THE TEACHING SCHOOL COUNSELOR: AN IPA STUDY OF SCHOOL COUNSELOR’S
EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING IN THEIR OWN CLASSROOMS.

A thesis
by
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to
The School of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
In the field of
Education

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
May, 2018
Abstract

A shift is happening within the world of school counseling. School counselors are moving out of their dimly lit back corner offices and into the classroom setting. This shift has brought with it a real change both in the mindset of school counselors and the way they approach their work. Therefore, using the conceptual framework of Gysber’s comprehensive developmental guidance program and the theoretical framework of Bandura’s Social Learning theory, this study sought to answer the following central research question: What are the experiences of school counselors with the transition from dyadic counseling to a classroom based teaching school counselors, and how do they make sense of those experiences as it relates to their ability to develop an effective counseling relationship with his or her students? Individual interviews with seven practicing teaching school counselors are included with the ultimate goal of understanding the experiences of the teaching school counselor and how they make sense of how they support the students they service.

Key Words: school, counselor, teaching, experiences, Gysbers, qualitative.
Acknowledgements

The completion of this dissertation and the securing of a doctoral degree has been one of the dreams of my lifetime from the time that I was very young. As I write this acknowledgement section, I still do not comprehend the full scale of what I have been able to accomplish with researching the experiences of school counselors and writing this document.

There are several people that I would like to thank as their help was pivotal to my completion of this project. Specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Karen Reiss Medwed who was vital in the construction and completion of this project. Not only did she take me on when I was very close to calling it quits, she completely reenergized me into a way that I did not think was possible. I will forever be grateful to her for ability to talk me through almost any type of confusion or problem with a smile on her face. Furthermore, for her strong and confident work ethic!

I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee in Dr. Nancy Young and Dr. Megan Krell. Both of these amazing scholars and researchers have provided fantastic insight into this project. For their help in seeing this project through to its completion, I am forever grateful!

I would also like to take the time to thank the members of the Wellesley public schools Central Office Administration, the Wellesley High School building administration and even more deeply the Wellesley High School guidance and counseling department. Each one of these amazingly dedicated educational professionals has given willingly of their private time to this
project. Furthermore, getting to work with such wonderful group of school counselors on a day to day basis is indeed a great honor and privilege. GO RAIDERS!

I would also like to thank my family, including my parents Dr. Allen C. Steere and Mrs. Margaret (Mercer) Steere and my three siblings, Allen C. Steere III, Margaret (Meg) H. Steere and Samuel M. Steere and their spouses and children. These people whose support through this process has been nothing short of complete and unconditional love is the reason why I am the person that I am today.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Amanda Santee (Oswald) Steere. There are not enough words in the dictionary to describe the amount of love and devotion I have for you. I do realize that our marriage and life together is relatively new and young, but I truly have treasure our life that we are starting to build together. Your kinds words of support and even more determination to see this project through have been amazing and I look forward to do the same for you when you start and finish your doctoral degree. Furthermore, our son was born during this process, Martin Oswald Steere. I do not know even how to say thank you to you for him… He is almost as beautiful as his mother.

Educating students through the art of counseling is truly my passion and it is my hope that as you read this document that you indeed feel my great pride and joy for this art form. No person can ever say that they are done learning and I know that I am continuing the great journey of life-long learning which will indeed make my life complete.
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Chapter One

Statement of the Problem

Imagine being hired as a new school counselor and you are asked by your direct supervisor to choose a method for best getting to know your new two hundred counselees. One method he or she suggests is that you might meet with your two hundred students individually and ask them a series of prescribed questions. This format results in having meeting after meeting, day after day, student after student. The other method they suggest asks for you to design a few lessons in which you meet with your counselees in a classroom setting and deliver your lessons in a style that showcases your talents as a teacher while also allowing you the ability to connect to your counselee in a method that is familiar and comforting to them. This alternative allows for your time to be used more wisely in the dissemination of information, but places you out of the office where you feel the most comfortable engaging individually with students.

Topic.

When one looks at the job description for a school counselor, it can be seen that the counselor works within many different arenas. These arenas are similar in ways, but different in how the counselor interacts with them. The school counselor provides academic, personal/social and vocational support to students. According to Dahir and Campbell (1997) who are the authors responsible for writing the National Standards for School Counseling Programs, “The purpose of the school counseling program is to impart specific skills and learning opportunities through academic, career, and personal/social development experiences in a proactive and preventive manner for all students.” (p.69). With respect to academic support the counselor helps their students discover their academic strengths and weaknesses, explores how a student studies,
supports proper writing skills, while also counseling their students on why school is important in their overall development as a 21st century person. With respect to the personal/social support, counselors interact and counsel students on how a child develops proper personal, social and relational skills with themselves, their parent/guardians, their peers and within their environments. This arena is where many school counselors spend a majority of their time interacting with students. Vocational support is provided more in middle, junior high and high schools, where the counselor is able to interact with students about seeing how their future vocation is tied into their academic and personal/social development. By having counselors teaching in their own classrooms, classroom guidance lessons can be created that directly address these three realms specifically to help students understand their importance. In order to be effective within these realms, there has to be counseling relationship with their students. This leads to the questions of how does a school counselor develop an effective relationship with their students?

For this thesis, the working definition of an effective counseling relationship is one where the student wants to speak with the counselor, not one where they are forced to speak. This is a question that is often pondered upon by school committees, central office superintendents, school building administrators and parents alike. For some of these people, trying to understand the development of a school counselor’s working relationship with his/her students is arduous and one they’d rather not understand. School counselors are constantly on the move and not just localized to one single classroom or space, which can make it hard for supervisors or community members to observe exactly what role they are performing. In some ways, the results of a school counselor’s work are invisible to the naked eye and known to a small population.
**Research problem.**

The daily life of a school counselor involves multiple forms of communication with many different stakeholders. Boyer (1998) who offered a description what types of conversation a school counselor can have everyday:

Today, in most high schools, counselors are not only expected to advise students about college, they are also asked to police for drugs, keep records of dropouts, reduce teenage pregnancy, check traffic in the halls, smooth out the tempers of irate parents, and give aid and comfort to battered and neglected children. School counselors are expected to do what our communities, our homes, and our churches have not been able to accomplish, and if they cannot, we condemn them for failing to fulfill our high-minded expectations (p. 3).

Historically these difficult conversations have happened far away from the spotlight of the daily action of a school building or in an active classroom. However, a shift is happening within the world of school counseling. As authors Boarders and Drury (1992) explain, “currently the field of school counseling is enjoying program expansion and renewal” (p.487). Some progressive school counselors are moving out of their dimly lit back corner officer and into the classroom setting. This shift in service delivery for school counselors has been advocated for by the American School Counselors Association (ASCA) National Model (2012) saying “school counselors provide direct instruction, team teach or assist in teaching the school counseling core curriculum, learning activities or units in classroom or other school facilities. They may also provide follow-up to small groups or individual students as needed.” (ASCA National Model, p.85) This shift has brought with it a real change for school counselors both in the mindset of school counselors and the way they approach their work. If we were better able to understand the
experiences of the teaching school counselor, then we might be better able to support the students they service.

Justification for the research problem.

Why should a counselor go into a classroom to do their work? ASCA recommends that counselors “spend 35-45% of their time delivering guidance curriculum at the elementary level, 25-35% at the middle school level and 15-25% at the high school level” (ASCA National Model, 2012. p.136) Colvin (2004) stated “Although secondary counselors typically work outside of the classroom with individuals, there are a number of advantages when they come into the classroom to work with groups of students” (p.43). The advantages for counselors being in the classroom are many. Colvin (2004) shares, “Secondary school counselors can work with teachers in order to provide actual experience with problem-solving techniques. Explicit instruction in group problem solving can help avert bullying and other problem behaviors” (p.43). The counselor presence alone in the classroom is a small proactive step of better preparing students for the 21st century. Dahir (2000) further showed this:

As schools drive curriculum change, improve instruction and learning, ensure that each student has an equitable opportunity for a quality education, and address accountability issues, it is essential they do not overlook a group of professionals who can have a positive impact on student success--a group of professionals who are neither teachers nor administrators; who can have a significant impact on the teaching and learning environment and help to create a school community that is positive and productive; a group of professionals--school counselors--who are trained to deliver a program that is part of the solution, not part of the problem. (p.68)
There is a true need for school counselors to be in the classroom as explained by Dahir (2000), “School counselors call attention to situations in schools that are defeating or frustrating students and thereby hindering their success” (p.69), however Paisley and Borders (1995) challenged this by saying “Despite their many successes, it often seems to us that school counselors too frequently find themselves in a reacting role, using all their energy trying to respond to daily challenges and external demands. Thus, little time and energy is left to be innovative or to think creatively about the role of the counselor in tomorrow's schools” (p.152). Basically, counselors aren’t able to perform their job they were hired to do, which is to serve as student advocates. Showing how they can execute change and proactive intervention within a school is critical to having their students succeed.

When a school counselor is asked what their major function is for their work with students, they say that it is to be an advocate for them. Citing ASCA (2012) “As educational leaders, school counselors are ideally situated to serve as advocates for every student in meeting high academic, career and personal/social standards.” (ASCA National Model for School Counseling, p. 4) This means that they are able to give a voice to a student who feels they do not have one. This role is a crucial one within the fabric of a school. This research study serves the purpose of giving voice to the school counselor to allow school counselors to say exactly what they do in schools and how important that work is within the overall development of children. If school counselors are not able to have a voice in the development of our educational system for children, then the schools will be missing a major piece of the student’s overall emotional development. Paisley and Borders (1995) speak to this problem when saying “Perhaps the most overriding issue for the school counseling specialty is the lack of control school counselors have over their day-to-day work activities and the development of their profession. The school
counselor's role continues to be either explicitly or implicitly defined (if not dictated) by a number of sources, few of whom have any background or experience in school counseling and who often provide somewhat contradictory direction”. (p.151) In providing justification for this research, this study sought to understand the experiences of school counselors as their job evolves into being more classroom focused and how that evolution impacts their ability to form an effective counseling relationship with their students. By having a solid understanding from the counselors of what they are trying to accomplish with their presence in the classroom is key to using their role successfully and most effectively within a school building.

**Deficiencies in the evidence.**

The concept of how a school counselor uses their time is always a topic where a lot of unknown questions are brought forward. A popular negative visual stereotype in how school counselor use their time is the picture of the counselor sitting in their office with their arms stretched back behind their head, sipping a hot cup of coffee and reading the morning newspaper waiting for anyone to show up. Author Partin (1993) states, “Parents, teachers, students, and administrators are heard to comment that counselors spend most of their time scheduling, testing, and shuffling papers. Counselors are seldom able to completely spend their time as they would prefer. The concern that counselors must devote large amounts of time to non-counseling functions has led several state legislatures to mandate a minimum percentage (typically 60% to 75%) of school counselors' time to be devoted to direct student services” (Partin, p. 274). Having central office administrators, community members and other educational stakeholders hear the counselor’s voice of success in the classroom while teaching appropriate developmental skills is one of the key aspect of this research study. The gaps that exist within the literature are more around what exactly a counselor spends their time doing. There is literature as to what a school
counselor hopes to do with their time, which is to be directly working with students and how they are doing tasks that are not what they were trained to do. Asking counselors about what they actually doing is rather limited with the world of school counselor’s academic research. By asking for the counselor’s perspective and having them discuss openly how they seek to engage students in a counseling relationship is key in getting school administrators to use these educational professional in a more effective capacity. Without seeking their voice of their day to day operations, school administrators will continue to use these professionals in situations where they are not best suited to be placed in.

**Relating the discussion to audiences.**

It is not the students themselves who are needing to understand this information about how a school counselor can be used effectively within the classroom. Many of them are already very well informed. It is the building administrators, community members, policy markers and any one who is not fully informed about what kind of impact a school counselor can have on a student overall academic, personal/social and vocational development and how that can impact their presence within 21st century society. As a change agent, I want building administrators, community members and policy makers to hear the voices of the school counselors in this research study and then say that if we want to be helpful to our children’s healthy overall development then we need educational professionals like school counselors available at every single school, to all children regardless of their socioeconomic status or other factors that would keep counselors out of the fabric of the school. According to Dahir (2000), “As specialists in child and adolescent development, school counselors coordinate the objectives, strategies, and activities of a comprehensive and developmental school counseling program to meet the personal, social, educational, and career development needs of all students” (p.68). Furthermore,
practicing school counselors can use this research to question their own roles within their buildings. If they are not having a major presence within a classroom setting, then they can use this research to advocate an increase in classroom time to district administrators.

**Significance of the problem.**

School counselors for many years have been in the background of education relying on their individual skills to develop relationships with their students. Now, schools are asking their school counselors to take their talents out of their offices and be able to develop an effective counseling relationship with their students through teaching their own specially designed curriculum in mainstream classroom. One of the most difficult aspects of this change to the classroom is that counselors don’t have a model which they are able to follow. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has provided some guidelines for counselors being in the classroom, however not all educational stakeholders wish to see them in there. Quoting the ASCA national model:

> school counseling programs are a collaborative effort benefiting students, parents, teachers, administrators and the overall community. School counseling programs should be an integral part of the students’ daily educational environment, and school counselor should be partners in student achievement. Unfortunately, school counseling has lacked a consistent identity from state to state, district to district and even school to school. As a result, school counseling programs are often viewed as ancillary programs instead of a crucial component to student achievement, and school counselors have not been used to their fullest (ASCA Executive Summary of the National Model of School Counseling, 2007).
The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) incorporated the best features of the Comprehensive Developmental Guidance (CDG) Model into its National Model, further illustrating the value of CDG for the profession. According to ASCA, thirty states have adopted Comprehensive Developmental Guidance as their state model” (The Massachusetts Model for School Counseling, 2006). When ASCA makes reference to the “best features of the CDG model, one of their major pieces is a teaching school counselor spending a major amount of their time within a classroom setting teaching a curriculum that they have had a hand in building and tailoring to the needs of their school building.

This study will examine this paradigm shift and the evolution of a school counselor’s role from a traditional dyadic counseling relationship to a classroom based school counselor towards the end of improving the counselor’s ability to develop an effective counseling relationship with his or her students. Furthermore, by having counselors in classroom with more of an active presence being seen within the school community, the confusion over the role of the school counselors can be clarified and brought forward into the mainstream view. In order for this to be done, audiences need to actually see and hear what the counselors are experiencing on a daily basis teaching in the classroom. Being able to understand how a school counselor constructs effective counseling relationships with their students is key to understanding the best way for counselors to be used successfully in schools.

Research Questions

The three central research questions for this study will be: 1. What are the experiences of school counselors with the transition from a dyadic counseling relationship to a classroom based, teaching school counselor? 2. How do they make sense of those experiences as it relates to the counselor’s ability to develop an effective counseling relationship with his or her students? 3.
What are the major advantages and disadvantages of counselors teaching within their own classrooms?

**Positionality Statement**

The question of how school counselors can be used to effectively counsel all students within a school and defending why are they are needed within a district is an ongoing battle. With school budgets being tightened and taxpayers asking for more accountability from administrators, the question of what a school counselor actually does is one that needs to be shown publicly. How can this be achieved? The answers lie within the position of the teaching school counselor, a school professional who has the ability to counsel students effectively in the traditional one-on-one setting, but also houses the skills to effectively teach a comprehensive and developmental curriculum in a classroom setting.

I bring a unique perspective to this study, as I am currently a teaching school counselor. However, within this world, I am a minority. Looking back at the emergence of school counseling as a profession “Since the early (19) fifties, most school counseling programs have been organized around a student service model designed to provide remedial interventions, largely targeting the most needy students. While this model, still prevalent in many Massachusetts schools, benefits some students, it leaves far too many to fend for themselves” (The Massachusetts Model for School Counseling, 2006).

This previous description is exactly what I was expected to do in the first school district I worked in. I counseled a caseload of 200 students and it was my responsibility to counsel all those on my caseload through individual meetings. As I progressed through that year, I found those meetings increasingly repetitious and boring that I began to become unmotivated to maintain my schedule of daily meetings. Furthermore, I felt that I had made the wrong choice of
professions. I loved the job of school counseling, but when it came to the question of how best to use my time in this profession, 200 individual meetings was not the right answer. When I presented the idea of the “teaching school counselor” to my district school administrators, I was promptly told that there was no way that I was going to get the idea past the district’s teaching union, but that if I wanted to try, I could pursue it, but wasn’t given much of a chance.

When I moved to a different school district, the idea of the teaching school counselor became a reality. My caseload was the same, the length of the school day was the same, but within that schedule, I had 12 guidance seminars split between two grades in the Fall and the other two grades in the Spring where I had an hour of time to teach a comprehensive and developmental guidance curricular. My motivation towards my job increased and I was able to get to know my caseload of students far beyond what I had been exposed to in my previous system.

My biases in this research stem from the fact that I am a practicing school counselor and that I want for both the American School Counselor Association National Model of School counseling to be adopted by all 50 states. At the local level I also hope for the Massachusetts Association of School Counselors Model to be put in place within all Massachusetts school districts. I believe that every school system will use these educational professionals differently, but the concept of the teaching school counselor will come out as the best way to service all students within the time that students are present within the school building.

**Theoretical Framework**
This study will primarily use the frameworks of Bandura’s Social Learning Theory to guide the research. This framework helps to make sense of the role for school counselors being in the classroom by exploring how relationships and modeling are keys to learning for students.

**Bandura’s social learning theory.**

The primary framework that will be used is Bandura’s Social Learning theory. Albert Bandura by trade is a social cognitive psychologist conducting his research at Stanford University. He is most widely known for his construction of the Social Learning theory (1976), which he states,

Traditional theories of learning generally depict behavior as the product of directly experienced response consequences. In actuality, virtually all-learning phenomena resulting from direct experience can occur on a vicarious basis through observation of other people’s behavior and its consequences for them. Man’s capacity to learn by observation enables him to acquire large, integrated units of behavior by example without having to build up the patterns gradually by tedious trial and error. Similarly, emotional responses can be developed observationally by witnessing the affective reactions of others undergoing painful or pleasurable experiences. Fearful and defensive behavior can be extinguished vicariously by observing others engage in the feared activities without any adverse consequences. Man’s superior cognitive capacity is another factor that determines, not only how he will be affected by his experiences, but the future direction his actions may take (p. 2).

Bandura saw the prospective that human beings learn best through the process of “observational learning” (McLeod, 2011). This means that the child is in a learning environment where the appropriate behaviors are being modeled for them by the people around them.
including family members, teachers, counselors and after direct observation the child will begin to imitate these people. “Within the framework of social learning theory, reinforcement primarily serves informative and incentive functions, although it also has responses-strengthening capabilities” (Bandura, 1976 p. 3).

The theory of the teaching school counselor will build greatly from the social learning perspective because of the relationship aspect that the school counselor has been able to build with their students and the example they set for the students:

Apart from questions on survival, it is difficult to imagine a socialization process in which the language, mores, vocational, activities, familial customs, and the educational, religious and political practices of a culture are taught to each new member by selective reinforcement of fortuitous behaviors without benefit of models who exemplify the cultural patterns in their own behaviors. Most of the behaviors that people display are learned, either deliberately or inadvertently through the influence of example. (Bandura, 1976 p. 5)

For example, if the school counselor has done their job correctly in developing a relationship with the child beforehand, then the student will be better able to trust their counselor in a way that opens their mind up to be able to hear and analyze the lessons being presented and furthermore, take away what they feel are the best and most important lessons. More importantly, the student will buy into modeling appropriate behavior that the counselor is presenting. Bandura (1976) stated that:

Modeling phenomena are governed by four interrelated sub processes. (1) Attentional processes (2) Retention processes (3) Motoric reproduction processes (4) Modeling
Phenomena.” (p. 6). In describing these processes in a little more detail, Bandura (1976) states (1) Attentional Processes is where “a person cannot learn much by observation if he does not attend to, or recognize, the essential features of the model’s behavior” (p. 6).

(2) Retention Processes - “A person cannot be much influenced by observation of a model’s behavior if he has no memory of it” (p. 7). (3) Motoric reproduction processes- “modeling is concerned with processes whereby symbolic representations guide over actions. To achieve behavioral reproductions, a learner must put together a given set of responses according to the modeled patterns” (p. 8). (4) Reinforcement and motivational processes- “A person can acquire, retain and posses the capabilities for skillful execution of modeled behavior, but the learning may rarely be activated into overt performance if it is negatively sanctioned or otherwise unfavorably received (p. 8).

Author Grusec (1992) simplified these four main components of observational learning when saying:

Four components involved in the process of modeling. Each of these components has a role to play either in the acquisition of information about events and of rules or in the decision to put this information to use in guiding behavior. First, the observer must pay attention to events—live or symbolic—that are modeled. Attention is determined by a variety of variables, including the power and attractiveness of the model as well as the conditions under which behavior is viewed: Television, for example, is a compelling medium for capturing and holding attention. Second, when material has been attended to, it must then be retained, with the observed behavior represented in memory through either an imaginal or a verbal representational system. In the third step, symbolic representation now must be converted into appropriate actions similar to the originally modeled behavior.
For instance, motoric reproduction of complex actions is much less likely to be successful than that of simple actions. The final process governing observational learning involves motivational variables. There must, for example, be sufficient incentive to motivate the actual performance of modeled actions (p. 781-782)

School counselors are in the unique position to have their lessons retained by their students through the processes that Bandura has described. The counselor can model the appropriate behavior that they are wanting the students to learning, but also they are appropriately trained to navigate the ever complex and wide range of emotions that accompany that particular student into their classroom. Furthermore, if the counselor is aware that the student is dealing with some circumstance that is causing them particular amounts of stress than the counselor would be able to proactively attend to the student before the lesson is delivered and the situation is circumvented.

Grusec (1992) summarizes observational learning and its theories by saying:

> It is important to note that people do not passively absorb standards of behavior from whatever influences they experience. Indeed, they must select from numerous evaluations that are prescribed and modeled by different individuals as well as by the same individual in differing circumstances. This conflicting information must be integrated so that rules can be generated, or general standards formed, against which individuals judge their own behavior. The selection of standards depends on the weighting of such factors as disparities in perceived competence between the model and the self, how much a specific activity is valued, and the extent to which individuals see their behavior as a function of their own effort and ability rather than external factors over which they have little control. (p.782)
Bandura’s theoretical framework of Social Learning has much to offer within the world of school counseling and how its impact can greatly enhance the abilities of the school counselors to reach all of their students in influencing them towards positive and productive citizenship.

However, author Sanderse (2013) gives a perspective that is counter to the positive aspects of Bandura Social learning theory when saying:

Bandura found that a considerable amount of learning takes place through a process in which children learn behaviors, attitudes, values and beliefs by observing others and the consequences of others’ actions. Although it might be uncontroversial among care and virtue ethicists that teachers cannot easily separate between their professional role and personal character traits, modelling becomes more problematic—and more interesting—when we realize two things: (1) teachers’ character traits do not necessarily have to be admirable and (2) even when teachers do model admirable character traits, this might not be done effectively. Unfortunately, teachers’ function as role models has been taken for granted to such an extent that it has prevented people in both educational theory and practice from enquiring whether modelling can be improved. (p.29)
Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

Based upon my research questions, I further review of the literature that exists on the role of the school counselor and their work within a educational building is warranted. What I have found so far exists within four strands, which I have described below.

Gysbers’ Comprehensive Developmental Guidance Program (CDG).

Gysbers’ work in 1970 that introduced the concept of the Comprehensive Developmental Guidance (CDG), set out to change the role of the school counselor from an unknown one-on-one counselor to a well-respected educational professional. Comprehensive Developmental Guidance also asked for counselors to be responsible for teaching their own specially designed and age appropriate curriculum within a classroom setting. Gysbers went on to author several more books and journal articles describing how the comprehensive guidance model could better serve the students of the United States and abroad. “Comprehensive guidance and counseling programs are becoming the major way of organizing and managing guidance and counseling in the schools across the country” (Sink & MacDonald, 1998, p.88).

Gysbers stressed how there were five phases to constructing a comprehensive guidance program which included the “planning, designing, implementing, evaluating and enhancing” stages (Gysbers and Henderson, 2012). Each of these phases is critical in the establishment and execution of a comprehensive guidance program. When Gysbers first began constructing this model, there were only four phases, but through several revisions of the seminal work “Developing and Managing your School Guidance Program” (Gysbers and Henderson, 1988) a fifth stage was developed. “Five phases for establishing and improving Pre-K-12 comprehensive guidance and counseling programs serve as the organizational framework for this enduring,
influential textbook written for counselor educators and their students, school leaders, practicing school counselors, and state or district supervisors” (Gysbers and Henderson, 2012).

Furthermore, “Fundamental beliefs and organizational structure represent an important part of comprehensive guidance programs serving students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. These programs help students gain competencies in the areas of personal/social, educational, and career development at all educational levels. Comprehensive programs guarantee that all students have access to school counselors and school counselors have access to all students” (Gysbers and Henderson, 2001, p. 2)

For the construction of this theory, each of these phases will be needed in building a foundation in fully understanding the role of the teaching school counselor. For example, the research team needs to know how the role will be designed, how the school system will use these educational professionals, how administrators will evaluate them, and finally how they will be used to their fullest capacity.

The relationship is the most important!

When describing school counseling, the idea of developing a counseling relationship is one of the most simplest ideas. Authors Crosnoe, Johnson and Elder (2004) gave a voice to this in their research when saying “this study focused on this type of in-school intergenerational bonding, examining students’ general feelings about their teachers—how well students get along with their teachers and whether they perceive them to be caring and fair.” (p.61) This is saying that students when believe that their teachers or counselors believe and care about them as individuals that they can learn anything.

Many adolescents believe that they never have connected with their teachers, the authors state “contrary to common depictions of an opposition between young and old in secondary
school settings, adolescents and teachers did form positive, affective relationships. Moreover, these relationships played an important role in education that was on par with more commonly studied demographic factors. Across all groups, students who had more positive views of their teachers did better and had fewer problems in school, while those with more negative views did worse and had greater problems.” (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004, p.75)

More counselors are needed?

There are some locations where a comprehensive guidance program is running on all cylinders, however, this is not the norm. According to Lapan (2012), “Some students have the good fortune to attend schools where they have supportive, personal relationships with their school counselors and receive valuable comprehensive school counseling program services such as effective college and career counseling. However, far too many students attend schools where this is not the case.” (p.84) When students miss out on time with this dedicated professional, “there is no doubt that far too many students continue to leave high school not having received the benefits of the best of what professional school counselors have to offer.” (Lapan, 2012, p.84) Why do school officials feel the need to not have these educational professionals working at their fullest capacity? Author Lapan states that there is evidence that “when highly trained, professional school counselors deliver ASCA National Model comprehensive school counseling program services, students receive measurable benefits. Furthermore, comprehensive program implementation may be most beneficial for youth living in poverty.” (Lapan, 2012, p.88)

However, he does see the challenges being mighty “the greatest challenges to providing all students the benefits of a comprehensive school counseling program are the huge implementation gaps in school counseling programs across schools and the very high student-to-school-counselor ratios that impede more personalized counseling relationships for every student.” (Lapan, 2012,
Although the challenges are many, Lapan being an optimist about the impact of school counselors and their professional model says “we have the means and the know-how to make a fundamental difference in improving the social/emotional, career, and academic development of America’s children.” (Lapan, 2012, p.88)

**What is the nation wide status of school counseling programs?**

Authors Martin, Carey and DeCoster (2009) were able to take a look at school counseling programs in the United States as a whole and they concluded, “a national survey was conducted using a structured interview to investigate the status of school counseling models in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Findings determined that 17 states have established models, 24 states are progressing in model implementation, and 10 states are at a beginning stage of model development” (p.378) “Most of these “participants' responses showed that 84% of the models were based on CDG and/or the ASCA National Model and that 75% of the models contained school counseling curriculum standards/ frameworks.” (Martin, Carey & DeCoster, 2009, p.382)

The authors were able to take this further when saying, “All of the states, regardless of category, provided professional development that supported model implementation — even if they did not have a written state model. In the seven states that did not have a formal written model this professional development was targeted at helping counselors implement other models (e.g., ASCA National Model, CDG). In all three categories, the most common element missing was an active state evaluation system for school counseling programs. Although Established states were more likely to have an evaluation system than were Progressing or Beginning states, the status of state-level school counseling evaluation nationally can be described as limited.” (Martin, Carey & DeCoster, 2009, p. 384) The authors also went into details about how leadership at the state level was important when implementing “We observed that many states had great variability
concerning leadership, organizational structure, political power, economic resources, and demographics. We believe that these variables greatly impact the degree to which states can support school counseling leadership, program/model development, program/model implementation, program/model endorsement, school counseling mandates, progressive school counselor accreditation and training, professional development, and finally, program/model evaluation.” (Martin, Carey & DeCoster, 2009, p. 384)

According to the authors, “for more than 30 years, school counseling scholarship has devoted a great deal of attention and energy to the promotion of comprehensive developmental guidance (CDG) models/programs (for a comprehensive review of CDG history, see Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Herr, 2001; Keys & Lockhart, 2000; Paisley & McMahon, 2001) in the simplest of terms, these models operate upon the premise that systematically delivering planned developmental curricula and interventions to all students is far superior to offering school counseling services that are reactive or randomly prescribed.” (Martin, Carey & DeCoster, 2009, p.378) Furthermore, regarding leadership the authors commented, “One important way that state-level leadership affects local practice is through the development and implementation of state models for school counseling programs. For more than 30 years, school counseling scholarship has devoted a great deal of attention and energy to the promotion of comprehensive developmental guidance models/programs.” (Martin, Carey & DeCoster, 2009, p.378)

Finally, the research showed that “interviewee comments illuminated the contextual factors within state organizational structures that either hindered or supported model implementation. Furthermore, these comments shed light on the political differences among states and how these differences affect both policies and the capacity to move school counseling practice forward. For instance, comments supported the notion that states with a designated
school counseling leader, strategically placed within the state DOE so as to have access to funds that support school counseling program development, adequate time to devote to school counseling leadership, and the ability to bring together different constituencies to support school counseling, had a greater capacity to promote school counseling model development.” (Martin, Carey & DeCoster, 2009, p.384-385)

“Show me the data!”.

There is a response that gets tossed out often in the world of education administrators when an educational professional in their school wants to address a gap that they sees in their school program. Before the administrator commits funding to this new idea they are quick to say, “show me the data!”. In the world of school counseling comprehensive guidance program implementation, this phrase has been used to deter school counselors from implementing their program. Author Lapan confronted this phrase directly when he discussed six studies in U.S. states (Utah, Nebraska, Missouri, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Wisconsin) that showed that a fully functional CGP program could help the students be more successful in United States schools. In looking at this state data, Lapan summarizes the Utah study first, “findings from the Utah study connect comprehensive counseling program implementation to higher ACT test scores and increases in the number of Utah students who take the ACT test. The current study also found that smaller student-to-school counselor ratios predicted lower disciplinary incidents and better school attendance rates.” (Lapan, 2012, p. 87) Student to school counselor ratios is always a point of contention with school counselors and what number is exactly the best number for the counselor to be effective. The Missouri study adds credibility to smaller ratios when saying, “the Missouri study squarely addresses the issue of whether or not smaller student-to-school-counselor ratios matter for student success. The answer is a definite yes, with clear
advantages especially evident for students attending high-poverty schools (i.e., schools with larger percentages of students receiving free or reduced price lunch).” (Lapan, 2012, p.87) The author goes even further when saying, “In particular, a significant interaction effect was found between smaller ratios and high-poverty schools.” (Lapan, 2012, p.87) In essence, this author is attempting to say that school counseling programs specifically comprehensive developmental guidance programs have the ability to close the achievement gap.

Much of the data in this article shows how states through their comprehensive developmental guidance models have been able to target gaps that exist within schools. For example, “The Nebraska study does link program implementation to advantages for career and technical education programs, such as better graduation rates and increased participation in non-traditional vocational programs. And finally, Nebraska school counselors appeared to spend a much greater amount of their work time carrying out duties that would be considered less central to implementing a comprehensive program: about 32%, on average, of counselor work time devoted to carrying out either systems support or non-guidance tasks.” (Lapan, 2012 p.87)

College and career readiness is always a hot topic within the education world as policy makers are asking educators to show that students are in fact leaving school ready to either tackle the challenges of a college curriculum or be ready for the 21st century world of work. In Connecticut, a study was done that said “the Connecticut study adds to the literature by further establishing the important link between providing college and career counseling services and promoting student success (i.e., lower discipline and suspension rates).” (Lapan, 2012, p.87-88) Furthermore, the study showed that “twenty- five percent of the Connecticut school counselors reported that they spend between 15% and 50% of their work time performing non-guidance tasks. Performing more non-guidance tasks was associated with counselors not spending at least
80% of their time working directly with students (r = -.53). Finally (and as found in prior research), principal ratings strongly connected the provision of college and career counseling services by school counselors in their school building to better attendance, graduation rates, and lower discipline incidents and suspensions.” (Lapan, 2012, p.88) A study completed in Rhode Island’s school said similar that “the Rhode Island study continues to make the connection between comprehensive school counseling and benefits for students. The hopeful side of these findings is that several domains of practice engaged in by professional school counselors link to student success.” (Lapan, 2012, p.88)

However, within Wisconsin another aspect of the implementations procedures was needed to ensure success which “the Wisconsin study tells the story of the challenges and substantial barriers the researchers faced in attempting to carry out a rigorous statewide study. Giving voice to the difficulties encountered by Wisconsin high schools in implementing comprehensive school counseling programs, the authors call attention to quality professional development needed to effectively put in place key aspects of ASCA National Model programs.” (Lapan, 2012, p.88)

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) incorporated the best features of the comprehensive developmental guidance model into its National Model, further illustrating the value of CDG for the profession. According to ASCA, “thirty states have adopted CDG as their state model” (The Massachusetts Model for School Counseling, 2006). When ASCA makes reference to the “best features of the CDG model”, one of their major pieces is a teaching school counselor spending a major amount of their time within a classroom setting teaching students a curriculum that they have had a hand in building and tailoring to the needs of their school building.
National Model of School Counseling

The most important document to review when discussing this topic of the teaching school counselor is the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model: *A Framework for School Counseling programs*. This document outlines exactly what an appropriate school counseling program at the elementary, middle and high school level should look like. For example, in the first line of the document “school counselors design and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs that promote student achievement. These programs are comprehensive in scope, preventive in design and developmental in nature” (ASCA National Model, Executive Summary, 2006). It can be seen that the model prides itself on being pro-active and preventative, which means that the school counselor cannot be waiting around their office for a series of standardized appointments. Furthermore, the model discusses strongly that “80 percent of this model should be in the delivery of services either directly or indirectly towards students” (ASCA National Model, Executive Summary, 2006). Examples of directly working with students are “the school counseling core curriculum, individual student planning and responsive services, while examples of indirectly working with students are referrals for additional assistance, consultations, collaborations with parents, teachers, other educators and community organizations” (ASCA National Model, Executive Summary, 2006). ASCA (2012) also recommends that counselors “spend 35-45% of their time delivering guidance curriculum at the elementary level, 25-35% at the middle school level and 15-25% at the high school level” (ASCA National Model, p.136) School counselors have the ability to do all of this, but if they are further put into a position where they can interact with their students in the classroom setting then they are being even more pro-active with their interventions to student’s academic, personal/social and vocational issues. Pioneers in the field of school counseling research, Lapan
and Gysbers start this topic off simply, which has driven much of the research on the full implementation and development of the school counseling programs which include a teaching school counselor saying, “students who attended schools with more fully implemented guidance programs rated the climate in their school as being more positive. They reported greater feelings of belonging and safety in their school. They indicated that their classes were less likely to be interrupted by other students and that their peers behaved better in school” (Lapan and Gysbers, 1997, p. 300). The authors are essentially saying that if you have these educational professionals in your school, you students will be that much better.

The Role of the School Counselor

The literature that exists about the role of the school counselor and what is the best use of a counselor’s time is extensive. According to one author, he describes why challenges of the job are immense and sometimes overwhelming. “School counselors are also assigned to work with students in crisis and conflict, monitor graduation requirements, process college applications, counsel students through family separation and divorce, provide academic motivation and attendance intervention and refer students and families to community agencies” (Dahir, 2004, p.344). Just this list alone can be totally encompassing for a counselor. However, with all that they do, author Nils Carlson's does a good job within his article of how “school counselors and school counseling program have had to fight long and hard for their survival because of a lack of knowledge caused by a lack of information disseminated by school counselors to the public about their roles” (Carlson, 1991, p.30). It is important to remember that many school counselor's personalities are one's of humbleness and non-attention seeking for the service they perform, which is why many times community stakeholders fully do not understand what exactly a school counselor does. Aluede then takes this perspective a little further when he discusses his
article of teacher perspective of school counselors and how he found that “a teacher's own personal characteristics have no significant impact on their attitudes towards school counselors and school counseling programs” (Aluede, 2007, p.445). Beesley and Frey review the idea of the school counseling roles in their article regarding principal’s perspectives of school counselor's roles. Within this study, the authors found that “principals were overall satisfied with their school counselors, but their satisfaction varied by the level of school they were serving in” (Beesley and Frey, 2006).

Elementary, middle school and high school counselors serve in very different capacities with what is expected of them by their administration. Elementary and middle school counselors serve students more within a relational and academic role than their high school colleagues who serve students more within a vocational, academic, and post secondary planning role. The principal and the school counselor work in close proximity to each other, but researcher Lieberman notes that many times the principal has a skewed view of what exactly the school counselor does. “As ASCA attempts to clarify and further define the school counselor role and the needed expertise, it is clear that school leaders have an obligation to understand the role and functions” (Lieberman, 2004, p.553-554). This is where the need is greatest for school counselors and administrators to be on the same page. School principals are charged with so many critical decisions and one of those decisions could be on how school counselors spend their time. For example, is the counselor's role just counseling? Or are they just teaching? Or are they combining counseling and teaching? and especially critical to this decision, in what setting?

Lieberman continues this argument by saying “it is initially incumbent upon proactive school leaders to familiarize themselves with the forthcoming counselor's role statement as the initial step in the appropriate and efficient utilization of the school counselor for school
effectiveness and productivity” (Lieberman, 2004, p. 556). Lieberman lists this pro-active stance as the initial step in making this partnership work, but there needs to be so many more steps taken together by the principal and counselor after the initial step is forged. This partnership is essential to a student's overall development. Authors Hardesty and Dillard discusses this about the role of elementary school counselors when he says how “school counseling is essential for proper student development” (Hardesty and Dillard, 1994, p.83). The idea of how graduate programs prepare school counselors is another aspect of the role of the school counselor that needs to be defined. For example, Trolley, discusses that “with such a plethora of tasks assigned to school counselors, and the diversity within their role across school districts and levels, counselor educators are left wondering how they may best communicate the professional identity of school counselors to their graduate students”. (Trolley, 2011, p.15) This goes back to the age old question of what a school counselor does in fact do? Think back to the introduction of this literature review where a school counselor is preparing for their day. What if that school counselors also has an intern who is following them around? How would that counselor's work be different if the supervisor was training the intern to also be a school counselor that teaches and not just counsel? The intern's preparation would be different and their skills for when they take on their own caseload would be better suited to handle more difficult and challenging situations because of their classroom training.

“Self-efficacy as a school counselor, particularly outcome expectancy, seems to be a critical component of school counselor practice. To have an impact on efficacy expectancy, it is important that school counselors learn the skills to implement comprehensive, developmental school counseling programs as well as the skills necessary to be effective counselors, consultants, coordinators, and facilitators” (Scarborough and Culberth, 2008, p. 456). By far
though, the research team of Militello, Carey, Dimmitt, Lee and Schweid paint the strongest picture of what a school counselor is within a school setting. “In the majority of the schools, we saw evidence that school counselors were powerful members of the school community and participated in the leadership of the school. School counselors were frequently appointed members of the principal’s school leadership team and/or elected members of school governance bodies” (Militello, Carey, Dimmitt, Lee and Schweid, 2009, p.11-12). A school counselor has the power to influence not only students and building stakeholders, but also the larger community via their presence in school, which is why the school counselor is always a role that needs to be working to its fullest capacity within a school building.

Furthermore, author Dollarhide expands upon this leadership role when he says, “to become successful leaders, school counselors need to be educated in leadership skills and be given opportunities to explore their own leadership style” (Dollarhide, 2008, p. 262). Continuing along this vein, Ford and Nelson state “school counselors have been traditionally trained as mental health providers and student advocates rather than receiving training on becoming school leaders” (Ford and Nelson, 2010, p. 3). How is a school counselor given the opportunity to expand their own leadership style if they are only counseling on an individual basis? Students and we as human beings learn the most about ourselves and how to be in a position of authority when we are leading a group of people and not just a lone individual. This is one of the primary reasons counselors need to be given the chance to take their role outside of the office and into the classroom, so that can develop their leadership skills and along with their visibility as leaders within the school community.

**Guidance in the Classroom**

School counseling can be a stressful job! Authors McCarthy Calfa, Guzman, Von Horne,
Kerne, and Lambert give voice to this statement when they describe, “The most frequent sources of stress were, in order, not having enough time to see students, too much paperwork, not enough time to do their job, too large a caseload, and too many non-counseling guidance duties. These stressors were summarized as involving mainly quantitative work overload (i.e., too much to do, and not enough time to do it) and role conflict or ambiguity” (McCarthy, Calfa, Guzman, Von Horne, Kerne, and Lambert, 2010, p. 147). How does one ease the burden of the demands and not fall victim to these stressors? Furthermore, when referring to stress, what makes a student go see their counselor? Authors Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, Holcomb-McCoy and Mitchell take another angle with the idea of having counselors in the classroom. “The preceding discussion raises important questions about whether the student counselor contact is student or counselor initiated. Counselor-initiated contact could result from counselors’ concerns, individual educational planning (IEP) requirements, school policies, parent requests, or administrator or teacher referrals. Student-initiated contact, on the other hand, results from students’ referrals” (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, Holcomb-McCoy and Mitchell, 2009, p.21). School counseling is largely defined by a one--on-one interaction with a student but more and more educational and school counseling professionals are seeing the role of school counseling being moved out of the office and into the classroom where the school counselor is able to deliver their own designed and developmentally appropriate curricula. Author Colvin spends a great deal of time discussing how a classroom guidance component can impact the entire school as a whole when he states, “classroom guidance can foster a sense of belonging in the classroom, and if widely done may modify the climate of the whole school” (Colvin, 2004, p.44).

School counseling for the most part is there to help improve a school climate so when a
school is not using classroom guidance lessons, it can be a detriment to the school's overall climate. Furthermore, Colvin emphasizes this point, with “in fact, most of not all revised state guidance curricula emphasize decision making, self-understanding, career exploration and preparation, and the improvement of study skills. Through classroom guidance activities counselors teach, team-teach, or assist in teaching curricular activities or units in classrooms” (Colvin, 2004, p. 44). This is one of the primary reasons school counselors need to get away from their offices and into the classroom because of the ability to impact that many more kids through their teaching practices. Colvin makes reference to this when he says, “there are many different agendas that school counselors and teachers can follow to meet their content and time limit needs” (Colvin, 2004, p. 45). The teaching school counselor truly has the ability to use their creativity and own vantage point of their of their caseload to mold the best teaching practices for their students. For example, knowing when the students need time to vent their frustration and when is the time to discuss motivational or time management strategies that could decrease stress.

Conclusion

School counselors can be effective in delivering lessons at the classroom level. However, this shift is a difference from the traditional role that existed for school counselors in the past. School counselors were traditionally hidden from the mainstream as many people did not want it known that they were visiting a counselor in school. By having school counselors being visible in the classroom and helping influence school change, counselors can become part of the visible school culture and better help students prepare for the ever changing world.
Chapter III: Research Design

Introduction

Imagine being hired as a new school counselor and you are asked by your direct supervisor to choose a method for best getting to know your new two hundred counselees. One method he or she suggests is that you might meet with your two hundred students individually and ask them a series of prescribed questions. This format results in having meeting after meeting, day after day, student after student. The other method they suggest asks for you to design a few lessons in which you meet with your counselees in a classroom setting and deliver your lessons in a style that showcases your talents as a teacher while also allowing you the ability to connect to your counselee in a method that is familiar and comforting to them. This alternative allows for your time to be used more wisely in the dissemination of information, but places you out of the office where you feel the most comfortable engaging individually with students.

The three central research question for this study will be: 1. What are the experiences of school counselors with the transition from a dyadic counseling relationship to a classroom based, teaching school counselor? 2. How do they make sense of those experiences as it relates to the counselor’s ability to develop an effective counseling relationship with his or her students? 3. What are the major advantages and disadvantages of counselors teaching within their own classrooms?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study is to describe the experience of the role of the teaching school counselors for the community of Wellesley High School and the town of Wellesley. At this stage in the research, the IPA study will be to
explore how school counselors are used. According to Dahir (2000), “The purpose of school counseling program is to impart skills and facilitate learning opportunities in an active and preventive manner that ensures all students can achieve school success through academic, career and personal/social development experiences” (p.68). The school counselors within Wellesley High School have for several years been teaching within a classroom setting and their experiences being presented to a larger audience could potentially show what Dahir is saying school counselors taking an “active and preventive manner” (p.69).

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm that I will be using for this study is one of constructivist/interpretivism. This paradigm is central in the world of qualitative research where both the researcher and the research participants want to interact and discuss how their reality is constructed and how they make sense of that shared experience. The school counselors shared experiences of spending a majority of their time in the classroom and how it impacts their ability to develop a working relationship with their students is critical to seeing how the evolution of the school counselor can positively impact the world of education.

Research Design

Why is it that I believe qualitative research and an IPA approach would be the right fit to answer these research question? Qualitative research is grounded in the ideals of listening and interacting within a culture. It is my belief that it is through the listening and interacting with school guidance professionals about the concept of the teaching school counselor that I will get the most out of my research. At times, these conversations could potentially go off track, so I am hoping to stay true to my script of interviews questions so that myself and the school counselors will be able to answer collect valuable data.
Research Tradition

It is my goal to approach this research from the tradition of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). As Smith, Larkin and Flowers (2009) describe, “interpretative phenomenological analysis is an approach to qualitative and psychological research which has been informed by concepts and debates from three key areas of the philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography” (p.11) In describing these key elements starting with Phenomenology, authors Smith, Larkin and Flowers (2009) define it as “a philosophical approach to the study of experience” (p.11). The next key element in the formation of IPA is Hermeneutics, which the authors define as “the theory of interpretation” (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009. p 21). Finally, idiography is “an argument for a focus on the particular” (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009 p.29). Each of these elements is unique, but at its main level, “IPA is concerned with the detail examination of human lived experience” (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009 p.32). One human’s perception, interpretation and unique particular experience is crucial to the understanding of one’s lived human experience. Mostly I believe this to be the correct angle because this tradition seeks to have the researcher and his subjects working together to understand their shared experiences and report out on those interactions. Much of this will be “stimulated by the interactive researcher-participant dialogue” (Ponterotto, 2005). My role as the researcher will be to listen and facilitate conversations with this school counseling professionals, but this will be a challenging one since I will need to maintain an objective stance, as I am a school counselor who does operate his own classroom.

School counseling as a profession is evolving and with school counselors working together and discussing the opportunities of school counselors being present in the classroom, I believe that the evolution of their role could become a reality in schools.
Participants

Those who will be participating will be employed school counselors working at Wellesley High School (WHS) in Wellesley, Massachusetts. WHS houses 1520 students in grades 9-12. These counselors are licensed to work in the Massachusetts public schools as school counselors. This means that they hold a Master’s degree or its equivalent and have received a passing score on the certification exams that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MADESE) requires of every educational professional before they begin working in any Massachusetts public school.

Sample Size

My intended sample size was to interview four practicing school counselor. Authors Smith, Larkin and Flowers state “that between three and six participants can be a reasonable sample size for a student using an IPA approach” (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009 p.51). Furthermore the authors state, “this should provide sufficient cases for the development of meaningful points of similarity and difference between participants, but not so many that one is in danger of being overwhelmed by the amount of data generated” (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009 p.51). Given these limitations, at least three, but no more than seven participants are desired. Furthermore, depending on the subjects involved, being able to have in depth conversations with these each of these school counselors is critical and four is an ideal number that to achieve objective results within a qualitative study.

Recruitment and Access

I was hoping to recruit school counselors who are currently working in Wellesley High School. Now it is also true that many of the school counselors whom I hope to recruit for this study are colleagues. This is one reason why my subject’s participation will be strictly voluntary
and the participants will have the ability to withdraw from the study at any time. Furthermore, none of my colleagues are under my charge as their direct supervisor. From my position within at Wellesley High School, I believe that I will be able to discuss the purpose of study informally with members and hope that people will see how objective I am hoping to remain in this study and hearing this will increase their desire to participate. For the counselors who do volunteer to participate, I am unable to offer an incentive to them. A small incentive could be that by participating that they will be helping to push forward both the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) national model of school counseling and the Massachusetts Association of School Counselor Association (MASCA) state model. I will provide each participant a consent form to ensure his or her privacy and confidentiality is ensured.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

In my interviews for this research, I intend to seek an expedited review from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) since I believe that much of my research will involve low risk to both the participants and the interviewee’s school district. The reason for my belief that this is low risk is that I wish to have a conversation with my participants regarding the possible evolution of the role of a school counselor that American School Counselors Association (ASCA) has put forward in its national model for school counseling. This model suggests that school counselors should try to incorporate themselves more into classroom settings more, teaching their own specialty designed curriculum. Essentially, I am following up on a conversation that the national organization for school counseling has already put on the table for discussion. I intend to gain informed consent from each participant and will ensure that subjects will be given a pseudonym and the school district in which they work in will not be identified. I also intend to use a script of guiding questions that I will give to the participants before we meet
in person. Mostly, this script will serve as a guide of what I am hoping to discuss with the interviewee, but mainly the conversation will work to gain insight into my research questions. I will also inform the interviewee that they have the opportunity to discontinue their participation at anytime in the research process.

I do not consider my research to be putting any particular group of school counselors in physical danger or at risk of retribution from administrators by speaking with me about the evolution of the role of the school counselors from a clinical mental-health counselor into a teaching/classroom school counselor. As I stated above, informal conversations have been happening within a national and state level about this evolution so now formal conversations and interactions are where I believe things need to happen at this stage.

**Data Collection**

The primary method that I would use to collect data would be through one-on-one interviews with four practicing school counselors from Wellesley High School. I would interview each school counselor three times. The interviews will happen at Wellesley High School with my self-serving as the interviewer. There will be a script of guiding questions that I will have, but chances for side deviations and informal conversations from this script are possible. The questions are included in Appendix A:

All of the questions listed in Appendix A are purposely broad and leave a lot of room for the research subject to discuss these topics in more depth and substance.

The procedures for data collection would be through audio recordings of the interviews with transcriptions to follow. Interviews will happen in person at the research site. I am hoping that the interview will be no longer than 45 minutes in length. If I was not able to accomplish a
decent interview in those time frames than I would ask the subject for an extension or I ask that we schedule another time to continue our discussion.

**Data Storage**

Each interviewee will be given a pseudonym and their years of service will told in general terms, not at the exact number they have been directly employed. I will keep all of this data under a password protected electronically medium. No one except the primary researcher and the transcriber who I will employee will have access to this recorded data.

**Data Analysis**

Glaser and Strauss (1967) that introduced the concept of grounded theory, which is the analytical process that I will be using when analyzing this data. After significant observation and interviewing of the Wellesley High School counselors and their work within their seminars, I will begin to code this data using the concepts of coding put forward by Glaser and Strauss of “Open, Axial, and Selective coding” (Creswell, 2013). Within this search, I will be looking for categories to emerge and then links to connect those categories with the hopes of the central category emerging that can firmly ground this research and can be further discussed and studied. Creswell also states with grounded theory and open, axial and selective coding is “the point in to gather enough information to fully develop (or saturate) the model” (Creswell, 2013). It will be important with this analytical process that I am able to go back and forth through this research process, where I can collect data and then a few moments later be able to analyze and compare it with previous data. This idea is a key piece to the grounded theory approach.

**Trustworthiness and Verification**

In attempting to maintain trustworthiness and verification of this study, I believe that it will be important that I employee the strategy of “member checking” (Creswell, 2012). “Lincoln
and Guba (1985) describe member checks as “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p.314). I think that with much of the data coming through the interactions and observations of school counselors, that the need to check back in with them once the data has been transcribed and analyzed will be great. Creswell and Miller (2000) talks about this idea when he said:

Alternatively, researchers may have participants view the raw data (e.g., transcriptions or observational field notes) and comment on their accuracy. Throughout this process, the researchers ask participants if the themes or categories make sense, whether they are developed with sufficient evidence, and whether the overall account is realistic and accurate. In turn, researchers incorporate participants’ comments into the final narrative. In this way, the participants add credibility to the qualitative study by having a chance to react to both the data and the final narrative (p 127).

I do not wish for any of the counselors to feel that they been “caught on a bad day” or that their opinions of the teaching school counselor were not listened to in their truest forms. The goal of this study is to attempt to find new and better ways that school counselors can build their relationships with their students, so it will be imperative that the data is accurate and trustworthy.

With regard to the potential threats to internal validity including subject characteristics, attitude of subjects, research bias and my own familiarity with school counseling there is much that threatens this study. However, Creswell and Miller (2000) address this when saying “Another validity procedure is for researchers to stay at the research site for a prolonged period of time. During repeated observation, the researchers build trust with participants, find gatekeepers to allow access to people and sites, establish rapport so that participants are
comfortable disclosing information, and reciprocate by giving back to people being studied. This lens is focused on gaining a credible account by building a tight and holistic case. Being in the field over time solidifies evidence because researchers can check out the data and their hunches and compare interview data with observational data” (p127-128).

I believe that there is a need to conduct this research and gaps in the current profession of school counseling that need to be addressed. This study has much to offer the world of school counselors, but conducting it in a school districts where the threats are minimized are going to be important to insuring its accuracy and verification as competent data.
Chapter IV: Findings

Introduction

The daily life of a school counselor involves multiple forms of communication with many different stakeholders. Historically, these difficult conversations have happened far away from the spotlight of the daily action of a school building. However, a shift is happening within the world of school counseling that is proactive service delivery is considered best practice. This shift has brought with it a real change for school counselors both in the mindset of school counselors and the way they approach their work. The goal of this research was to understand the experiences of the teaching school counselor and how they make sense of the shift to the classroom helps to support the students they serve. This was done by posing the following research questions: 1. What are the experiences of school counselors with the transition from a dyadic counseling relationship to a classroom based, teaching school counselor? 2. How do school counselors make sense of those experiences as it relates to the counselor’s ability to develop an effective counseling relationship with his or her students? 3. What are the major advantages and disadvantages of counselors teaching within their own classrooms?

Participants

The research questions above were informed using interview data from school counselors identified through both convenience and criteria sampling. The names of the participants have been changed to protect their identity. Seven school counselors were interviewed for this study. All of these counselors work within the same guidance and counseling office in a suburban, Massachusetts high school. Although the same school employs all of the counselors, their physical office spaces are entirely separate from each other by floors of the school building.
Alex. Alex is a female in her late 50’s who has worked in the district under study for five years. Prior to that she worked in three other schools. Alex loves working with her students but sometimes has the ability to get lost in wanting to work one-on-one with students as her background comes from that of a clinical psychologist. Alex is also passionate about wanting to see the guidance and counseling department regain its powerful abilities of advocacy and collaboration within the school.

Anthony. Anthony is a male in his early 30’s who has worked in the district under study for three years. Prior to that he worked at three other schools. Anthony has the strongest presence within the classroom since much of his professional background is based in both k-12 classrooms and adult education classrooms. However, with this strong presence he is probably the counselor who spend the least amount of time in a classroom teaching guidance seminars classes.

Gem. Gem is a female in her 30’s who has worked in the district for seven years. Prior to that she worked at one school. Gem is dual certified as a licensed adjustment counselor and early in her life decided to leave a very selective Ph.D. program in clinical Psychology to fulfill a desire to work more closely with adolescents as a school counselor. Other counselors have described Gem as being very direct with students and their families. Gem at one time describes herself to the author as very “type A” person. This has sometime caused tension within the department as other counselors have described Gem as being too overly efficient in her work.

Helen. Helen is a female in her late 50’s who has worked in the district under study for twenty-nine years. She has never worked in any other school. Helen has been described as the “voice of reason” by her departmental colleagues. Helen is very apprehensive about technology and its ability to disconnect students from their counselors. Helen wants the opportunity to work one-on-one with students and feels that her abilities in front of a crowd lack charisma. On the
other hand, Helen commands a great deal of respect with the teaching faculty in her abilities to advocate for her students.

Jennifer. Jennifer is a female in her mid 30’s who has worked in the district under study for twelve years. Prior to that she worked at one other school. Jennifer is considered to be the “mother” of the guidance and counseling department as she loves the opportunity to make all her colleagues feel comfortable and loved. Helen always referred to Jennifer as “Jenniferbelle” when she was being too “lovely-dovey” with students or faculty members. Jennifer dealt with major tragedy early in her career, which made her the center of her colleague’s attention for a few years.

Olive. Olive is a female in her late 30’s who has worked in the district under study for sixteen years. Prior to that she worked at one other school. Olive is the most thorough of the group with her guidance and counseling abilities to the point some colleagues of her have described these traits as “obsessive”. Olive is also a member of the perform arts department at the school, which does make her schedule quite packed when there is an upcoming performance. Olive considers herself a performing arts person first and a school counseling professional second.

Romy. Romy is a female in her late 30’s who has worked in the district under study for five years. Prior to that she worked in two other schools. Romy is considered by the department to be most consistent member of the guidance and counseling staff in her abilities to advocate for her students. Romy came from a school where the school counseling program was very well developed and well managed by a seasoned administrator. Through her time at this high school, Romy has found herself at the center of having to implement several student support programs
that were very well developed in her former school. This has caused Romy to feel a great deal of frustration in this setting.

One very interesting personality trait is that all of the members of the guidance and counseling department who were interviewed shared that they consider themselves to be an extroverts on the Meyer-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which means they are energized by social interactions. This can make for a very loud and distracting time when they all get together in the same room at a department meeting or have to work together to schedule seminars.

**Responsibilities of the School Counselors**

In addition to their responsibilities as school counselors all participants of this study also teach their own developmental comprehensive guidance curriculum. This four-year program is known in the school as the Guidance Seminar program. Seminars topics are meant to address the overall needs of adolescent within the academic, personal/social and vocational realms. All students of this high school receive this program through their own individualized assigned school counselor during their Freshman, Sophomore, Junior and Senior year. The seminar runs for one semester with Freshman and Senior Seminars being taught in the Fall, while Sophomore and Junior Seminars are taught in the Spring. The Guidance Seminar courses are taught in a classroom setting with each class running for an hour in length. The classes tend to be capped at 15 students each, but in recent years, seminar sizes have been growing due to scheduling constraints with students and counselors.

**Experiences of School Counselors with the Transition to Classroom Based Teaching**

The move of school counselors into the classroom was a change for school counselors both in the mindset of school counselors and the way they approach their work. The move of
school counselors into the classroom was intentional with the goal of getting counselors in front of their students vs. having students always having to come to them.

*The guidance seminar program was created to help get school counselors in front of their students.* The classroom-based seminar model was adopted in the early 1980’s when two school counselors decided to change their approach to how they interacted with students. These two counselors wanted more opportunities to interact with their own students and they felt that moving into a teaching classroom seminar model would better serve their students than the multiple individual meetings they were having with students. The counselors would still maintain individual appointments with students if it was necessary, but the majority of there information dissemination would go out through the classroom guidance lessons/seminars. However, a major shift came about in 2008 when the members of the guidance and counseling department were moved into a brand new, state of the art school building. This move was met with a great deal of excitement by the school counselors; however, with this move came a major change for the department as they concurrently moved from a model of having every single member of their department, including their two administrative assistants who were responsible for the mailing of over 3,000 + transcripts in the college admissions process, along with their guidance director being housed within one administrative suite directly across the hall from the main office where the assistant principals and principal was housed. Through informal conversation with my own past WHS teachers and counselors, WHS came to adopt the guidance seminar program in the 1970’s as a new and better way to further develop the school counselors relationships with their own students.

The former building’s guidance and counseling suite prior to 2008 allowed for a significant amount of collaboration between the counselors, administrative assistants, the
guidance director and most importantly, the building administrators. Another benefit to this location was that counselors were easily accessible to the entire teaching faculty and to the parents of students as the location was close to the main entrance of the school. Importantly, this move allowed students to go to one specific location to access their individual counselor or a person who knew how to answer their question correctly or gain support if they were in crisis. With the new move, the counselors were then split into three individual “pods” or as they later became to be known as, “houses” with each house being overseen by a “housemaster”. The title “housemaster” was later changed back to “assistant principals” due to the concern of faculty members that the administrator’s title sounded too “discipline” orientated. Currently, the administrative suites are on floors two, three and four of the school with their precise location being stacked on top of each other. The joke among the school counselors is that they would love to have a firefighter’s pole installed between the floors so that they could slide up and down into each other’s offices. Each administrative suite has either two or three school counselor’s offices on each floor. By having at least two offices or more on each floor, the counselors are able to collaborate with another professional if the need arise from either a challenging crisis situation or more simply how to present a particular lesson plan effectively. Also, the assistant principal has easy direct access to the counselor so that if a situation were to come across the desk of the assistant principal and required consultation from the counselor, the assistant principal could simply walk next door and they would be able to engage with the counselor about how to properly handle the situation.

Three major criticisms emerged from counselors in response to these new physical spaces. The first was that students have to walk directly by the assistant principal’s office in order to access their counselor’s offices, which are tucked into a back corner hallway. The
second was that the school counselors are entirely separated from their guidance director and two administrative assistants. These roles are housed within the main office, which is located one floor and an entire cafeteria space separated from the nearest school counselor’s office. Lastly, is that the separation negatively impacted the ability of counselors to collaborate.

*Getting in the classroom was a new experience for many of the counselors.* For many of the school counselors the move into the classroom was a new experience. Romy shared:

I've never been in a program like this where we see our students regularly”. Gem described the following…“I loved it, and it was easy for me because another part of my job in my former school was to teach a career unit once a cycle in both biotechnology classes that they had. I would have a class of like 25 that I was teaching this to. When I came here, it was smaller and I knew the students. It was easy for me because I think I have a natural inclination towards classroom management. That's not a difficult piece of it for me where I think for some people that might be. It was a smaller room and it was kids I knew. It was, frankly, overall better behaved students. I liked that they were receptive.

Alex shared:

I loved it. Not all the other schools that I've been in had the seminar model, so I had to be more creative about how I would get to know my students, which would sometimes include ... I'd build relationships with the teachers, so it would be like, "Can I take half of like 1 grade?" Because it was a small school, and like talk with all the kids in the auditorium. I was sort of always hunting and pecking for that to disseminate information. I felt like this gave me that opportunity.

Romy contributed:
Neither of the previous schools had a guidance seminar program person, but a previous High School we did have monthly group meetings with your say, junior case load to do college planning. Senior case load to do actual college work. I did find that effective, but they were kind of one shot deals because you would get them for, like I said, sixteen minutes once a month and the rest was done individually.

**Flexibility with the design and implementation of the guidance seminar.**

The counselors shared that they had autonomy with respect to the design and implementation of the guidance seminar and each person taught this class in unique ways. Some examples of different seminar activities are described below.

Anthony, in his limited capacity within the seminar program was only able to describe a few experiences but one he used his fuller classroom experience at another school system that employed a seminar model saying “I'll speak because of my limited experience with the seminar program here, seminar programs, one that I found to be tremendously impactful and I still use some of the understanding that I gained that day was when I was working in a seminar program when we brought seniors into the junior classes and they talked to the, it was called Senior Speak. The seniors would talk to the juniors about had they known at this point in their senior what they know now, they would've done things different as juniors, I'm sorry in their junior year. Hindsight's 20/20, as a junior maybe I would've done this differently, live and learn. This one student talked about the college essay and made this tremendous comment to the students that, it's always kind of stuck with me and said that's a great point. When you ask people to provide feedback on your essay, ask them to just give you feedback on the message. Ask them to give you feedback on the general, is it clear, is understandable. Don't ask them to cross off and
change and put in their own words and edit so that it's not longer yours because then you lose your voice and you're actually supposed to be your voice.”

Gem does a great job in the following story of showing how the counselor can be creative in their delivery of the lesson described below, but truly it shows how the students appreciate the creativity of the counselor in the delivery of their message. “I really love seminars where we can split the time, where we have something multimedia. An example is I love doing the grit lesson where they watch the TED talk about it and then I show them Will Smith talking about hard work. Then we have some general discussion questions, and I love it when they start talking amongst themselves and debating each other about an issue. I see this also when I do the transcript GPA lesson. I always try to end it with a discussion about weighted versus un-weighted GPA and what they see as the pros and cons. When they get into it and they're arguing their points, and I can see them starting to open up to other people's perspective, or just become more open in general when they listen to each other about some of the issues that we face as a school but it's important for them to talk about. I think that that's the best seminar environment.”

The final story comes from Romy and believe it is one of simplicity, which counselors are looking for when deciding they are wanting to take their abilities into the classroom. “Amazing would be, I had, I guess this was last year, so a current sophomore group, they were freshman. I had a freshman seminar the day before Thanksgiving break. We had talked about, in the group, oh it's the day before Thanksgiving. We have seminar. We really want to do something fun. Can we do this? You know, they all were brainstorming ideas. It seemed like a lot of talk at first. Amongst the group, really without me, they organized. They brought in a movie, a DVD movie. Someone baked cookies. Someone brought in a box of juice boxes, and we watched a movie, eating and drinking together. The kids thoroughly enjoyed it. I just sat back
and it was definitely a magical moment. I know it seems silly. It's just a movie, but it was the way they came together as a group.”

**Classroom Based School Counselors Develop Effective Relationships with Students**

The transition of school counselors to the classroom helps to contribute to the development of effective relationships with students in multiple ways.

**Students know their counselors on a more personal level.** Participants shared that being in the classroom helped the counselors to form more personal relationship with students. These more personal relationships contributed both a more accurate understanding of students about the role of the school counselor and contributed to the development of trust between the counselor and student. Anthony shared: “I love that counselors are with their students and spending time getting to know them. I think that that's the critical piece in the relationship that there's no right way, there's no manual on how to get to know your kids as a counselor. You have to meet each kid individually. You have to figure out who the personality of that unique learner is and how to work with them and how to get to know them.”

**Creating a more accurate understanding of students about the role of the school counselor.** The word “counselor” in some references can imply “therapy” or emotional health distress just by saying that a person is seeing a counselor. This is why the students being clear on what role the school counselor is charged with is so important in the being able to help support the student. Anthony shared that being in the classroom helps to promote “the true understanding of who the counselor and what their role is”.

**Contributing to the development of trust between the counselor and student.** The counselors shared that there needs to be trust and comfort between the student and the counselor or the student won’t access the counselor. They shared that an effective counseling relationship
was one built on mutual respect for each other, and was one that was non-judgmental and where
there is opportunity for self-direction and self-growth is the goal for the student with facilitation
by the counselor.

Anthony shared that by being in the classroom counselors:

…..[you] really empower kids to use the resource of the counselor by building that
relationship as part of the process so they're not, it's not always on the kid to say you have
to find your own counselor, you have to be a self advocate, you have to seek out the
support you need. We're bringing it to them and we're modeling delivery of service in a
way that I think for kids is developmentally appropriate. For me that's one of the biggest
takeaways.

Romy shared:

I absolutely think our program supports the relationship with students, especially
developing that relationship as during freshman year, and how critical it is to get to know
your students right as they come into high school. In other schools that I worked in the
relationship building was more dependent on making those individual appointments.
Calling them in, and getting to know them. Whereas, we've got this built in system now.

Jennifer also comments about this built in system when saying:

I think it's great. Even before I came to the high school, I knew about it. I researched it a
lot and I spoke with a lot of people about it who are familiar with it. I think it's great
because you get to know so many of your students so well. I think that the students feel
comfortable because they know you, to seek you out individually.

Gem also shared:
I think the major advantage is getting to know the kids and the kids' comfort level with us. Specifically, that's freshman and sophomore year. I honestly don't care if they don't learn anything in my seminar except who I am and where they can find me, and why they should come find me, and then they do that in the future. I think that's how I view the first half. If they learn something about career and they learn something about depression, and they learn something about advocating for themselves in the school, that's all secondary to me. It is important, but if they don't have that first piece, I don't think the second piece is worth it.

Lastly, Anthony shared:

I though that it was the ideal of a situation. Counselors are seeing their kids very regularly. By the time the student graduates high school they're taking four semester worth of a once per cycle seminar with their counselors, meaning that aside from individual appointments, in the group setting they're seeing their counselor 80 times more or less. That number can vary based on the cycle calendar.

Helen shared a story of a particularly memorable seminar class where she observed first hand the trust and safety that was established for students through the seminar program.

The most amazing seminar that I ever had was two or three years ago, was with seniors. The group came in the classroom and we just happened to be sitting in a circle because that's the way that the tables were set up. One of the students had a guitar with him. I said, "Oh, why do you have your guitar today?" He said, "I'm practicing for my audition at Berklee. Do you want to hear it?" He pulled out his guitar and he sang for the class. It was amazing, and the kids were so in awe of him. They never knew how talented he was. There was just silence as they listened to him. Then so much support for him when he
finished. It was the best seminar I ever had. It was so cool. Wow, that's incredible. What about it contributed to it just being amazing? The fact that we all knew each other and that we'd been together ... They'd been together in classes, but in seminar for the whole semester; that he was comfortable enough with us and we were open and ready to listen. We were able to take what we were supposed to be doing that day and put it aside so that we could listen to him perform.

**Celebrating student success.** Alex described a moment that many teachers at one point in their careers have had the wonderful experience of that ah-ha moment.

I would say amazing seminars are when the kids, like those eureka moments where they're sort of like ... When the kids will say, "I'm spending this much time, I'm doing this, you're right. I can't be expected to do that," when they feel really empowered that way. There was a great opportunity, this was amazing to me, and it wasn't so much the content either, but one of my students who's actually homeless, we've been working really closely, and he was taking some classes at the museum of fine arts. There was this position where to be on the teen arts council. I was like, ‘You should do this. You should do this.’ He finally applied. He had told me that he got accepted for the position right before seminar. He came in. I was like, ‘Do you mind if I announce it to the class?’ He's like, ‘Okay.’ This is a kid who academically doesn't do well, a student of color. His family is amazing, but they've had so many challenges. I was like, ‘You guys, I just want to ... ‘ And our seminars are, as you know, heterogeneous in every aspect. I have kids who are heading off to ivy leagues I know next year. I was like, ‘You guys, I just want to tell you this.’ I told them the good news and they were like, ‘What?? It's amazing.’ Everyone was cheering. I felt like team-building day there. That was one of the
amazing!” This experience of celebrating successes with one seminar shows the comradery that can be developed seminar.

**Advantages of Classroom Based School Counseling**

In addition to the above mentioned advantages of the classroom based counseling modeling two other themes emerged with respect to time and reflection.

*Classroom counselors have more flexibility with time.* Although many of the counselor believe that there is never enough time to satisfy the conditions of the job, having counselors in the classroom provided the counselors with more flexibility. Helen gives voices to this when saying “I think that the time factor is always a big piece. That if we had all the time in the world, we could get everything done.”

*Creating a ‘pause’ moment for reflection.* Olive shared that one advantage of seeing students in a classroom setting is that it creates an opportunity for reflection, which can help inform the best next steps for students. She shared that by engaging with this other type of pro-active service, that students may have to wait for help and support to be given, which is in some cases not entirely the worst of situation because of how it may cause the student to have to reflect of the situation themselves and come to a resolution on their own.

Yeah, does stuff come up when I'm in the classroom and they just have to wait?

Absolutely. Obviously if it's a true emergency, I have been pulled out of class before. Rare but I have been pulled out of class before. Then the reality is, sometimes, in a way, it creates almost like a buffer because sometimes things aren't really a crisis. In the moment they're very real and they're right there but you take 24 hours to percolate and take a deep breath, it might still be a problem but it's not an immediate. I feel like in that sense it's actually allows me to manage a little bit more or triage a little bit more about
what's actually like, "Oh my gosh, this child is completely in need," versus, maybe they didn't do so well on a test and they're upset, we'll talk about it tomorrow. You know what I mean?

Disadvantages of Classroom Based School Counseling

Although most counselors shared that students in their seminar courses were engaged, others expressed concern about classroom management and how seriously students take the class.

Not all students take the counselor classroom time seriously. This may be due in part to the fact that the although the seminar does appear on the student’s transcript the student receives either a “P” or “F” grade for the course, rather than the grade being factored into a student’s overall GPA. It has been joked by the students that one has to try “very” hard to earn a “F” in Guidance Seminar.

Not enough time. Alex shared:

What I don't like is that, I'll be honest, I don't think that the school as a whole is appreciative of the time that it takes to both prepare for the classes, deliver the classes, and then have follow-up. I also feel like the classes, having the kids in the seminars provides, it makes for a very authentic and genuine relationship. It's not surprising to see that our books are full. I feel like it's great to see the kids in this atmosphere, because it's going to be times when they need us when it's not structured and when there's a lot of pressure or a crisis, and the fact that they already know me, I know them, I know a lot about them, is really helpful. I think that that's the beauty of it. I think what's the challenge of it means that we really ... We are so much not just classroom counselors,
because what happens is, it's that facility of the classroom guidance that also makes our other job I think so effective.

Scheduling of the seminar courses are done by the counselors themselves which presents another challenge as it means that they have to go through each of their student’s schedule and search for open blocks or directed researches in which to find times where enough students are free in order to hold a class. One of the counselor designed a theoretical formula through an excel document in order to make this process slightly easier for the counselors since before the excel document, counselors had to go through student’s schedule one-by-one.

Not first thing in the morning. Helen shared that the timing of the seminar course during the day can impact the overall experience. She said: “I also have difficulty with the fact that oftentimes our classes are at 7:30 in the morning. The kids don't like it. They're not awake. You get a whole different response in a classroom at 7:30 than you do at 9:30. I think that's difficult.” It is a major hope that a school counselor’s use of time could be improved by having their ability to disseminate information in a classroom setting be always productive, but even in the most perfect of circumstances, this is just not the case.

No disadvantages. Gem and Jennifer take the time to discuss how they truly believe that there is no disadvantages to the counselors being in the classroom when they say. Gem shared:

I don't think there's any disadvantage in the sense that, "Oh, it would be better if we didn't run this because x, y, or z." I think it's good that we do run it. Other than what I mentioned where sometimes kids don't feel like it's a real class and they don't show up, but that's not a disadvantage of the system. I think that we probably have the best one anywhere I've ever seen in terms of delivering information to students and meeting them at the appropriate times.
Jennifer concurred when she says, “I don't think there really are any. Like I said it takes time but if we were to give all the information to students individually, it'd take a lot more. Sure. I think it’s important to always update the curriculum which can be a challenge because we have to have the time for that. As far as disadvantages, I can’t think of any.”

Conclusion

These above findings do paint a picture how much the counselors feel the guidance seminar program is what is best for kids at their high school. The school counselors are able to get to know at both an academic and personal level with their students through their consistent interactions and furthermore are able to show to them that the counselors are consistent presence within that student’s daily life in school.
Chapter V: Discussion of Findings

Introduction

The goal of this research was to understand the experiences of the teaching school counselor and how they make sense of the shift to the classroom helps to support the students they serve. Several number of super-ordinate themes emerged from this study including the one over-arching theme where the counselors feel strongly that the guidance seminar program is a vital piece of their daily work with students. Without this ability to interact with their students in this direct manner, the counselors would not be able to be as successful as they are in counseling their students towards obtaining their academic, personal/social and vocational goals.

Discussion of Findings in Relationship to the Literature

The interviewed school counselors show that they are working hard to change the perceived role of the school counselor to a more well respected educational perspective. Gybers who is the father of the comprehensive developmental guidance (CDG) model wanted this be to be the major reason for what the school counselors are known for. In addition to their responsibilities as school counselors all participants of this study also teach their own developmental comprehensive guidance curriculum. This four -year program is known in the school as the Guidance Seminar program. Seminars topics are meant to address the overall needs of adolescent within the academic, personal/social and vocational realms. All students of this high school receive this program through their own individualized assigned school counselor during their Freshman, Sophomore, Junior and Senior year. “Comprehensive programs guarantee that all students have access to school counselors and school counselors have access to all students” (Gysbers and Henderson, 2001) At Wellesley High School, all students have access to
school counseling services and access to a licensed school counselor. Furthermore, due to the alphabet split of counselors into their caseload, multiple member of the same family could have the same school counselor which allows the relationship of the counselor to grow larger with the family as a whole unit. This can be incredibly helpful to the counselor as they navigate a difficult family system unit because of the already established relationship that has been built upon the counselor’s previous relationship with another sibling or parent.

The guidance seminar program at Wellesley high School is a pro-active and preventative comprehensive developmental guidance program in nature is what the school counseling program should be. This is exactly in line with the American School Counselors Association outlines in its National Model for School Counseling programs. “School counselors design and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs that promote student achievement. These programs are comprehensive in scope, preventive in design and developmental in nature” (ASCA National Model, Executive Summary, 2006).

Counselors’ engrained personality traits does not usually give them a vehicle to show case their talents and abilities in the work they do. The school counselors at Wellesley High School are extremely powerful in their school community when they have the freedom to do what they were essential trained to do. In the literature on school counseling, school counselors have the ability to do all of this, but if they are further put into a position where they can interact with their students in the classroom setting then they are being even more pro-active with their interventions to student's academic, personal/social and vocational issues. Pioneers in the field of school counseling research, Lapan and Gysbers start this topic off simply, which has driven much of the research on the full implementation and development of the school counseling programs which include a teaching school counselor saying, “students who attended schools with
more fully implemented guidance programs rated the climate in their school as being more positive. They reported greater feelings of belonging and safety in their school. They indicated that their classes were less likely to be interrupted by other students and that their peers behaved better in school” (Lapan and Gysbers, 1997).

The counselors at Wellesley High School are visible leaders within the school. They are doing this more thoroughly every day with their guidance seminar model and with their participation in school wide ventures in technology, scheduling and the college admissions process. This is also summarized in the school counseling research is saying that “In the majority of the schools, we saw evidence that school counselors were powerful members of the school community and participated in the leadership of the school. School counselors were frequently appointed members of the principal’s school leadership team and/or elected members of school governance bodies” (Militello, Carey, Dimmitt, Lee and Schweid, 2009).

If counselors are able to continue being seen as leaders, students wouldn’t feel ashamed to see their counselors.

Wellesley High School Counselors are in the classroom with their ninth grade students from the first days of their time through the doors of Wellesley High School. Author Colvin spends a great deal of time discussing how a classroom guidance component can impact the entire school as a whole when he states, “classroom guidance can foster a sense of belonging in the classroom, and if widely done may modify the climate of the whole school” (Colvin, 2004). This shows that the Wellesley counselors are already directly impacting their students in a positive way by seeing their students within the first few days of their high school journey and essentially solidifying what Colvin is saying that the school counselors of Wellesley truly care about their students.
Discussion of Findings in Relationship to the Theoretical Framework

The primary framework that was used is Bandura’s Social Learning theory. Albert Bandura by trade is a social cognitive psychologist conducting his research at Stanford University. He is most widely known for his construction of the Social Learning theory (1976). In layman’s terms, social learning theory says that students learn best through appropriate modeling, observation and direct instruction. In the findings from this research study, the counselors did discuss how the guidance seminar model does provide this for this as counselors can design their lessons with the goal of having students learn appropriate strategies for navigating the complex waters of their educational experiences and emotional feelings. Furthermore, within Bandura theory, the building of the relationship with the one who is doing the learning is key. For example, if the school counselor has done their job correctly in developing a relationship with the child beforehand, then the student will be better able to trust their counselor in a way that opens their mind up to be able to hear and analyze the lessons being presented and furthermore, take away what they feel are the best and most important lessons. More importantly, the student will buy into modeling appropriate behavior that the counselor is presenting.

Counselors can show students appropriate behaviors for handling their complex and ever changing feelings and emotions through appropriate coping strategies. School counselors are in the unique position to have their lessons retained by their students through the processes that Bandura has described. Why it is unique for a school counselor is that the counselor can model the appropriate behavior that they are wanting the students to learning, but also they are
appropriately trained to navigate the ever complex and wide range of emotions that accompany that particular student into their classroom. Furthermore, if the counselor is aware that the student is dealing with some circumstance that is causing them particular amounts of stress than the counselor would be able to proactively attend to the student before the lesson is delivered and the situation is circumvented.

Bandura theoretical framework of Social Learning theory has much to offer within the world of school counseling and how its impact can greatly enhance the abilities of the school counselors to reach all of their students in influencing them towards positive and productive citizenship.

**Implications**

*School Counselors-*

There are several implications for the school counselors that can be drawn from this study. First, the counselors believe that the guidance seminar program at WHS is indeed a good program with many good intangible lessons that students can take away from it. Second, the school counselors being up in front of their own students is a good way that pupils can get to understand the role that their school counselor plays for them in their educational journey. Third, the counselors need to be given time and training to able to develop their teaching skills and their classroom management skills. Good teaching practice is a skill that is learned over time and the only way to get better at it is too practice one’s craft. Fourth, how the counselor chooses to prepare, deliver and evaluate their lessons are some of the most important that a school counselor can do in determining their effectiveness and furthermore developing their relationships with students. The counselor needs to be prepared to teach effectively every seminar or the program
will not flourish Finally, the counselors need to work with their building administrators to determine how they can let go of some other administrative aspects of the job in order to free up time for them to adequately prepare for their seminars. According to the ASCA national model (2012) “administrators are encouraged to eliminate or reassign inappropriate tasks, allowing school counselors to focus on the prevention and intervention needs of their program.” (ASCA National Model for School Counseling, p. 45) This is by no means an easy task as the counselors and the administrators need to have solid and complementary working relationship, where each has complete trust in the other when determining what parts of the job need to be done and what can be let go of.

Myself

There are several implications for this study moving forward for myself. First, is that I know that the role of the “teaching school counselor” can be a quality part of the fabric of a school system. How exactly it is put into place is up to the school counselors and the administrators to work out, so that it fits perfectly into the school and allowed to grow effectively. This little situation has the potential to cause a great deal of tension between the school counselors and the administrators. Data sources that are credible and relevant and can show how this practice was put into place at other schools have the potential to relieve this tension and show the way forward with the teaching school counselor role. Second, is that I as a teaching school counselor need to continue to grow my abilities within a classroom setting. This means that I need to continue to improve my classroom management skills, as well as my abilities to deliver relevant and practical lessons that students can apply to make their academic, personal/social and vocational arenas of school a little bit easier. Furthermore, the planning, organization and execution of my lessons needs to be at the highest level of quality. My reasons
for this is due to the fact that there is no external reward (good grades) for the students to participate in my seminar. The reward is purely that the information I will provide will directly impact the student’s life hopefully in a positive manner. Lastly, is that I need to continue to push forward the concept of the teaching school counselor with whatever role I work in within a school setting. Whether that is as a central office administrator or building administrator, it will be from a position of leadership that I would continue to push this idea forward. This will not be easy depending on the school system, but I need to continue to believe in it effectiveness.

*Positionality Revisited*

After having completed this experience, I have concluded the following things about myself as a scholar practitioner. First, it can be said that the experience of writing this dissertation has been not an easy one and that my struggles with academic writing will continue for many years to come. Knowing this, I need to involve myself in many situations where I have the chance to practice and hone my skills with academic writing. Writing and speaking are for me my positive/negative, my ying/yang and my daytime/nighttime. Speaking is my strength while writing is my weakness. Knowing this fact of my personality through the lens of being a scholar practitioner will only make me more complete as a human being. Second, I need to continue to develop my abilities and a school counselor and as a teacher. I am by no means the best teacher, nor am I the best counselor. I need to continue to have opportunities to practice and refine my abilities as a classroom teacher and as a one-on-one counselor. This means that I need to continue to work in educational settings where I can have experiences that allow me to try new things within these arenas. Third, I have found that in order to be successful with any kind of scholar practitioner endeavor like this one that you need to have people surrounding you who
truly care about your overall well-being and self. Basically, you need to have people who believe
in what you are researching and truly want for you to be successful. The role of the school
counselor is based in the idea of being an advocate for a child. It is no different within the role as
a scholar practitioner. Advocates for your research and endeavor are needed at every level and
mainly they are needed in your every day life.

**Areas for Future Research**

In thinking of future research, several areas are needing to be considered, starting with
the idea that not all schools utilize a guidance seminar model for their school counselors.
Furthermore, some schools are not even adequately staffed with school counselors to even put
forward the notion of their counselors being within the classroom. Why is that? Why are school systems not giving these educational professionals a chance to be involved? Schools as a whole are needing the recognize that emotional safety and security are key ingredients to students being able to achieve their best academically. When central office and building administrators see that these educational professional can be used effectively in their school in curtailing many of the negative aspects of a student’s educational experience then many schools will have school counselors as part of their staffs.

Another idea for further research would be to conduct a longitudinal cohort study involving school counselors working at multiple schools districts that employees a guidance seminar model fully and completely and see how it impacts their students in either a positive or negative way. The ideal situation would be to have multiple years of qualitative interviews with several of the same school counselors and ask them to describe their work with students fully. For example, if one researcher would start with the same five to seven counselors and follow them through the entirety of their school careers with the main research question asking them to
describe the work they do using a guidance seminar model, many in the public would see that school counselors are doing incredible and fantastic work.

Another area where school counselor research is needed is in the area of being able to convince district and building administrators that school counselors need to be in their own classrooms as much as possible. This can be quite a challenge because in theory this sounds like a wonderful idea, however in practice this may be extremely difficult as some district and building administrators are in no place to take their counselors away from their individual counseling duties, let alone their administrative tasks in order to place school counselors in their own classrooms. There needs to be research done that shows how effective school counselors can be in changing school climates and addressing emotional health needs by having their outreach work being in a classroom setting. Furthermore, if this research were to address the notion that by having counselors teaching within their own classrooms, that the counselor’s time would be given greater freedom to serve the rest of the student populations overall emotional needs, then more school and district administrators would be interested in seeing and interacting with this type of research.

The final piece of research that needs to be done would being on the implications and barriers of having school counselors in leadership position. There is a noticeable absence of strong research that shows that when school counselors are placed within positions of leadership where they can be able to excel in influencing school climate and culture for the positive. There are many stories of school administrators turning around a failing school, but are there any stories of school counselors whose positions were prominent in that failing school being turned around? If there are… These are the types of stories that are needed to show the great work that school counselors are doing every day in their school buildings. More often, school counselors
have been portrayed as not doing enough for their students, but if more research were to show exactly school counselors were doing in prominent leadership positions within a school building, then school counseling as a service would be available to all students in every school whenever school is in session.

**Limitations**

There are limitations to this study in that the research was conducted at only one school in one state with a relatively small sample size. Furthermore, the data was collected by a person who is working alongside the interviewed counselors on a day to day basis. These factors alone have the potential to impact validity and trustworthiness. However, this data is only intended to be a pin prick in getting outside school personal to see how effective school counselors can be when given the right conditions to work in. School counselors have been in the background for too long and having them take their work to a more prominent and strong level is the major intention of this research. This is the hope of the major longitudinal study is being able to show over many years how effective school counselors can be with their students, however there are limitations on this particular study as it would take a very driven and determined researcher to pursue this study to its finish.

**Conclusion**

School counselors have long been in the background of education where people have struggled to know exactly what do they do on a day to day basis? Their role has been discussed and debated as to what is the best purpose for them for them to serve in education. Nowadays, the defined role is different by every school, but mostly it is one of a “catch all” professional who is able to serve in a variety different counseling and administrative role, but more specifically one that school counselors have not been trained to do. This research of asking
seven practicing school counselors to make sense of their experience of the evolution of their role into more of a classroom teaching school counselor is an attempt to show how the role of the school counselor is becoming more and more defined into what is believed to be the correct purpose school counselors are needing to serve. It is the hope of the researcher that people will read this data and take it back to their own school districts and ask questions about the services that their school counseling office is offering and see if they are using the guidance seminar/classroom model. If they are, then that is great, but if they are not, then this document will serve a blue print for getting school counselors into the classroom directly serving students for 21st century learning.
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Appendix A

**Introductory Questions**

1) Where was your career and education before you started working at Wellesley High School (WHS)?

**Previous counseling experience(s) and how it worked (or didn’t) as perceived by the interviewee**

2) What was the guidance program like this institution? How effective do you think it was? How do you see it as supporting your relationship with students and your efforts with them? Could you please provide specific examples about your effectiveness in providing guidance services and if you were felt you were effective in developing a counseling relationship with your students?

**WHS counseling experience**

3) WHS has a specific counseling model. When you first came to WHS, what did you think about it? And how did you feel about this model?
4) So…Now I am going to focus specifically on what it was like for you early on when you began counseling in this new model at WHS? What was that experience like for you…transitioning from counseling in the previous model (and or as you perceived guidance should look like) to the WHS model? Was it hard? Easy? How so? Could you please cite examples? Do you like it? Not like it? Parts of it? Which parts? Why? Could you please cite some more examples?
5) So now that you have been counseling in the WHS model for some time, what is your experience of it? What you like, not like? Why?
6) What are the major advantages you find by teaching your own Guidance model and seminar at WHS, as you see it, in general and then specifically for you? Could you please give some examples?
7) What are the major disadvantages you find by teaching your own Guidance model and seminar at WHS, as you see it, in general and then specifically for you? Could you please give some examples?

**Personal Perspectives**

8) How would you define an “effective counseling relationship” between a student and their school counselor? Can you give me some specific examples of that from your past experience?
9) Please tell one story or two stories from your guidance seminar program that stick out in your mind as amazing? One or two that was awful?! How did the WHS model/seminar facilitate/contribute to the amazing? And how did the WHS model/seminar facilitate to those occasions that it was not?
10) If you were going to recommend changes to the program, what would they be and why do you recommend those? What would/could be the results of those?