the 1976-77 school year, thirty-seven candidates took the G.E.D. test. This figure emphasizes the great discrepancy between the number of dropouts (5,533) and those who took the G.E.D. examination. With the advent of Rule 20, the General Educational Development tests were made

available to a much larger population. Question seventeen of this study asked counselors, "Of the number of students to whom you mentioned, or advised of the G.E.D. during the past school term, how many followed your advice?" Respondents indicated a total of 176 counselees were in the process of pursuing G.E.D. preparatory classes or taking the G.E.D. examination. This figure shows that for every three students advised, approximately 1.8 followed the advice by taking preparatory classes and/or the G.E.D. test. The contrasts and comparisons between the 1976-77 figures and those of this study should indicate to counselors their increasing influence on students relative to advisement concerning the G.E.D. alternative.

Question eighteen was the third and final question in the series related to informing and advising the student about the G.E.D. Five methods of informing and advising were presented to counselors. After each method, the survey participants were to indicate with a "yes" or "no" answer whether or not they used this method to inform and advise students of the G.E.D. Table 13 in Chapter IV showed that ninety-seven percent of the counselors surveyed explained the G.E.D. to those counselees who requested information and ninety-five percent referred students to the G.E.D. testing program officers. Only three of the sixty respondents stated they explain the G.E.D. to all their counselees. If counseling is directed toward the individual student, an

explanation of the G.E.D. to all counselees may not be appropriate. Eighty-two percent of those surveyed discussed the program with parents or guardians of prospective G.E.D. candidates. Considering the age and circumstances of many potential G.E.D. candidates, the parent conference may or may not be important in the advisement process. One information sharing method which did not receive the attention of all counselors was that of providing printed materials on the G.E.D. Less than half of the survey participants indicated their use of this information technique. The recommendation section of this chapter makes note of the need to increase information dissemination through printed materials regarding the G.E.D.

### Conclusions

The conclusions presented here are based on the findings displayed in Chapter IV and discussed in the preceding section of this chapter.

This study points out that the Nebraska high school counselors surveyed were "somewhat aware" (as defined in Chapter III) of the General Educational Development tests and that the majority of counselors held a "moderate professional estimation" (as defined in Chapter III) of the G.E.D. tests. As was indicated, a significant difference was found to exist between the awareness of male and female counselors in regard to the G.E.D. tests. This difference

was illustrated by the chi-square comparison test. Thus, null hypothesis one was rejected. Other personal characteristics of counselors, including age, counseling position and classification of school district in which employed did not reveal significant differences when compared to awareness or professional estimation of the G.E.D. Though the null hypotheses two through nine were accepted, evidence was presented in Chapter IV through figures and description which illustrated some differences of perception between the four demographic groupings of counselors. These differences were discussed in the preceding section of this chapter.

A description of findings and figures was used in the latter part of the study. The characteristics of the potential G.E.D. candidate, as viewed by the majority of counselors, were identified and it was observed that the traditional G.E.D. candidate may be a stereotype which is no longer applicable with the advent of Rule 20. It was noted in this latter part of the study that counselors are presenting information concerning the G.E.D. and advising students of this alternative. Also discussed was the one-in-three relationship between the students who are advised of the G.E.D. and those who take preparatory classes and/or the G.E.D. test.

The use of objectives and hypotheses in this study provided the basis on which to analyze and evaluate the data collected. As information was presented in tables, figures and discussion, the objectives and hypotheses served as a



point of reference. This also holds true for the remainder of this chapter which deals with implications for counselors and educators.

### Implications for Counselors and Educators

In the description of the significance of this study as outlined in Chapter I, it was stated that the information gained would: assist practicing counselors and educators to evaluate and assess their own awareness of and attitude toward the G.E.D.; indicate to high school administrators as well as G.E.D. Testing Program supervisors the need to maintain open and active communication with counselors regarding the G.E.D. as an equivalent of or alternative to the high school diploma; and provide high school counselors information that will assist them in supplying clientele with information regarding the G.E.D. alternative.

Objective six, as identified in Chapter I, stated that a specific objective of this study was: to gather data that will assist counselors in evaluating their current knowledge of and attitude toward the G.E.D.; and assist them in critically viewing their present method of supplying clientele with information regarding the G.E.D. alternative.

The data displayed in the first part of Chapter IV should provide counselors with the means of analyzing their own awareness of the G.E.D. and their professional and personal attitude toward the test. The second part of

Chapter IV and Chapter V provide insight concerning methods of supplying clientele with information regarding the G.E.D. alternative. As was previously noted in the findings of this study, counselors seem to be having an increasing influence on whether or not students are advised of the G.E.D. and choose to take the test. Because of recent state regulations (Rule 20), high school counselors should be well-informed of the prerequisites of the G.E.D. Findings of this study indicate the majority of counselors are "somewhat aware" of the G.E.D. and that the majority of counselors surveyed inform and advise those students who inquire about the G.E.D. This study also shows, however, that many counselors were not aware of the competency areas and most were not acquainted with the scoring process on the G.E.D. tests. A great danger lies in misinforming or providing inadequate information to students concerning the G.E.D. Again, this study should assist counselors to analyze their awareness and hopefully gain greater knowledge to aid their counselees.

Counselors should also be acquainted with the purposes the G.E.D. can serve in meeting the needs of a variety of students, so that the stereotype mentioned in the previous section of this chapter may be removed. By being well-informed, the counselor can, in turn, furnish clientele with pertinent information regarding the G.E.D. One means of supplying information, which was noted in the study to be lacking, is to provide printed material regarding the

G.E.D. to students.

This study should also point to a re-examination of the communication system between G.E.D. testing centers and local high schools to assure that open and active communication is maintained in the best interest of their mutual clients.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

As this study was being conducted, two specific areas of need for research emerged. The first recommendation involves conducting further research to determine if there is a relationship between counselors' professional estimation of the G.E.D. and the information process which counselors use to inform and advise students of the G.E.D. A key concern stressed in this study involved the need for counselors critically to examine their present method of supplying clientele with information regarding the G.E.D. alternative. Because a relationship may exist between the counselor's professional estimation of the G.E.D. and the manner and means by which he/she informs clients, it would seem further research would be justified.

The second recommendation originates from research on the G.E.D. which was described in Chapter II, "Survey of Selected Literature." Through the literature, it was noted that research indicates a favorable response by educational institutions and employers to the G.E.D. as a reliable tool

for measuring competency. Nebraska educators are currently concerned with developing means of measuring the academic competency of students. As previously explained in this study, the G.E.D. test has maintained a long-standing reputation for its reliability. As educators search for a standard or norm upon which to base competency measurement, perhaps the G.E.D. should not be overlooked as a possible model or pattern. It would seem advantageous to examine the possibility of using the G.E.D. test as a competency measurement tool or as a model for such a tool.

#### Recommendations For Immediate Action

If any single theme has prevailed throughout the course of this study and emerged full-blown at the end, it is the need for information and communication regarding the G.E.D. alternative. The following recommendations for immediate action are therefore directed to the organizations, agencies and individuals who can aid in removing the veil of obscurity and misunderstanding which has shrouded the General Educational Development Test.

It is recommended that the information process be initiated at the state level, as it is the State Department of Education which manages the G.E.D. testing program. The Adult and Community Education Department might provide the general public and all adult education and counseling departments throughout the state with a reissuance of information regarding Rule 20.

The Student Personnel Services Department is another state level resource whose assistance must be enlisted to assure a well-informed community of counselor/educators. Because this department is responsible for monitoring the general activities of guidance counselors on a state wide basis, their role in informing counselors of the G.E.D. alternative is especially significant. In addition to providing directives and explanatory information in printed form, this department might initiate workshops on a state wide basis or in a central location such as the general assembly of counselors at annual conventions.

On the district level, schools must inform their local administrators, counselors, and teachers of the G.E.D. alternative through the Guidance Department of the district. Directives issued by this department may help to clarify district policy relative to the G.E.D. alternative and dispel the uncertainty which confronts many counselors when they consider recommending the G.E.D. to students. The Guidance Department of local districts might also provide workshops and in-service sessions for informing educators and counselors of the G.E.D. Counselors might in turn set up an information program to disseminate facts about the G.E.D. to potential candidates and parents.

Another source of awareness training for counselors is the local G.E.D. test center. The test center supervisor might initiate communication with local school counselors

(rather than waiting to be contacted by the counselor). G.E.D. awareness training sessions might be offered through the test center so that counselors are well informed of the competency areas measured by the test, the scoring process and the verification process. Thus, counselors who recommend the G.E.D. to students can provide these students with a true picture of the test requirements.

Finally, it is recommended that counselors make an immediate effort to enhance their own awareness of the G.E.D. alternative by becoming familiar with the purposes of the test, the guidelines established through Rule 20 and the test instrument itself. The underlying purpose of this information effort, as it applies to the counselor, and to all persons and agencies connected with the G.E.D., is to enhance educational opportunities for students and assist them by providing the best tool to meet their individual needs. The G.E.D. may be one such tool.

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APPENDIX A

ORIGINAL SURVEY INSTRUMENT

## G.E.D. Attitude Survey

Hello, my name is John Mackiel. I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. As a part of my research I am conducting a survey of high school counselors to elicit their responses to some questions concerning the General Educational Development Test. Your name was selected at random from a list of Nebraska high school guidance counselors. Neither your name nor the name of your school will appear in my report, however your opinions are very important to the outcome of the research and will hopefully provide information and assistance to counselors. May I have a few minutes of your time to ask you a variety of questions regarding the General Educational Development Test?

1. I will begin by reading to you five of the possible purposes for the General Educational Development Test. I will then repeat each purpose. For each one I read, would you please indicate with the response of "Yes" or "No" if you believe it to be the major purpose of the G.E.D. exam:
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_ To provide a means by which students can leave school early.
  - B. \_\_\_\_\_ To test proficiency.
  - C. \_\_\_\_\_ To reduce the drop-out rate.
  - D. \_\_\_\_\_ To provide an alternative for students - this alternative being to stay in school or leave.
  - E. \_\_\_\_\_ To measure educational development of individuals who have not completed high school.

2. Of the five areas of competency measured by the General Educational Development Test, which areas do you feel are most difficult for students?
- 
3. What is your opinion of the scoring process used in evaluating G.E.D. test results?
- 
4. What is the minimum age at which you would allow a student to take the G.E.D. test?
- 
5. Are there G.E.D. preparatory classes offered in, or nearby, your community?
- \_\_\_\_\_ . If so, where? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Where is the nearest G.E.D. Test Center?
- 
7. Have you personally been in contact with this center?
- \_\_\_\_\_ .
8. What condition do you require a student to meet before taking the G.E.D. examination?
- 
- 
9. Once an individual passes the G.E.D. what does he/she receive as verification that he/she passed?
- 
-

10. Do you believe an individual would have any difficulty entering a Nebraska college or university with this verification?
- 

11. How would you generalize the G.E.D. student's performance in relation to other college freshmen in the same class?
- 

12. Do you believe the verification received for passing the G.E.D. to be equal to the high school diploma given by your school?
- 

13. What percentage of students dropped out of your school last year?
- 

14. Do you recommend the G.E.D. as an option or alternative for students?
- 

15. What circumstances usually exist before this recommendation is made?
- 

16. I will read to you nine descriptions of possible counselees. After each description will you indicate the likelihood of you recommending the G.E.D. to that particular counselee. Please indicate whether you think it is 1) very likely 2) somewhat likely 3) somewhat unlikely 4) very unlikely.

\_\_\_\_\_ average student dissatisfied with school

\_\_\_\_\_ above average student dissatisfied with school

\_\_\_\_\_ below average student dissatisfied with school

- average student expelled for behavior problems
- above average student expelled for behavior problems
- below average student expelled for behavior problems
- average student dropping out to get a job
- above average student dropping out to get a job
- below average student dropping out to get a job

17. Estimate the number of students to whom you mentioned, or advised, of the G.E.D. during the past school term.

---

18. How many followed your advice?

---

19. In the following question, I will read some methods of informing and advising students of the G.E.D. After each, will you indicate with a "Yes" or "No" whether you use this method of informing and advising students of the G.E.D.?

- Explain the G.E.D. to all your counselees.
- Explain the G.E.D. program to those counselees who request information.
- Provide printed materials.
- Refer students to the G.E.D. testing program officers.
- Discuss the G.E.D. program with parents/guardians of prospective G.E.D. candidates.

20. Do you advise more males or females?

\_\_\_\_\_. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Data:

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years in education? \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years in the guidance area? \_\_\_\_\_

Position (e.g. Only counselor in the school, department head,  
part-time counselor, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

21. What is your personal opinion of the G.E.D. as an alternative to or equivalent of the high school diploma?



APPENDIX B

REVISED SURVEY INSTRUMENT

## G.E.D. ATTITUDE AND AWARENESS SURVEY

Hello, my name is John Mackiel. I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. As a part of my research I am conducting a survey of high school counselors to elicit their responses to some questions concerning the General Educational Development Test. Your name was selected at random from a list of Nebraska high school guidance counselors. Neither your name nor the name of your school will appear in my report, however, your opinions are very important to the outcome of the research and will hopefully provide information and assistance to counselors. May I have a few minutes of your time to ask you a variety of questions regarding the General Educational Development Test?

1. I will begin by reading to you five of the possible purposes for the General Educational Development Test. I will then repeat each purpose. For each one I read, would you please indicate with the response of "Yes" or "No" if you believe it to be the major purpose of the G.E.D. exam:
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_ To provide a means by which students can leave school early.
  - B. \_\_\_\_\_ To test proficiency.
  - C. \_\_\_\_\_ To reduce the drop-out rate.
  - D. \_\_\_\_\_ To provide an alternative for students - this alternative being to stay in school or leave.

E. \_\_\_\_\_ To measure educational development of individuals who have not completed high school.

2. Of the five areas of competency measured by the General Educational Development Test, which area do you feel is most difficult for students?

---

3. What is your opinion of the scoring process used in evaluating G.E.D. test results?

---

4. What is the minimum age at which a student is allowed to take the G.E.D. test?

---

5. Are there G.E.D. preparatory classes offered in, or nearby, your community? If so, where?

---

6. Where is the nearest G.E.D. Test Center?

---

7. Have you personally been in contact with this center?

---

8. What conditions do you require a student to meet before taking the G.E.D. examination?

---

---

9. Once an individual passes the G.E.D. what does he/she receive as verification that he/she passed?
- 

Awareness: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Do you believe an individual would have any difficulty entering a public Nebraska college or university with this verification?
- 

11. How would you generalize the G.E.D. student's performance in relation to other college freshmen in the same class?
- 

12. Do you believe the verification received for passing the G.E.D. to be equal to the high school diploma given by your school?
- 

13. Do you recommend the G.E.D. as an option or alternative for students?
- 

14. What circumstances usually exist before this recommendation is made?
- 

Estimation: \_\_\_\_\_

15. I will read to you nine descriptions of possible counselees. After each description will you indicate the likelihood of you recommending the G.E.D. to that particular counselee. Please indicate whether you think it is 1) Very Likely 2) Somewhat Likely 3) Somewhat Unlikely 4) Very Unlikely.

- \_\_\_\_\_ average student dissatisfied with school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ above average student dissatisfied with school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ below average student dissatisfied with school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ average student expelled for behavior problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ above average student expelled for behavior problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ below average student expelled for behavior problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ average student dropping out to get a job.
- \_\_\_\_\_ above average student dropping out to get a job.
- \_\_\_\_\_ below average student dropping out to get a job.

16. Estimate the number of students to whom you have advised of the G.E.D. during the past school semester, September to January.

\_\_\_\_\_

17. How many followed your advice?

\_\_\_\_\_

18. In the following question, I will read some methods of informing and advising students of the G.E.D. After each, will you indicate with a "Yes" or "No" whether you use this method of informing and advising students of the G.E.D.?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Explain the G.E.D. to all your counselees.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Explain the G.E.D. program to those counselees who request information.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide printed materials.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Refer students to the G.E.D. testing program officers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discuss the G.E.D. program with parents/guardians of prospective G.E.D. candidates.

19. Do you advise more males or females?

\_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Data:

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Position (e.g. Only counselor, department head, part-time,  
etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

Classification of School District: \_\_\_\_\_

20. What is your personal opinion of the G.E.D. as an  
alternative to or equivalent of the high school  
diploma?

APPENDIX C

POSTCARD

Dear Colleague,

I am a guidance counselor with the Omaha Public Schools and a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. As a part of my research I am conducting a survey of high school guidance counselors to elicit their responses to some questions concerning the General Educational Development Test.

Your name was selected at random from a list of Nebraska guidance counselors. I hope to be contacting you by phone on February 20th, 1979. Your opinions are very important to the outcome of the research and will hopefully provide information and assistance to counselors.

I look forward to talking with you on Tuesday. Your cooperation and assistance are most appreciated.

Sincerely,