School Counselors’ Perceptions of Developmental Guidance: A Qualitative Study

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SCHOOL COUNSELORS' PERCEPTIONS OF DEVELOPMENTAL GUIDANCE:  
A QUALITATIVE STUDY  

by  
Lori A. Pashnik  

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Submitted to the  
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A developmental emphasis is the fundamental core of the school counseling profession. However, Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Programs (CG&CPs) that have been identified as developmental have been shown to have significant gaps with regard to developmental theoretical concepts. In addition, counselors who are implementing CG&CPs are unsure of how to put developmental principles into practice. This study explored how elementary and middle school counselors who currently implement CG&CPs perceive the developmental philosophical foundation of the program.

A focus group methodology was used for this study to gain an in-depth understanding of elementary and middle school counselors’ perceptions of developmental guidance. A total of nine credentialed school counselors were chosen to participate and placed into one of two groups. The length of the focus group interviews were 90 minutes. The interviews were unstructured and a constructivist grounded theory approach was used to analyze and interpret the data. Follow-up interviews were also conducted to clarify vague or elusive data or to refine salient data.
Four major themes were identified: (1) The demand to Justify CG&CPs, (2) CG&CPs as Related to Developmental Guidance and Relationships, (3) Managing Resistance, and (4) The Press of the School Environment. Respondents viewed CG&CPs and their developmental foundation as the “ultimate,” yet at the same time they perceived the developmental approach to guidance as impractical and in conflict with the reality of the school environment. In summary, this study illustrated counselors’ misconceptions of developmental guidance and emphasized a lack of understanding into theoretical developmental concepts. It underscored the need to enhance school counselors’ training to include a knowledge base that expounds upon developmental theory.
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Lori A. Pashnik
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Historical Background of the Problem

The philosophy and practice of elementary and middle school guidance programs have been redefined over the years. The mental health movement during the 1920s was instrumental in shaping the role of elementary and middle school counselors (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). Because of its treatment-oriented approach, the mental health movement offered a narrow version of the broader services that are now being offered to elementary and middle school children. In addition, societal events also had a tremendous impact on the scope and focus of school counseling. America's response to Sputnik in 1957 was one such event that altered the movement toward a comprehensive guidance focus. As the United States competed with Russia's space program, secondary counselors, already few in number, were commissioned to focus on the technological and scientific needs of the time. It wasn't until the influence of congressional legislation in the 1960s, through the National Defense Education Act, that the scope and focus of elementary and middle school counseling services began to broaden. In the 1960s funds were provided to include guidance programs, testing, and training at the elementary and middle school levels.
Past influences such as these have spanned a period of 50 years affecting the growth and course of elementary and middle school guidance. Once a shadow of secondary guidance, elementary and middle school guidance distinguished itself from the crisis-oriented methods of the past. The result of this growth has emerged into the current approach to guidance and counseling and is a culmination of three individual approaches: remedial, preventive, and developmental (Myrick, 1968).

Each approach carries with it its own fundamental principles. Today, the approaches are used simultaneously and provide the scope and focus of a Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program (CG&CP). Each of the three approaches will be described below.

Utilizing a remedial approach to school counseling means that the emphasis of the guidance program is placed on the resolution of problems. Problems may be the result of crises in students’ lives such as suicide, death of a family member, house fires, or conflicts with peers. Stresses in students’ lives may also be considered problems. Students may experience stress due to the separation and divorce of their parents; integration into stepfamilies; physical, sexual, or emotional abuse; academic failure; or a disability. An overwhelming number of stressors invariably affect coping skills. In order to deal with the stress in their lives, students may adopt maladaptive behaviors (discipline problems, substance abuse, eating disorders, etc.) that require remedial interventions. When the remedial approach to school counseling is used exclusively, it promotes a “fix and repair” condition, one which impels school counselors to limit their services to a select few. Such interventions
often result in temporary gains for a few while the majority of the student body receives fewer services.

A second approach, influenced by the mental health movement, emphasizes prevention as a means of assisting students. Preventive activities require that guidance programs anticipate potential problems with which students may be confronted. School counselors inform students about these potential problems and discuss ways in which they can avoid negative consequences that can arise if such problems are not resolved. School counselors who deliver guidance services via the preventive approach assume a directive position. They instruct students with pertinent information regarding problems to be avoided and also supply students with appropriate solutions to problems.

The third guidance and counseling approach is developmental. The developmental approach stresses the impact of biological and environmental forces upon the growth of children and adolescents. Perhaps due to the scope and breadth of human development, it is challenging to find resources that exclusively and explicitly illustrate how developmental principles provide the framework of a comprehensive school guidance program. For example, in 1968, Myrick defined a developmental approach as

more than a study of child growth and development . . . more than student appraisal . . . more than a recognition of developmental stages and tasks. Developmental guidance and counseling stresses the optimum development of man’s potential. (p. 5)

A definition of such magnitude is difficult to comprehend. Because of the immensity of human development, the pragmatic aspects of developmental guidance
can easily be misunderstood and, therefore, difficult to apply. Dewey (cited in Erickson & Whiteley, 1980) illustrates this point: the very nature of human development presents itself as an ongoing process with unending starts and restarts that are unique to every individual. Development assumes constant movement in a given direction in that individuals progress through an invariant sequence of stages. The healthy advancement of children’s development requires interactions with others or with their environments that bring about movement in the desired direction.

Counselors who employ a developmental approach believe that all people possess the ability within themselves for self-directed, constructive change (Rogers, 1951). Counselors must possess the intellectual and emotional insight to see the potential and possibilities deeply seated within each child. Within a developmental approach, the major focus of school counselors is to provide all students with experiences to help them grow and develop (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). Although early models of comprehensive guidance emphasized the importance of establishing these programs on developmental theory and practice, a specific developmental framework, one that reflects developmental constructs and principles, appears not to be present in current school guidance models (MacDonald & Sink, 1999).

Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program Model

Since 1984, the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) has endorsed the philosophy and implementation of CG&CPs. CG&CPs are comprehensive in design and incorporate aspects of the remedial and preventive
approaches that were emphasized in prior school counseling programs. It does deviate from earlier programs in that its focus is broader and process oriented rather than task-related or problem-oriented, and rests upon a developmental foundation. Further, a CG&CP focuses on prioritized student goals and behavioral outcomes for each grade level, meets the needs of all students, and, ultimately, stresses the potential of the individual (Walz & Bleuer, 1997).

Activities and services within a CG&CP are intended to assist all students in their personal-social, academic, and career development. Activities and services are delivered by school counselors and/or teachers in either large or small group guidance sessions, in or outside of the classroom or in small group or individual counseling sessions. In addition, school counselors may indirectly give assistance to students by providing brief counseling and/or consultation services to parents and teachers.

Within a developmental context, the activities and services are planned to help students focus on tasks and issues appropriate for their age and stage of life (Schmidt, 1999). The challenge for school counselors who implement CG&CPs is to use developmental principles as a rationale for practice. In general, school counselors need to understand developmental principles that incorporate the stages of human growth and the unique process of development as identified by developmentalists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson, Havighurst, Kegan, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Super, and Loevinger (Paisley & Benshoff, 1996). Moreover, school counselors need to be able to use developmental principles for individual and group assessment and intervention. They need to be able to assess students’ developmental stages and use
methods that bring about developmental change (e.g., provide a balance of challenge and support, encourage perspective taking, etc.). (Paisley & Benshoff, 1996).

Overall, “when planning guidance for all, [school counselors] need a clearly articulated understanding of development in order for the model to be most effective” (McDonald & Sink, 1999, p. 425).

**Conceptualizations of a Developmental Framework**

The implementation of a CG&CP is seen as a fundamental component to the total school curriculum (ASCA, 1997). With its focus on prevention and interventions that support student development, school counselors must consider how children move and change through qualitatively, that is, developmentally different stages in the life cycle (Paisley & Benshoff, 1996).

Models of child development that are founded in clinical settings have been identified as psychosexual, qualitative-developmental, behavioral, psychosocial, or family life cycle (Simeonsson & Rosenthal, 1992). Although school counselors assist students in a variety of ways distinct from clinical settings, the developmental characteristics established in each of the models contribute to a broad conceptualization of changes that occur through a succession of qualitatively different stages. Such developmental characteristics are adaptable to a school setting as well.

A brief description of each model follows.
The Psychosexual Model

Freud (cited in Simeonsson & Rosenthal, 1992) maintains that children move through stages from birth through adolescence in their own unique ways. The stages are oral, anal, phallic (or oedipal), latency, and puberty. As children move through these stages typical development occurs via age-appropriate need gratification through consistent caregiving. Standard Freudian concepts embedded in the psychosexual developmental model are id, ego, and superego. Each of the three concepts pertains to areas of the mind and function at differing levels of awareness. The ego, and its development, is at the forefront of the psychosexual model. Healthy ego development depends upon the quality of interactions with significant others.

Qualitative-developmental Model

The qualitative-developmental model includes Piaget’s Cognitive Development Theory as well as the social-emotional domains of development (Piaget, 2000; Simeonsson & Rosenthal, 1992). Piaget asserts that development is a process in which reality is formed through interaction with the environment. Development occurs as children attempt to organize environmental stimuli through the process of assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation refers to incorporating information into cognitive structures. Information that does not fit within existing cognitive structures necessitates that changes or accommodations be made in structures in order to establish understanding. Typical development occurs when a balance between assimilation and accommodation has been achieved.
Behavioral Model

The behavioral model considers children's behavior as a response to external environmental stimuli. Learning theorists, such as Pavlov, Watson, and Skinner (cited in Simeonsson & Rosenthal, 1992) believe that behavior is learned by imitation, association, conditioning, and observation, and that reinforcement has a role in development. Although learning theorists emphasize current rather than past events, they are of the opinion that typical development occurs when past reinforcement histories are adequate. Furthermore, adequate reinforcement histories expand access to appropriate ways of responding to the external environment.

Psychosocial Model

Psychoanalytic theorists, Erikson and Mahler (cited in Simeonsson & Rosenthal, 1992) have contributed to the expansion of traditional Freudian concepts. Whereas Freud's psychosexual stages focused on the inner world of feelings, impulses and fantasies, Erikson's stages included children's interaction with the social world (Crain, 2000). "The totality of environment, in physical, social, and cultural aspects contributes, along with innate processes, to development" (Simeonsson & Rosenthal, 1992, p. 24).

Erikson proposed that, beginning at birth, individuals move through eight qualitative stages of development (Erikson & Erikson, 1997). Within each stage, individuals are confronted with a crisis: (a) trust versus mistrust; (b) autonomy versus shame and doubt; (c) initiative versus guilt; (d) industry versus inferiority; (e) identity
and repudiation versus identify diffusion; (f) intimacy and solidarity versus isolation; (g) generativity versus self-absorption; and (h) integrity versus despair. Typical development occurs when the crisis is resolved and growth is enhanced.

*Family Life Cycle Model*

The Family Life Cycle Model proposes that the family is a system that progresses through developmental stages: young adulthood; the young couple; families with young children; families with adolescents; launching children and moving on; and the family in later life (McGoldrick, Heiman, & Carter, 1993). "A primary assumption is that an individual cannot be understood separate from the context of both the nuclear and extended family, or the social, economic, or political context" (Simeonsson & Rosenthal, 1992, p. 25). A transition point is reached at each stage in which its members face a primary task. Typical development varies according to the cultural, religious, and socioeconomic composition of the family, and occurs when the family progresses.

These models represent how qualitative changes occur in the course of typical development. In a school setting, within a CG&CP model, attention is given to the development of children with respect to the personal-social, academic, and career developmental domains (ASCA, 1984; Campbell & Dahir, 1997). However, if developmental theoretical concepts are lacking in CG&CPs that have been identified as developmental (Whiston & Sexton, 1998), how are school counselors using
developmental principles to help students progress through an invariant sequences of stages?

When planning activities and services for all students, do school counselors accurately explore strategies that challenge students to move beyond their current levels of maturity, or do they merely offer the same program for all and attach a developmental label to it? (Gerler, 1992, p. 500). Paisley and Borders (1995) concur with this criticism. They maintain that despite the current developmental focus in a comprehensive program, “such a program has rarely been implemented; instead, scope and sequence have been confused with a theoretically based approach using what is known about development and how it occurs” (p. 152).

Counselor educators who are interested in assisting school counselors in their ability to translate developmental principles into practice strongly suggests ongoing professional development by qualified counseling supervisors as a means of implementing the developmental emphasis (Paisley & Benshoff, 1996). At present, however, school counselors who are interested in delivering CG&CPs may be doing so without a well-grounded understanding of developmental principles and the skills necessary to carry out this conceptualized role (Paisley & Benshoff, 1996). To this end, I, this researcher, am interested in exploring how developmental guidance is perceived by school counselors currently implementing CG&CPs.
Statement of the Problem

A developmental emphasis is the fundamental core of the school counseling profession (ASCA, 1990). Data from recent studies have shown that comprehensive guidance programs that have been identified as developmental in nature have significant gaps in developmental theoretical concepts (MacDonald & Sink, 1999). For instance, these authors found that in a qualitative developmental analysis of comprehensive guidance programs in the United States:

- Salient developmental constructs were more difficult to find than expected.
- Vague language, without reference to the source of the ideas, was common.
- For example, 'social tasks' were discussed in many models, yet rarely was Havighurst cited, nor were the tasks well grounded in theory. Some developmental notions were so deeply embedded that they were difficult to identify. (p. 423)

Although MacDonald and Sink (1999) did not address how school counselors are implementing developmental constructs and principles, Paisley and Borders (1995) suggest that counselors have uncertainty about scope and sequence of a comprehensive program and a developmental approach to guidance. Does the basis of this problem, which has not been adequately addressed in the current literature, stem from how school counselors come to understand developmental guidance?

Although studies have been conducted to ascertain counselors' perceptions of as well as the effects of CG&CPs on student development, these studies have not addressed school counselors' beliefs, attitudes, or knowledge of a theoretically developmental approach to guidance.

The purpose of this study was to explore how elementary and middle school school counselors who are currently implementing CG&CPs perceive the
developmental philosophical foundation of the program. In particular, I was interested in exploring elementary and middle school counselors’ knowledge, attitudes, interests, beliefs, understandings and experiences about the developmental approach to guidance.

**Significance of the Study**

The study attempted to provide new insights into how practicing elementary and middle school counselors perceive developmental guidance. It was my hope that a clear and accurate understanding of school counselors’ beliefs, values, attitudes, and knowledge about developmental guidance might provide insight into how developmental guidance is currently being used at the elementary school level and, assist counselor educators in the training and supervision of school counselors.

**Research Question**

What are the perceptions, attitudes, interests, beliefs, understandings, and knowledge (about developmental guidance) of school counselors who implement CG&CPs in elementary or middle school settings?

**Definition of Terms**

*Guidance*: a program whose characteristics include (a) student competencies, (b) activities and processes to assist students in achieving these competencies, (c)
professionally certificated personnel, (d) materials and resources, and (e) program, personnel, and results evaluation (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000).

Developmental guidance: based on the regular order of progressive change in the dynamic human being. This is in contrast with guidance focused on repair work to bring an individual to a level of adequacy so that he then may proceed once again along the developmental path toward maturity and responsible adult living.

Developmental guidance focuses on the characteristic behaviors considered typical for the various ages or stages of development (Peters, Shertzer, & Vanhoose, 1965, p. 7).

Comprehensive program: a full range of activities and services, such as assessment, information, consultation, counseling, referral, placement, follow-up, and follow-through (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000).

Preventive approach: one that emphasizes the circumvention of potential problems (Myrick, 1968).

Scope of Study and Limitations

This study explored elementary and middle school counselors' perceptions of the developmental approach to guidance via qualitative focus group methodology. A theoretical sampling was conducted through a “snowball” process: “One respondent was located who fulfilled the theoretical criteria, then that person helped to locate others through her or his professional networks” (Warren, 2002, p. 87). Ten practicing elementary and middle school counselors currently implementing CG&CPs
were selected and placed into two groups. Of the ten participants, nine attended the interviews. Five counselors participated in one group, with four counselors participating in a second group. According to Morgan (2002), the fewer the number of members participating in a group the greater the depth and detail of the discussion. Focus groups usually do not exceed 8 to 10 members (Edmunds, 1999). In addition, this paradigm permitted participants to talk freely about their experiences and perceptions of CG&CPs and supported an exploratory investigation of the topic. A constructivist grounded theory approach was used to analyze the data. This study was limited in the following ways:

1. The study included 10 practicing elementary and middle school counselors.

2. The results of the implications from the data were restricted to two group interviews. Follow-up interviews were conducted in order to clarify vague or elusive data, or to refine salient data.

3. The study was intended to examine counselors’ perceptions of developmental guidance; it was not an evaluation of counselor roles or guidance programs.

4. The study employed qualitative methods. Therefore, it was an exploratory study and the findings cannot be safely generalized to school counselors beyond this group.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Organization of Chapter

Chapter II provides a review of the related literature to gain an understanding of how developmental guidance is currently being used by school counselors and examined by researchers. It covers literature pertaining to others’ (parents’, teachers’, counselors’, administrators’, students’) perceptions of developmental guidance as well as others’ perceptions of school counselors’ roles. The effects of developmental guidance on students’ personal, social, and academic, development were also reviewed. Qualitative studies that focused on elementary and middle school counselors’ perceptions of developmental guidance were nonexistent in the literature that was reviewed.

Overview

Of the few studies that have been conducted on comprehensive and developmental programs, the majority of them fall into the responsive services component of the counseling curriculum (Whiston & Sexton, 1998). Within a CG&CP, responsive services consist of those services that are remedial in nature (e.g., individual and group counseling, or consultation). Whiston and Sexton propose
that the emphasis of studies in responsive services might “suggest that researchers, and potentially counselors, may be more interested in remediating problems rather than focusing on developmental or preventive programs” (p. 424).

As stated previously, classroom or group guidance activities are ideologically designed to be developmental and to serve all students. However, the dominant focus in school counseling research has focused on the remedial component of the comprehensive model, when, in fact, the guidance curriculum component is philosophically the core of a CG&CP (Gysbers & Henderson, 1997). In accordance with these findings, Campbell and Dahir (1997) also confirmed that “… school counseling is moving toward developmental and comprehensive programs, yet research seems to have lagged behind this current trend by continuing to focus on remediation activities” (p. 423).

Whiston and Sexton (1998) completed a review of qualitative research conducted between the years 1988 and 1995. One of the three purposes of Whiston and Sexton’s (1998) qualitative literature review was to explore the breadth and scope of school counseling research. Overall, the researchers concluded that, within three components of a comprehensive model (guidance curriculum, individual planning, and responsive services) 24 % of the studies concentrated on the guidance curriculum component of the comprehensive model. Specifically, Whiston and Sexton concluded that during these 7 years a total of 10 studies on comprehensive and developmental programming were conducted at the elementary and middle school levels: Carns & Carns, 1991; D’Andrea & Daniels, 1995; Hadley, 1988; Lee, 1993;
Morse, Bockoven, & Bettesworth, 1988; Omizo, Omizo, & D’Andre, 1992; Rathvon, 1991; Stafford & Hill, 1989; Walsh-Bowers, 1992; and Wiggins & Wiggins, 1992. Additionally, during these years, two studies that examined the guidance curriculum were conducted at the high school level: Hughey, Lapan, & Gysbers, 1993 and Lapan, Gysbers, Hughey, & Arni, 1993. The studies conducted at the elementary and middle school levels focused on the effects of classroom or group guidance activities such as, self-efficacy, academic achievement, and social development. The studies conducted at the high school level focused on vocational plans and identity, as well as academic achievement.

Schmidt, Lanier, and Cope (1999) conducted a review that spanned 20 years (1977 to 1997) of elementary school guidance and counseling (ESG & C) research. They reviewed a total of 599 articles in an attempt to identify trends in the following four areas: types of articles published, the work settings of senior authors, the goals of the articles, and primary interventions. The area that is most specific to this study is the “goals of articles published” and is delineated below.

The researchers classified the goal of each article as either developmental, preventive, treatment, or informational. Articles that were classified as developmentally focused on aspects of student development similar to the student outcomes that were identified in Whiston and Sexton’s (1998) review. The outcomes identified included aspects such as self-concept, education, or moral development. Preventive articles emphasized services that focused on preventive measures affiliated with topics such as using alcohol and drugs. Articles identified as
“treatment” articles highlighted intervention strategies that counselors could use with students. Each treatment article was then divided into several components and identified as individual counseling, group counseling, group guidance, parent education/consultation, teacher consultation/in-service, behavior management, referral, skill group, or other classification. Lastly, “information” articles were those articles that contributed informational resources on a variety of topics. That is to say, 25% of the articles emphasized a particular treatment, whereas 10% had either a developmental or preventive goal. In addition, “the topics identified seem to reflect important trends in the profession and society... or may relate as much to an editor’s fascination as they do to popular interest in the subject matter” (p. 256).

The results of the Schmidt et al. (1999) article review were parallel with Whiston and Sexton’s findings. The largest number of type articles were identified as programmatic (33%) with the largest number of goal articles identified as informational (68%). In addition, only 7% of articles were identified developmental and 3% as preventive.

The authors of these findings have also suggested that although the counseling profession promotes a developmental focus, the trend in the ESG&C literature has indicated otherwise. Remedial articles that provide counselors with techniques and strategies to use in their interventions with students seem to prevail over the profession’s goal toward a developmental perspective. However, it is important to note that although these articles overwhelmingly represent a remedial focus, the techniques and strategies reported might have been presented within a developmental
context. Nonetheless, findings suggested that articles that were primarily developmental in nature were fewer in number than articles that reported practical information and counseling techniques.

According to Gysbers and Moore (cited in Neukrug, Barr, Hoffman, & Kaplan, 1993), a clear developmental focus within the profession is inherent in the ability to “establish guidance as a developmental program – a program that is an integral part of the educational process with a content of its own” (p. 356). Without such a focus, the developmental aspects of the program will be misused, omitted, or abandoned. Counselor education programs and the profession’s national leadership have only just begun to emphasize developmental guidance models. The lack of this emphasis in previous counselor education programs, as well as in some present day programs, supports the confusion or lack of knowledge that many school counselors face with regards to developmental guidance (Neukrug et al., 1993).

In order to address school counselors’ lack of a clear developmental scope and focus, Neukrug et al. (1993) organized a committee to design a developmental guidance and counseling model. The broader purpose of this task was to help counselors develop and implement developmental guidance programs. The committee recognized that a developmental model, however clear its design, could not be effective without knowledge of a conceptual developmental framework. This would include knowledge grounded in theoretical concepts, developmental stages, and counseling skills.
For CG&CPs to be successful, it stands to reason that "school counselor education should be built on a foundation of educational developmental theory and practice as well as psychological practice" (Feller et al., 1994, p. 2). The ASCA (1997) National Standards maintain that effective developmental school guidance programs are grounded in the knowledge and theory of developmental stages and in the implementation of counseling skills. However, in a recent study, MacDonald and Sink (1999) analyzed the structure of 24 comprehensive state models for their attention to developmental constructs.

The research questions posed by this study included: Have the approved state plans been crafted with a developmental focus? From a lifespan perspective, Are they broadly based enough to be considered developmentally comprehensive? According to well-established developmental principles, are these plans for the kindergarten though grade 12 (K-12) (approximately ages 5-18) setting theoretically sound? (p. 417)

A mixed-data inquiry and analysis of the current state-level comprehensive developmental guidance models in the United States were used. The methods of analysis used by the researchers were a combination of program evaluation, quantitative, and qualitative examination. Using a 0.00-2.00 scale, mean findings were outlined. Results (mean ratings are denoted in parentheses) indicated the most developmentally prevalent concentration was on stage theory-type patterns (patterns or stages of development for students) (1.31) and to holistic focus (cognitive, social-affective, moral/character, meaning-making) (1.04). Very little concentration was given to acceleration (the stimulation of student development) (0.58) and culture (development as having strong cultural implications) (0.46). The highest ratings were
found within the personal/social domain and included: attention to specific
developmental tasks per each grade level (1.15), identity development (1.00), and the
development of interpersonal skills, such as getting along with others (0.98).
However, attention to ethnic identity development was minor (0.37). Lastly, within
the area of citizenship, much attention was given to character development (honesty,
integrity, and justice) (1.02), some attention was given to how individuals learn to
make choices (0.79), and discussions that focus on how students make meaning in
their lives was almost non-existent (0.04).

Overall, MacDonald and Sink provided a synopsis of their discoveries: the use
of vague language without reference to the source of the developmental ideas was
prominent, developmental themes were difficult to identify, developmental ideas
were used for remediation purposes, developmental levels had to be inferred, there
were minimal and ineffective reference to cultural and ethnic developmental issues,
no attention was given to the notion of constructivism, and little attention was given
to career development. The researchers conclude that gaps across the models
regarding developmental theoretical concepts exist. However, the researchers
emphasized that their analysis “. . . did not address implementation, so it is unknown
how developmentally focused practitioners actually are” (p. 425). It is with this
intention that school counselors’ perceptions of developmental guidance be explored.
Perceptions of Developmental Guidance

While there is some research that indicates favorable perceptions of CG&CPs among school personnel (Neufeld, 1999), other research (MacDonald & Sink, 1999) indicates that there is a significant lack of understanding of developmental, programming, principles and how change occurs in children. Furthermore, this lack of understanding may be operationalized in school counseling programs. This discrepancy found in current research may lead to the conclusion that the theoretical characteristics and principles embedded in developmental guidance are being overlooked by counselors.

In a recent study, Torma (1999) examined the perceptions of school administrators, teachers, counselors, parents, and fifth grade students about elementary guidance programs in the Virginia Beach Public Schools. Torma examined four domains: home-school relationships, student personal development, support for academic growth, and program value. Overall, school personnel and parents agreed that supporting home-school relationships, personal development, and student academic growth were worthwhile goals and believed that the counseling program was valuable. The findings indicate that all adult groups believed that the counseling programs had a positive impact on personal development. The findings specifically showed that the elementary guidance program helped students to better understand themselves and others, helped to support students' personal development, and helped students cope with developmental changes. Parents and faculty gave
slightly lower ratings regarding the support that is provided by counselors for academic growth.

This study seems to indicate that parents and faculty within the Virginia Beach City Public Schools recognize the positive impact that the counseling program has had on the development of their children. It would be interesting to explore how the outcomes of this study were achieved. For instance, what were the developmental principles used by the school counselors to support students' personal and academic growth. More specific to the purpose of this research, it would be interesting to explore what the school counselors in the Virginia Beach City Public Schools believe to be the altering factors that led to the developmental changes perceived by school personnel and parents? Once more, how developmentally focused are the school counselors who implemented the elementary guidance program in Virginia Beach, and/or how do they understand the developmental approach to guidance?

Robinson (1998) was also interested in perceptions of school personnel about developmental guidance. Robinson surveyed counselors and principals in Alabama regarding their perceptions about the importance of program elements that are essential for a CG&CP in a secondary setting. Results indicated that counselors and principals shared similar perceptions about the elements that are essential in the guidance curriculum component but they disagreed about the essential elements in individual planning, responsive services, and system support.

This research shows congruence among counselors and principals about the core (i.e, the guidance curriculum) of a comprehensive guidance program. School
counselors and principals in Alabama agree on the fundamentals of developmental guidance however, the scope and focus of this research did not address how these fundamentals are understood by the school counselors who implement them. Robinson recommended that qualitative research be conducted to determine how principals and counselors in secondary settings practice their roles with regard to comprehensive and guidance programs. Such data may begin to provide information about how developmental theory is being understood and perhaps operationalized.

Two studies (Lee, 1997; Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001) were located in the literature that assessed counselors’ perceptions of CG&CPs. Although the study conducted by Lee provided valuable information regarding developmental guidance, its focus was a quantitative examination of a secondary school counseling program located in Korea. The second study (Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001), also a quantitative examination, focused on school counselors’ perceptions (i.e., their concerns and anxieties during the reform/change process associated with the development and implementation of CG&CPs). Both studies will be discussed below.

School counselors in Korea were surveyed to determine their perceptions about the importance and effectiveness of counselor interventions (Lee, 1997). Lee reported that school counselors in Korea relied on individual counseling most often in their work with students. Interpreted as a reflection of counselor preparation, it appeared that school counselors recognized additional means of intervening with students (e.g., group counseling, classroom guidance) but lacked the developmental training fundamental to CG&CPs. Counselors’ perceptions revealed that they lacked
the knowledge necessary for implementing a CG&CP. Lee suggested that counselor education programs in Korea strive toward better school counselor preparation, specifically, better applications of developmental theory.

Sink and Yillik-Downer (2001) surveyed counselors nationwide to investigate their perceptions toward their school districts' development and implementation of a CG&CP. The instrument (The Perceptions of Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Inventory [PCGI]) was a revision of Hall, Loukes, Rutherfored, and Newlove's (cited in Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001) Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoC Questionnaire). The PCGI was administered to 1,033 practicing school counselors nationwide to: (a) examine counselors' concerns of CG&CPs at the Planning and Designing, Implementing, and Evaluating stages of program development; and (b) to examine and compare the response trends of counselors based on background variables such as gender, age, grade level, case load, school district's location, geographical region, position, and years of counseling experience.

The findings of this study revealed counselors' concerns with CG&CPs during the reform process. The implications of these findings revealed that counselors' anxieties may influence the change process during different phases of the reform. Salient demographics, such as the ones mentioned previously, have shown to significantly impact some counselors' perceptions' (anxieties) toward CG&CPs during the reform process. Among the demographic variables, the research findings regarding counselor anxiety during the change process included the following: (a) high school counselors reported more anxiety with respect to tasks within the
program (e.g., effects of implementing CG&CP on current work responsibilities, expectations on new role, etc.), while (b) task anxieties were a significant predictor of counselors' level of involvement and their outlook on CG&CP, (c) counselors in the midwest also reported higher anxiety ratings than counselors from southern and western regions, and (d) counselors with fewer than 6 years of experience reported more anxiety than experienced counselors (more than 20 years). Caseload, age, and level of importance of the program did not have a significant impact on counselor anxieties.

The findings of Sink and Yillik-Downer’s (2001) study revealed a moderate, although not causal relationship between “how involved school counselors are with the development of and implementation their district’s CG&CP and the level of importance they ascribe to their program” (p. 285). The implication of this finding suggests that school counselors who perceive their CG&CP as worthy are more likely to be an active participant in its development and implementation.

The level of counselor involvement in CG&CP has additional implications as well. Of the three phases (Planning and Designing, Implementing, and Evaluating) counselors reported more concerns during the initial stage. However, counselors who involved themselves in the change/reform process showed a decrease in their levels of anxiety. According to Sink and Yillik-Downer, the implication of this finding suggests that counselors’ direct involvement in the reform process, particularly during the beginning stages, will reduce anxiety and perhaps increase the growth and development of the CG&CP in their districts.
Although the study concentrated on investigating counselors' anxieties toward their districts' development and implementation of CG&CPs, and did not focus on counselors' perceptions of the developmental approach to guidance, its implications resonate with the intent of this research. If counselors' perceptions (anxieties) can influence the implementation of CG&CPs, then do counselors' knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs, of developmental guidance also influence aspects of CG&CPs? Understanding counselors' perceptions of developmental guidance may provide counselor educators with information that may help to support how school counselors are prepared.

In addition to, but not incompatible with "others'" (counselors', parents', teachers', administrators') perceptions of developmental guidance is "others'" perceptions of the school counselors' role. The following section will present a brief rationale for and a review of the current literature regarding perceptions of the school counselors' role as it pertains to developmental guidance.

Perceptions of the School Counselors' Role

Developmentally appropriate programs currently hold a prominent role in the education system with their most apparent presence found in early childhood practices. There are many ways to implement developmentally appropriate programs and are therefore defined as both varied and comprehensive. "They enable children to engage in the kinds of experiences they need at a given time." (Kostelnik, p. 21, 1992) In schools where CG&CPs are implemented, it is the school counselors' role
to plan and deliver guidance services that are developmentally appropriate. Many teachers, parents, and administrators, not unlike school counselors, are embracing a theoretical developmental approach to student growth and learning. However, "the problem is, not everyone means the same thing when they use the term" (Kostelnik, 1992, p. 17). Yet, there are a number of studies that have examined others’ (parents’, teachers’, counselors’, administrators’) perceptions of developmental guidance, as well as the effects of developmental guidance on students’ personal, academic, and career growth. In addition, decisions about guidance programs and the role of the counselor are being made based on these evaluations. The following studies will present how others in a school setting, as well as parents within the community perceive the school counselors’ role as it pertains to developmental guidance.

In a recent project O’Dell et al. (1996) investigated the counseling services provided to students who attend schools in northeast Ohio. The project spanned a total of 6 years (1986-1992) and included four components: a review of the literature, visits to schools to evaluate their guidance programs, implementation of revitalization ideas into 10 programs, and project evaluation. Their literature review and school visits, which included interviews with counselors, the public, board of education members, educators, and administrators, were especially relevant to the purpose of this study and will be discussed below.

In their review of the literature, these researchers identified role confusion, lack of organization for service delivery, public misunderstanding of school counseling programs, and the lack of leadership for program development as the four
factors contributing to ineffective guidance programs. Data were gathered from interviews with school personnel, counselors, teachers, administrators, and the public regarding their views that contribute to effective and ineffective guidance programs. According to the interviewees, four factors contributed to effective guidance programs:

1. Strong leadership from the local board, the state department of education, nearby university, or the counselors employed in the schools.
2. Time set aside for counselors to act as middle managers to plan, implement, and evaluate their programs.
3. A strong commitment to organize the counseling program to address student competencies.
4. Outside funding to foster program development. The funding was usually obtained through grant writing or working with local businesses or organizations.

Interviewees appear to be saying that for a program to be effective a significant amount of support, money, and time for the program is required. In contrast, the data revealed 10 factors responsible for ineffective guidance programs. Six of the 10 factors are pertinent to a developmental school guidance philosophy:

1. Nobody could agree on the role of the counselor. Counselors were either suffering from role overload or their skills were under-used.
2. The public, board of education members, and many educators did not understand the need for, or the functions of, school counseling programs.
3. Many programs had not changed from their inception in the 1950s and 1960s.

4. Existing programs focused on the most visible situations with the highest public appeal. Thus, college-bound students and students with severe problems were well served, while non-college-bound students and students with less severe problems received little or no attention.

5. Canned guidance programs that did not meet the needs of individual schools were all too prevalent.

6. Disagreement and indecision about the nature of the programs existed. School personnel differed about whether the programs should be remedial, preventive, or developmental. (O’Dell et al., 1996, p. 305)

The effects of the problems identified negatively influence the core of a comprehensive and developmental approach to guidance. Indecision about the type of philosophy a counseling program adopts for its approach will undoubtedly contribute to problems within that program. In particular, the lack of agreement about which type of program the schools choose to emphasize – remedial, preventive, or developmental – carries with it a certain curiosity in terms of opinions held regarding developmental guidance. What were the reasons given by school personnel who were not in favor of a developmental guidance program? Did these reasons depict an accurate understanding of developmental guidance? Last, and specifically relevant to the purpose of this research: How did the school counselors who were interviewed perceive developmental guidance?
In a study by Ballard (1995), Louisiana and Oregon school counselors' perceptions were investigated regarding differences and similarities in school counselor's roles and functions. A replication of the 1992 Oregon School Counselor Study was used to assess school counselors' roles. A CG&CP model was used to conceptualize the primary roles and functions of school counselors. These roles and functions of this conceptual model included counseling, consultation, classroom guidance, and coordination. However, the data collected from counselors in both states did not empirically support this conceptual model. The three major roles and functions that did emerge included: (1) crisis intervention counseling; (2) career counseling; and, (3) developmental counseling. School counselors characterized their primary role and function as developmental counseling. Counselors also identified developmental counseling as a training need.

However, the theoretical philosophy of school counselors who implement a CG&CP is not necessarily developmental in nature. Carter (1990) surveyed elementary school counselors to examine the relationship between the American School Counselor Association role statements and the actual daily work of elementary school counselors. An adaptation of Barnette's Guidance Program Preference Scale (GPPS) and Kameen, Robinson, and Rotter's Survey of Counselor Function (SCF) were administered to a sample of 400 counselors (200 counselors actually responded to the survey).

Four null hypotheses examined: (1) the relationships between a developmental philosophy of guidance and activities of elementary school counselors, (2) the perceived ideal and actual roles of counselors, (3) a developmental philosophy and variables of sex, experience, student load, school district size, and type of
community, and (4) a list of counselor activities and the variables of sex, experience, student load, school district size, and type of community. (p. 1505)

A statistically significant difference (< .05) between the perceived actual and ideal roles of school counselors was found. The results suggest that the elementary school counselors sampled in this survey did not believe they were performing the roles that they perceived to be essential to their job function. These roles are counselor, consultant, and coordinator.

Although no other statistically significant difference was reported, the data are nonetheless meaningful. For instance, one null hypothesis which could not be rejected maintained that "there is no relationship between the role counselors are actually performing and developmental philosophy of guidance" (Carter, 1990, p. 102). Carter provided this illustration:

one respondent, whose survey had one of the highest developmental philosophy scores on the GPPS, but also indicated very strongly, in both responses on the SCF and in comments, that elementary counselors should be responsible for managing the school's discipline program (p. 102).

How can counselors practice developmental guidance and simultaneously fulfill roles such as disciplinarian or administrator? Exploring how school counselors perceive developmental guidance may reveal how school counselors come to understand the developmental philosophy of school guidance.
Effects of Developmental Guidance

Studies regarding the effects of developmental guidance on students' personal, social, and academic development have also been prominent in the current literature. Research that has investigated the effects of a developmental approach to guidance will be discussed for two purposes: (1) to understand the ways in which the developmental principles are currently being used by practitioners and researchers, and (2) to explore the outcomes of what has been considered developmental guidance.

Falcone (1999) investigated how, using a team approach, a developmental guidance program enhanced the self-esteem, encouraged respect for others, and improved the conflict resolution skills of five, fourth grade students in a suburban school district. The five students were selected during their third year in school. The students' needs were diverse and included learning, gifted, organizational skills, motor development, attention deficit disorder, communication, impulsivity, self-worth, coping, and problem solving. A case study method was used to determine whether or not the following objectives were sustained for 1 year: students felt better about themselves and others, they felt valued and respected, they felt that they had something to contribute to the school community, and they applied interpersonal and coping skills. These objectives were identified as aspects of a developmental guidance program and the objectives were met.

The children's academic, social, emotional and physical needs were assessed. Data were obtained from individual student interviews, archival records, parents'
written response to surveys (The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, and the Behavioral Academic Self-Esteem Inventory) as well as phone interviews. Falcone concluded that the effects of a developmental guidance program for the five, fourth grade students were descriptive indicators of both personal and academic growth. Furthermore, the school counselor was perceived as instrumental to the continuity of the program and the problem solving approach that was utilized.

Flax (1998) investigated a developmental guidance unit that used play counseling strategies with 63 fourth and fifth grade students who were identified as having disruptive classroom behavior. The unit consisted of 10 sessions and was delivered over a period of 5 weeks. The effect of the play unit on the disruptive students was investigated in terms of their acting-out behaviors, peer-relationships, self-concepts, and classroom behaviors. Additionally, gender differences and group leadership variables were also examined.

The 63 students were randomly assigned to three groups (counselor-led, peer-led, and control) and were assessed using a pre- posttest control group design. Data were collected at the end of the unit using the Student Self-Concept Scale and the Disruptive Behavior Scale (DBRS), as well as the teacher completed DBRS and the Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist. Findings indicated a statistically significant difference in terms of peer relationships only. Regarding the changes from the pre- to posttest, the results of the developmental play unit revealed that of the 63 students, only the students in grade five demonstrated better peer relationships than students in grade four. However, results did not indicate significant differences
between the experimental and control groups for acting out behaviors, self-concepts, and classroom behaviors.

A third study (Ronaldson, 1995), also responsive to the needs of disruptive fifth grade students, attempted to examine art therapy as a preventive and developmental approach to counseling. Sixteen students were referred to the school psychologist by their teachers. Although school psychologists do not receive the type of training similar to that of school counselors (which includes the implementation of CG&CPs and the developmental approach to guidance), they may be responsible for fulfilling a counselor role, and some generalizations about how a developmental approach to counseling is being used.

At this particular elementary school, the students were randomly assigned to three treatment groups: art-therapy, direct counseling, and classroom intervention. The students in the art-therapy and counseling groups received individual counseling services for 12 weeks, whereas the students in the classroom intervention group received services from their teachers who worked directly with the school psychologist.

Pre- and posttest assessment data regarding the changes in student behavior that were observed by parents and teachers were collected using the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklists. Pre- and posttest student self-report of perceived changes in feelings and behaviors were assessed using structured interviews. Decreases in disruptive behaviors were reported for all three groups, with the most significant change reported by mothers of students in the art-therapy group. Furthermore, all
students reported an increase in interpersonal communication skills with the art-
therapy group, again, reporting the greatest increase.

Cunningham (1997) investigated the impact of an intentional developmental
guidance curriculum on study skills strategies, self-concept enhancement, and
schoolwork completion of fifth-grade students. The curriculum consisted of six
developmental teaching groups entitled “Tools of Learning” which integrated the
theoretical principles of the Developmental Guidance Model, Strategic Learning
Concepts, and social learning theory. Students were assigned to three groups: (1)
Control Group A received normally scheduled developmental classroom guidance
instruction, (2) Control Group B did not receive any classroom guidance services, and
(3) the Experimental Group, received the intentional developmental guidance
curriculum.

The effects of the intentional developmental guidance lessons were measured
using the Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale, the Home Study Skills
Inventory, a schoolwork completion percentage, and the demographic variables of
socioeconomic status, gender, and race. In addition, a survey was administered to the
fifth grade students, as well as their parents and teachers. The results indicated that
there were no significant differences among the three groups on the dependent
measures. However, Cunningham proposed that the surveys yielded positive data that
defended the idea of teaching study skills enhanced by self-concept activities to
students. For instance, 60% of the parents reported that they would like to know how
to help their child do better in school and 91% of the teachers indicated that they would benefit from learning techniques to teach students study skills.

The obvious emphasis in research concerning developmental guidance has been on the effects of developmental guidance programs on students. Results are often mixed and more research is needed in this area in order to ascertain the effectiveness of developmental guidance. What does seem apparent in the studies cited are others (parents’, teachers’, students’) positive assessments of developmental guidance programs. Parents, teachers, and students have rated developmental guidance favorably.

Although the emphasis of the above research has focused on the effects of developmental guidance programs, it has also depicted how developmental guidance is being used. The research that has been reviewed tends to show developmental guidance being used as a remedial intervention. It appeared that some of the strategies that were implemented were designed with a philosophically developmental purpose (i.e., to move students beyond their current levels of maturity) while others were not. Those such strategies appeared to have been designed to remediate students’ behavior. The studies conducted measured the effects of “developmental guidance” on students’ grades, relationships, test scores, etc., and not on students’ psychological maturity. Improved grades and test scores are important, especially to administrators and consequently to the survival of the CG&CP. However, using remedial interventions and assigning a developmental label to them when it is
possible “to make a case for how emotional and social development is linked to academic progress” (Gerler, 1992, p. 500) undermines the purpose of CG&CPs.

Given that the direction and foundation of CG&CPs is developmental, is it unreasonable to assume that for CG&CPs to be effective, school counselors should understand if not hold a developmental philosophy of guidance? Moreover, to what extent should school counselors espouse a developmental philosophy of guidance in order for CG&CPs to be effective? Lee (1997) discovered that in Korea, the lack of developmental knowledge was attributed to counselor preparation. School counselors’ lack of developmental knowledge may be attributed to counselor preparation in the United States as well. Again, to what extent are school counseling programs preparing counselors with the skills needed to implement developmental guidance? For instance, what aspects of developmental theory are being understood and implemented by school counselors? A further exploration into school counselors’ perceptions of developmental guidance may explore the significance of these questions. Furthermore, exploration of counselors’ perceptions may be more thoroughly understood via qualitative investigation.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study explored elementary and middle school counselors’ perceptions of developmental guidance. Existing research focused primarily on the perceptions of “others” (e.g., parents, teachers, students, administrators) regarding the effectiveness of CG&CPs, and the role of the school counselor. Overall, the results of these studies have concluded that “others” view CG&CPs as valuable, and believe they are an effective approach in helping children (Neufeld, 1999; Robinson, 1998; Torma, 1999). However, evidence suggests that many comprehensive school counseling models lack a developmental approach to guidance (Schmidt, Lanier, & Cope, 1999; MacDonald & Sink, 1999; Whiston & Sexton, 1998). In addition, Paisley and Borders (1995) maintain that counselors are often confused between a developmental approach to guidance and the scope and sequence of a comprehensive program. Evidence such as this challenges proponents (or opponents) of developmental guidance to ask: How were these favorable results achieved by school counselors who implement CG&CPs? Through what philosophical lens do school counselors of developmental guidance view their students?

Although it is difficult to reveal how developmental guidance is utilized by school counselors, it has been my hope that an inquiry into their perceptions of
developmental approach to guidance might provide insight into how school counselors have come to understand this approach. To that end, this study explored school counselors' perceptions (attitudes, interests, beliefs, understandings, and knowledge) about developmental guidance among those who implement CG&CPs in elementary and middle school settings.

Subject Selection

In order to determine the perceptions of school counselors regarding developmental guidance, a criteria-based selective sampling was used. Criteria for participation included counselors who: (a) possessed a state credential to practice school counseling, (b) are currently practicing in elementary or middle school settings, (c) have been employed full-time for a minimum of 2 years, or employed more than 2 years in an elementary or middle school setting if a part-time counselor, (d) stated that they are implementing a comprehensive guidance program that is developmental in nature, (e) demonstrated familiarity with CG&CPs, and (f) demonstrated a willingness to discuss CG&CPs in a group format. Participants were solicited through a “snowball” process: “One respondent was located who fulfilled the theoretical criteria, then that person helped to locate others through her or his [professional] networks” (Warren, 2000, p. 87). All participants were screened via phone (Appendix A). A total number of 10 elementary and middle school counselors were selected from a county in the southwestern region of the United States and assigned to one of two groups. One of the participants failed to attend the scheduled
interview, leaving a total number of nine respondents. Every attempt was made so that no two counselors from the same school or school district were placed in any one group.

Research Design and Procedure

I chose a focus group methodology for this study in order to “use elements of [the participants’] shared experience to discuss the topic” (Morgan, 2002, p. 152). By using a group format, participants may have been less likely to experience the interview as “quiz-like” when asked explicit questions surrounding developmental activities and concepts and more likely to gain valuable information about themselves, their knowledge base, developmental guidance, and CG&CPs. In this sense, the data collected were not personal perspectives of comprehensive guidance, but a common experience regarding a program. In systems, or cultures, such as schools, rules (explicit or unexpressed) often guide acceptable forms of behavior and influence practices. Within this system, school counselors share universal experiences, broad and typical perspectives of comprehensive and developmental guidance programs, of which they were asked to discuss.

While this method offered an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of elementary and middle school counselors’ perceptions of developmental guidance, predictable group dynamics might have influenced the process (Morgan, 2002). Two such group dynamics common within focus groups are (a) political influence (group
think) and (b) indexed talk (folk knowledge). Both dynamics are defined below and were considered during the interview and analytic process.

"Group think," as the terms imply, asserts that individuals within a group are less likely to voice their true opinions than if they were interviewed individually. "It is certainly true that the same people might say different things in individual interviews than they would in a group discussion, but that does not mean that one set of statements is distorted and the other is not" (Morgan, 2002, p. 151). The occurrence of political influence within a group simply calls to attention the context of the interview and the consideration of group dynamics during the interview process.

To deal with the possibility of this phenomenon, I closely monitored participants' verbal and non-verbal communications throughout the interview process, as well as during data analysis. This was done through direct observation as well as video and audio tape. Participants who displayed an apprehension (tension communicated either verbally or non-verbally) toward discussing a particular topic were contacted by phone for follow-up question and discussion. Follow-up interviews were also conducted in order to clarify vague or elusive data, to refine salient data, and to verify the themes that have been identified.

The other dynamic, indexed talk, is a phenomenon that takes place when the individuals in a group share such a common experience that elements of the discussion are implied or unstated. Indexed talk can be addressed through the techniques of the moderator. A technique such as "sharing and comparing" (Morgan,
2002, p. 155) was used by me ( moderator) in an attempt to direct participants to be more explicit by asking them to compare and contrast their opinions and experiences regarding the topic. Merton (as cited in Fontana & Frey, 1994) identified three other skills needed by an interviewer that are unique to focus groups:

First, the interviewer must keep one person or a small coalition of persons from dominating the group; second, he or she must encourage recalcitrant respondents to participate; and third, he or she must obtain responses from the entire group to ensure the fullest possible coverage of the topic. (p. 365)

The techniques described above (i.e., focus group methodology) are consistent with an exploratory, as well as a constructivist grounded theory approach of collecting data. A constructivist grounded theory approach of collecting data maintains the following assumptions (Charmaz, 2002): (a) multiple realities exist, (b) data reflect the researcher's and the research participants' mutual constructions, and (c) the researcher enters and is affected by participants' worlds (p. 678). The focus of the interviews "emphasized the participants' definitions of terms, situations, and events and tried to tap into the participants' assumptions, implicit meanings, and tacit rules" (Charmaz, 2002, p. 681).

The procedures for collecting data from participants began initially through a "snowball" process in which I solicited a respondent who met the criteria for the study (Appendix A). In turn, that respondent helped to locate others through her or his [professional] networks (Warren, 2000). I contacted all potential participants by phone. A brief description of the purpose of the study was provided. Following this brief description, the counselor (i.e., potential participant) was screened, (i.e., asked a series of questions to determine eligibility for the study) (Appendix A). School
counselors who met the criteria for participation were provided with additional information: facility location, mailing information, and the date of the interview. A confirmation letter was e-mailed to the interested participant (Appendix B). A reminder call was made the day before the interview.

Ten participants from a county in the southwestern region of the United States were selected for the study, of which a total of nine attended the scheduled interviews. The participants were divided and placed into one of two focus groups. In order to determine the perceptions of school counselors regarding developmental guidance, a criteria-based selective sampling was used. Criteria for participation included counselors who: (a) possessed a state credential to practice school counseling, (b) were currently practicing in elementary or middle school settings, (c) have been employed full-time for a minimum of 2 years (or part-time if more than 2 years) in an elementary or middle school setting, (d) stated that they are implementing a comprehensive guidance program that is developmental in nature, (e) demonstrated familiarity with CG&CPs, and (f) demonstrated a willingness to discuss CG&CPs in a group format. According to Morgan (2002), the fewer the number of members participating in a group the greater the depth and detail of the discussion. Focus groups usually do not exceed 8 to 10 members (Edmunds, 1999).

Participants selected for the study were advised to arrive at the facility 20 minutes prior to the interview. This time was used for an opportunity to get acquainted with the other participants, and to review both the consent form (Appendix D) and a request for supplemental information form (Appendix C).
A follow-up interview was conducted with participants by phone in order to clarify vague or elusive data, to refine salient data, and to verify the themes that have been identified.

Instrumentation

A constructivist grounded theory approach was used to shape the focus of the group interviews (Charmaz, 2002). One interview guide (Appendix E) was used for both groups and to support a constructivist grounded theory approach. Questions were developed to cover a broad range of experiences, yet narrow enough to draw out participants’ specific implicit meanings and experiential perceptions of developmental guidance (Charmaz, 2002).

The course of the interviews conformed to the following sequence:

1. The interview began by reviewing the purpose of the study, emphasizing confidentiality, and indicating the amount of time the interview was expected to last.

2. Participants were informed that group sessions would be video and audio recorded, that tapes would be listened to and transcribed by me, and all tapes would be destroyed following the completion of the study.

3. Participants were informed that a second follow-up interview for the purpose of clarifying data would be conducted by phone.

4. A brief statement about my experience and interest in the study was made.

5. In order to receive salient data, participants were instructed to answer
questions based on what they though, believed, and understood about comprehensive and developmental guidance and to refrain from sharing examples or stories about their program.

6. The initial question was broad and inquired into counselors’ knowledge about CG&CPs followed by additional questions regarding counselors’ attitudes, beliefs, and interests about developmental guidance. An attempt to focus the interview was made by providing a brief definition of a CG&CP and a definition of the terms developmental and preventive.

Data Analysis

I analyzed participants’ responses via constructivist grounded theory approach. Data analysis from a constructivist grounded theory approach involves the following guidelines for analyzing data: (a) initial, open coding to define what is occurring in the data; (b) selective, focused coding to sort, analyze, categorize, and conceptualize data; (c) analysis of categories through memo writing; (d) theoretical sampling to fine tune categories, i.e., define emerging concepts, and (e) integration of memos (Charmaz, 2002).

I video and audio recorded all data, as well as listened to and transcribed the tapes. When using quotes in reporting results, the names of the participants were not disclosed. In addition, names of schools and school districts were not identified in the final report. At the completion of the study, the tapes, a copy of the transcriptions,
and the signed consent forms were given to the principal investigator. The principal investigator will hold the data and consent forms for 3 years.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

A total of 10 credentialed counselors were chosen to participate and placed into two groups. Each group was assigned five participants. The first group was scheduled to meet on Wednesday, November 5 and did meet from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and the second group was scheduled to meet on Friday, November 21 and met from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. One of the five participants failed to attend the second group interview. Overall a total of nine respondents, eight of whom were female, participated in the study. All participants were credentialed school counselors in the state of California. The years of service ranged from 5 to 17 in elementary school with an average of 10 years experience, and 2 to 11 in the middle school with an average of 6 years experience. Four of the participants had both elementary and middle school counseling experiences, two had worked solely as elementary counselors, and three as middle school counselors. Three of the nine participants also had some high school counseling experience.

Five of the participants self-identified as Caucasian, two as Hispanic, and two as multi-racial. Three participants indicated that they had graduated from CACREP accredited programs, two indicated that they had not while four of the participants
were unsure. Furthermore, all nine participants specified training workshops as a means by which they learned about CG&CPs. In addition, eight participants identified conferences, seven identified college courses, and four indicated that they learned about CG&CPs through research/articles. The county office of education, and colleagues were also identified as an "other" means of learning about CG&CPs.

An inquiry into school counselors' perceptions of developmental guidance was initially considered from a broad perspective. Given that a developmental philosophy is the foundation of CG&CPs, participants were initially asked to discuss their thoughts regarding CG&CPs. As the interviews progressed the interview questions became more specific to the topic of developmental guidance. Follow-up questions were prepared in advance to assist facilitating the interviews. This paradigm permitted participants to talk freely about their experiences and perceptions of CG&CPs and to support an exploratory investigation of the topic. The following section describes some initial characteristics of the study, followed by an analysis of the interview transcripts. A summary concludes the chapter.

Initial Considerations

The discussions from the interviews were analyzed within a constructivist grounded theory paradigm. According to Charmaz (2002), within a constructivist approach, as opposed to an objectivist approach to inquiry, the following assumptions are considered:

(a) Multiple realities exist, (b) data reflect the researcher's and the research participants' mutual constructions, and (c) the researcher, however,
incompletely, enters and is affected by participants’ worlds. This approach explicitly provides an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it. (p. 678)

This was my approach to the entire interview and analytic process. In this case the studied world (i.e., school counselors’ perceptions of developmental guidance) was explored from a group perspective. The data were gathered from an unstructured open-ended focus group interview. In the group interviews, the participants discussed their thoughts, experiences, and opinions about developmental guidance. Respondents talked, listened to one another, shared ideas, agreed and disagreed with others’ perspectives, asked questions, sought others’ help, and offered their help to others. This was the format in which I received data regarding the respondents’ perceptions of developmental guidance.

The data were also analyzed within a constructivist grounded theory paradigm. From a grounded theory perspective, I defined what was happening with the data (Charmaz, 2002). More specifically, I defined what was happening with the data that were derived from the two group interviews. In addition, as a proponent of developmental guidance, I reflected upon the data through this theoretical area of interest. I view development within an object-relations framework, in that “formative interactions between parents and children become internalized by the child and serve as cognitive schemas (relational templates, internal working models) that shape how children establish subsequent relationships with others” (Teyber, 2000, p. 7). Within this developmental framework I believe that all children move through stages of development that increasingly lead to an integrated perception of self and others.
Thus, I used my preconceived ideas and assumptions about developmental guidance to interpret the data and made decisions about the boundaries and usefulness of these assumptions (Glaser, 1978).

Although I believe that the group interviews encouraged a richer array of data than an individual inquiry would have, I am also aware that it is the group that is represented in this study, and not the individuals in the group. This factor does not change the genuineness of the data, however. It simply highlights a group perspective and moderates an individual perspective. An example of this concept was observed in this study. It became apparent to me that during the group interviews (and as I analyzed the data), some of the respondents had a more complete understanding of developmental guidance than others. Their contributions to this study have been well documented however, the extent of their understanding has not been fully acknowledged.

During the group interviews I observed the participants to be candid in their discussions of developmental guidance. There were subtle moments of conformity and differences among the participants, all of which provided stimulating discussions and enhanced the data. In addition, participants profited from others’ knowledge and experiences. As the researcher, my experience during the interview process was a positive one. I found it a pleasure to meet with these counselors and to discuss their perceptions of developmental guidance. In return, I believe that the participants left the experience with something valuable as well. Overall, I believe that the participants in the study found the experience to be constructive. Two of the
counselors shared an exchange at the conclusion of the interview. The first counselor spoke to the group: “I appreciate the experience and expertise. And it actually eases my willingness to want to be perfect; it’s been an ongoing process.” To this another counselor replied:

I’ve been thinking the same thing. I’m really pleased to have gotten to hear what you’ve said. And since we almost never have formal connection, I don’t really talk much except through occasional email, but to hear what you’re attitudes are and what’s happening . . . really admiring the way that you speak about kids, and what you’re trying to do, and your aspirations. It’s like, oh. It feels good to me to hear that’s what’s out there and that’s who’s out there.

The preceding passage denotes the spirit of the group interviews. As I facilitated the group interviews, I observed the participants’ portrayal of their perceptions of developmental guidance to be open and honest. Participants appeared to speak freely about their attitudes, opinions, and experiences regarding developmental guidance. The next section considers four major themes identified in an analysis of the group interviews. All but one theme contained sub-themes. The first theme, The Demand to Justify CG&CPs, included two sub-themes: Data Production, and Program Building. The second theme is CG&CP as Related to Developmental Guidance and Relationships. The third theme, Implementation Realities, included two sub-themes: Remediation Issues, and The Press of School Environment. The fourth theme, Managing Resistance, included two sub-themes: Changing Perceptions of Program and Overcoming Challenges.
The Demand to Justify CG&CPs

A repeated theme throughout the interviews was a sense of the counselors’ urgency to prove, not necessarily the success of their programs, but the value of their work, their significance within the school. When asked broadly what they thought about comprehensive guidance and counseling programs, their responses moved from “I think they’re personally real valuable, and I see it as an ultimate, or as a goal, or as what we’re always working toward — difficult to meet” to “I think the measurement part is really important, and I mean it makes sense and it secures our jobs. It’s the hardest part to implement, I think, but the whole idea of the concept to me is, it’s great.”

All counselors in the study experienced CG&CPs as something for which they must advocate. They described themselves as sellers, advocators, and sole supporters of their counseling programs. The counselors in the study described two approaches in which they advocated for CG&CPs. The first approach was through providing data regarding the effectiveness of their programs. The second approach was through building the program. Each sub-theme will be analyzed in detail.

Data Production

The counselors revealed that by obtaining results through data collection and research (pre- and posttests) they were hoping to also obtain some recognition by conveying validity to their work and, therefore, control over their role as counselors. This control over their role would give them the freedom to implement a CG&CP as
opposed to being misused (as in the disciplining of students), misunderstood, slighted, and overlooked.

One way in which some of the counselors approached the quest to establish the value of their programs was through measuring their programs' effectiveness. They discussed using a results-based approach to measure the success of their programs, or to gauge the effectiveness of interventions. However, the respondents in the interviews also described using a results-based approach in such a way as to indicate that they used it to measure their value, their significance, to prove their usefulness as counselors. They seemed to use results based as a solution, a hope that with proof of their value they might obtain control over their roles as counselors. As one respondent said:

But little by little, like you say (pointing to another participant) if we stand our ground and say, "no I can't do that because I'm doing this right now," that when we're able to show our staff and our department what we have been able to accomplish through a comprehensive guidance program, through a results based, we may be able to make some changes. That's what I'm hoping.

This same respondent shared a similar expectation later in the interview:

There's this student in the classroom who was maybe molested, and they think, only bad kids go to the counselor, and so they're afraid. So it's little by little changing that perception of what we really do. I think that's the most difficult thing that we face. But I believe the results based, comprehensive program really is helping to change that.

Upon entering the workforce, another respondent experienced disillusionment about the counseling profession due to resistance encountered from the existing counseling staff. The description below illustrated again how one counselor believed that a results-based approach provides counselors with a voice:
I don’t know about yourselves, but I came out of college “I want to charge, get out there, do this, do that, and so forth, and make a difference.” But as soon as I got there the realization was I felt like I had my hands tied because, “this is the way we do it. Or, it’s been done all this time, and if you come in here and try to impose your energy, your beliefs, etc., you’re rocking the boat.” And so, many ideas came up, but they were shot down. So I’ve seen our program evolve and, comprehensively, are we aligned with the state’s standards, or you know for career, social, and so forth. I believe we’re getting to that point and I believe now that with the results based approach, and what we’ve been hearing in counseling, I think we’re getting closer to it.

Obtaining results was motivated by these counselors’ experiences of being unrecognized and misused. In the previous excerpts counselors used a results-based approach as a voice for determining their roles, whereas in the following passages the counselors used results as a voice for endorsing the CG&CP. The purpose of the results was to provide a voice to the counselor and lend significance to the program the counselor is attempting to implement. One respondent explained how the school counseling staff, in their desire to promote their program, selected study skills as the focus of their results:

That’s why we chose our study skills to do the study on, and do our research on because we felt like that’s if we were to ask our teachers, “where do you want our efforts most,” that’s probably what they’d say. We also felt like our administrators if we could show that we improve or did something for academics then that sells us to them as well.

For educators, there is no doubt about the relevance of study skills. It seems, however, that such a selection was decided upon from the viewpoint that counselors are in a struggle to promote their programs. Another counselor discussed promoting their district’s program in a similar manner, a way in which the focus of their research to solely market the counseling program:
The other thing is, through what we’re doing we improve attendance which is really easy to document. I think attendance in our district is a really high issue, so that’s one thing that the data is very easily collected.

Measuring the success of a counseling program is wise, and for several reasons. An obvious reason is to evaluate what works and what doesn’t work so that changes can be made and the best possible services can be delivered to students and families. Another reason is to substantiate the efficacy of an existing program. Both are valuable and necessary. In listening to the respondents, however, it appeared that some counselors were relying solely on a results-based framework with little understanding of the developmental foundation of CG&CPs. What is at risk here is that in an urgency to promote and sell a program, the developmental elements of CG&CPs may become overlooked. Documenting positive results may become a guiding principle. In addition, by concentrating solely on selling their programs to teachers and administrators by providing evidence, counselors may risk losing sight of the developmental needs of students.

In the following excerpts, the counselors describe the necessity to promote their programs, and at the same time recognized the limitations of a results-based focus:

...about 3 years ago we started to choose one element to look at for creating a measurable instrument and creating a pre- and post- and then looking at and trying to improve a program...we think, and kind of unfortunately chose study skills because it was politically correct. We wanted to pick an area where principals go “hey, that’s important”... self-confidence, self-esteem, and limiting negative behaviors is very hard to measure. Unless you’re looking at attendance, unless you’re looking at something else that’s measurable that might be an outgrowth of something it’s real had to say, “yes, this group increased in self-esteem, or this group is more confident now, or this grade level is making better choices now than they would have.” That’s
hard to measure. So we picked something very concrete and easier to measure and that, we, the teachers would like and the principals would support, to kind of start our process.

The overall experience of another respondent regarding CG&CPs and the responsibilities as a school counselor was summed up in this way:

In college I had this perception that administrators would know, the professionals, would know what counselors would be all about, would know what their duties were. And here we are trying to convince them, and give them proof that we are working. It’s almost an insult, especially when you’re dealing with very, very intense situations with families, etc., and they get on you for not making it to supervision on time, or a meeting, etc., and hopefully this results based stuff will help, but it’s not going to cover the gamut.

Both of these counselors described the necessity of promoting their program and the challenges they experienced on a personal and professional level. In the second excerpt the counselor provided a private insight into the resentment that is created from the realization that the counselor’s role is unnoticed. This counselor recognized, at least on an emotional level, that the type of value that school counselors may be seeking cannot be measured. The very integrity of this counselor is minimized at the administration’s lack of knowledge of the counselor’s role. For the other counselor, the challenge being experienced is political. The integrity of this counselor’s professional decision to choose an area to improve is compromised. This counselor is aware of who and what is the basis for making this decision. Both counselors recognized personal and professional limitations of providing data regarding the effectiveness of their programs, and, yet, as one respondent stated: results-based comprehensive guidance doesn’t cover the gamut. Put another way, using results as a strategy to establish significance of CG&CPs has limitations. For
some of the counselors in this study, providing data regarding the effectiveness of their programs can then be a question of integrity: their integrity and the integrity of a program.

I feel excited, I actually feel torn... to me, for us to be the ones in the trenches having to prove ourselves. I mean it's like we need a full time researcher coming in... Trying to keep track of something, or being part of a focus group or committee in addition to what you're doing. So, it seems huge, it seems impossible sometimes, but I also question quantifying everything. Counseling is a different animal. And how do we communicate that professionally to the non-counselor type, where they be in our school sites or out in the community. To where, even if, through results based we can't prove a lot or even if we don't prove as much as we'd like, everybody who goes to any counseling program knows that a lot of the after effects don't happen until a long ways away. And that's what I understand, and I don't know how we research that or prove that, and so to me, it's a little scary, to have to prove the pieces of what we're doing when we know that part of this isn't about the immediacy of diminishing the suspensions, or truancies, or suicide threats or pregnancies, or whatever. Some of it's not measurable, or if it is measurable it's down the line... Research continues to prove that people who become resilient, that it's often the piece that was embedded early on, or somewhere else, or repetitively. And so if we're one piece of that repetition, then how do we justify ourselves? So that part to me is pretty big and erroneous. I try not to think about it.

Counseling is a unique discipline and is often misunderstood and misused by others. People within or outside of a school setting have many preconceived or distorted ideas about who a counselor is, what a counselor does, and how the counseling process works. In a school setting, the role can be even more complicated. In a school setting a counselor communicates almost always, if not exclusively, with "non-counselor types" (i.e., administrators, teachers, parents, and students). The sense that their profession or the counseling process is misunderstood leaves them in an isolated and precarious situation, one that resigns them to either...
oppose or to uphold the circumstances of their situations, one that may challenge their integrity.

So there's some fear factor in there, and some dismay about it having to be measurable when I think that some of what we do that's full of integrity isn't going to be shown in the results. But I also think the results are going to help us politically, and help us overall in people understanding that there's value.

Another counselor spoke to the limitations of providing data regarding the effectiveness of their programs and the question of integrity:

... it's interesting, because you talk about reducing suspensions... We're always putting these kids [referring to the "bad" kids] up for expulsion because they do bring bad things to school, and so we're supposed to reduce these things. Well, how hard is it to reduce suspensions, when they [the leaders] say, "okay, just send them home for the day." So is it really quantifying? So when you say, "okay, let's reduce suspensions" and then the principals, directing vice principals, and deans now - to well, just - "this is just an informal suspension for the kids." Yeah, we're reducing our suspensions, but what does that really mean. Kids' grades are going up, well, are they going up because: Are there an inflation of grades? Are they going up because the teacher doesn't know about the kid, and feels sorry for him now... just like you're saying, things are so subjective, and so, we can come up with these things that we think are really hard data. Is it really? You can tweak anything.

Another counselor concurred: "And, you can tweak anything, and just because you don't prove it doesn't mean it isn't happening. You know that's the other thing."

The position these school counselors find themselves in is conflicting. To be in opposition to the current culture compromises their integrity, and, as another counselor put it, is "frustrating... the realization was I felt like I had my hands tied because, this is the way we do it. Or, it's been done all this time, and if you come in here and try to impose your energy, your beliefs, etc., you're rocking the boat." But to oppose the idea of a results based approach as a way of justifying CG&CPs is not
politically astute. However, when the developmental aspects of CG&CPs are not understood by counselors, therefore, not applied in practice, and when CG&CPs are perceived by counselors solely as documenting results, its developmental foundation is, again, at risk.

Obtaining results consumed many of the counselors’ thinking about their programs. For some counselors obtaining results helped define their roles and gave them control over their very overwhelming and largely misunderstood professions. For these counselors, very few or no references were made regarding the developmental foundation of CG&CPs.

The following excerpt marks a transition between using a results-based approach as a way of thinking about CG&CPs and using it as a tool that can provide counselors with guidelines to assist in the implementation of CG&CPs. In the upcoming excerpt, a respondent described using a results based-approach to support the counselors’ position (i.e., the counselors’ placement at the school) but did not use a results-based approach as the counselors’ mind-set or guiding principle. This respondent viewed a results-based approach not as a means to an end, but as a way to gain support counselors need and deserve. The respondent clearly identified how providing data regarding the effectiveness of their programs was important and to whom it was most important. Further, this respondent was not interested in results as a means to prove the counselors’ value. A counselors’ value is recognized, perhaps intuitively.

It’s great to have the support of the administrator and to be able to create something, and also with the results-based counseling and the meetings we’ve
attended; we have these guidelines, and I like that. I like having guidelines, 
finally to be able to go towards something that I can see my results, I can see 
the measurements and it’s real important for others – we all counselors know 
what we’re doing and we can see the results. But I guess it’s important to 
those others for us to prove it on paper, and all along, though we know what 
we’re doing because we see it in the kids faces every day.

I did not interpret this counselor’s ability to see the influence of her 
counseling interventions in the students’ faces as naïve or unsophisticated. 
Counselors who are engaged and who attend to the relationship can often recognize 
such subtleties, or as this counselor puts it, results. It is true that identifying results in 
this manner are not considered as sound evidence, nor do I think this counselor was 
attempting to seriously justify her work. However, this study is not about results-
based counseling programs. It is about CG&CPs and how school counselors perceive 
developmental guidance. What this excerpt marks is the transition between 
counselors’ perceptions of CG&CPs as data production, and program building.

Program Building

A second sub-theme that emerged in which counselors advocated their 
CG&CPs was to focus on building the program. Although all of the counselors in the 
study identified using both approaches (providing data as well as building the 
program) it was clear that counselors from both focus group interviews aligned with 
either one approach or the other approach. Those who aligned more closely to 
building the program referred to the various components of comprehensive guidance 
and communicated its value, demonstrating an understanding of the program’s 
services. They revealed that they focused on demonstrating results and initiated
opportunities to be experienced by teachers, parents, and students. Within this approach, counselors were able to demonstrate the value of the program and come to be perceived as resources within their schools. Thus, as these counselors demonstrated the effectiveness of CG&CPs, teachers, students, and parents began to recognize the value of the program.

Furthermore, all participants in this study identified their programs as CG&CPs, or that they were working towards implementing CG&CPs. In addition, all participants identified their programs as developmental. Thus far there was no evidence of counselors' perceptions of CG&CPs as being grounded in a developmental framework. Within this sub-theme, however, there was an indication of an implicit, although shallow, understanding of a developmental philosophy.

Counselors spoke at length about the frustrations they encountered in trying to implement CG&CPs. One of the qualities that the counselors believed was necessary for moving a CG&CP forward was their ability to act in an open and hospitable manner within the school environment. One respondent described how she invited others to experience CG&C services:

It’s that you’re there to provide a service. I’m not going to force this on you, but, hey, teachers, I’m here for you, kids I’m here for you. Parents, community...

This respondent described the importance of being accessible, and that to be accepted as a resource, this respondent moved slowly and in an unassuming way. Another counselor who saw the counseling program make gains in a positive direction attributed it to the counseling staff’s ability to be warm and open:
And I think there’s a lot more collaboration and communication between a lot of us now. And that’s why I see it evolve. I see our counseling turn into something more welcoming, more resource, more.

Another counselor agreed that in order to gain access into the hearts and minds of teachers, in order for teachers to accept them into their classrooms as a resource, teachers needed to know that counselors were available.

And sometimes teachers don’t even know exactly what we do. (Like you were saying) we need to let teachers know that we’re available to do this, this, and this.

Emerging within this sub-theme was that if counselors expected teachers to value their services, then counselors need to find a way to gain access into the classroom so that their services can be experienced.

They don’t experience it then why should they want it. If they experience it and it’s lousy, why should they want it? It’s a matter of giving them something valuable that they can benefit from and see a difference and appreciate support from a counselor.

Building a program is clearly different from quantifying the effects of an intervention. Counselors are a contributing force in students’ education, as well as a support to teachers. The challenge, however, as described by these counselors was how to be free to implement a CG&CP, how to be used for what they were trained to do. For counselors in the study who understood the value of CG&CPs, this meant waiting for opportunities to demonstrate such value.

The only way I was able to crack my way into middle school was unfortunately after the Santana shooting. I have a sixth grade teacher come over to me and say “hey can you do something in my class about teasing and bullying?” . . . so . . . well he said, “do it during my elective, I’ve got two periods of that”. I said “ok”. Then another teacher – it turned out that I ended up doing the whole sixth grade. And then all of the sudden the 8th grade “What about us?” And these are people who I handed it to on a silver platter,
but didn’t want it. I had to wait for the opportunity to be asked in and to show that it made a difference.

This counselor recognized the power of relationships and specifically the necessity of building relationships if there is to be a CG&CP. Again, the counselor reiterated the need to act with a sense of subtlety, almost a quiet assurance.

And finding the means to kind of get in there and do it where you’re not forcing it on people. I knew my opening would come at some point. It was there all the time. Unfortunately it took a disaster like Santana to make that become a priority and my feeling is how many of these school shootings are we going to go through before we finally realize we have to start at the bottom. We’ve got to start young with these kids and give them the same messages.

The respondent’s reference to the need for counselors at the elementary grades signified a foundation built on relationships and also emerges as a second theme in the following section, as well. The need for counselors at the elementary grades generates the idea of connection, that growth and learning is a continuum, that growth is a process. This counselor’s recognition of growth as a process is aligned with a developmental philosophy. The counselor conceptualized a CG&CP as something that is ongoing and with the potential to impose constructive differences in the lives of children, that there is a link to having information and using that information to move forward in a dynamic and productive way. In addition, the counselor perceived this link or connection as fundamental to children’s growth and learning, as well as the foundation of the CG&CP.
An analysis of the data revealed that, as a group, the counselors did not have a thorough understanding of a developmental theoretical base inherent in CG&CPs. There was, nonetheless, a developmental philosophy characterized by the counselors as one that emphasized the theme of connection. All of the counselors described developmental guidance as a link between connection and prevention. They conceptualized developmental guidance as a bridge, a bridge built of relationships, and more importantly, the power of the connection between the relationships they had with each other, the students and their families, and the purpose of CG&CPs.

Some of the counselors described relationships and the building and maintaining of them as a fundamental aspect of developmental guidance, so much so, that the foundation of the program is the relationships between students and counselors. One counselor described the significance of building relationships in the passage below:

And it’s important. Once they [the students] develop this early relationship – maybe first or second grade – and they know there’s somebody they can go to. Then they know that when they get to be 13, it may not be you, because maybe it’s a different school – they know there’s somebody out there. That’s an important thing, too.

The students, those in the elementary grades who experienced having a counselor in their schools and were familiar with the counselors’ role, carry that understanding with them into middle-school and beyond. In the following passage, another counselor concurred with the above description and further explained how
relationships, especially when they’re developed in the early grades, are a significant aspect of developmental guidance:

Another aspect developmentally is, when you’ve already established a good relationship [with younger kids] and they know who you are so that when they’re 13 and having some troubles they’re not going to come in and put the wall up in front of you. They’re going to know you’re there. And just that act of letting these people know who you are and the getting to know these kids – know them early, can create even a much better relationship.

According to the counselors who participated in the study, building and maintaining relationships are a core element of developmental guidance. One respondent who strongly believed in the connection between having counselors at the elementary level and prevention stated:

I think that if there were more elementary administrators who thought that counseling at the elementary level was important then we’d have less fires and less problems at the higher levels. It’s just really sad that the administrators – a lot of them – don’t feel that it’s important at the elementary level.

Building relationships with students at the younger grades has an inevitable impact on the counselors’ role, and on CG&CPs. By building counselor-student relationships in the elementary grades, a preventive component seems to materialize almost naturally, as if prevention and relationships are symbiotic concepts. They are symbiotic in the sense that prevention and relationships, although unrelated as concepts, are joined together to benefit one another, to form the foundation of developmental guidance. That is, for the counselors in the study, guidance is developmental when relationships begin in the elementary grades and continue throughout high school. These relationships are the conduits of prevention.
Furthermore, as another counselor perceived developmental guidance, the relationships that are built throughout students’ educations, continues into adulthood:

That just knowing what it [a developmental guidance program] is ... that it’s there. And hopefully, when those people are parents they won’t be so suspicious about what counseling is, what counseling does, or accessing it for their family. I hope that maybe it might extend out even into lifetime as an adult.

The continuity of building relationships with students not only forms a bridge for growth and constructive change, but it may endorse CG&CPs as a valuable resource that will have a positive impact on its students beyond their high school graduations. It may be remembered by students as a positive experience in their educational career and therefore accepted as a part of the total school curriculum. Therefore, within the theme of connection, of the relationship as the foundation of developmental guidance, comes continuity, a reliable and familiar process. The continuity is not only derived from the relationships counselors develop with students and families, it is maintained by the relationships that counselors have with one another within their districts:

The connection is really strong in our district, at least in my school. That’s because I know the elementary counselors too. So I can call them and I can kind of reach out to them, and I have a personal knowledge with them. But the results are: people do know what a counselor does. Kids know what a counselor does. By the time a kid gets to middle school our articulation is so good, I think, by the time they get to middle school there’s no question about what a counselor does. There’s not stigma attached to seeing a counselor. Not only is there not a stigma, it’s “how come I don’t get to go to counseling? How come you get to go to a counselor?” The only stigma that we get is when kids, in that maybe, aren’t used to that; that came in from another elementary school that didn’t have elementary counselors.
This counselor identified having a personal knowledge of other counselors within the same school district as an important building block to CG&CPs. The counselor attributed, to some extent, the strong connections among counselors in the district as a reason for the program’s success. Both the counselor and students seem to benefit from the continuity of the guidance program. The counselor can reach out to other counselors and experience their connection as a source of support. In addition, students learn at an early age what a counseling relationship can offer, and does not resist counseling, but rather accepts it as something desirable. In the following passage the same respondent again, identified the significance of the continuity of a guidance program:

Kids come to me saying, I had anger management classes last year and I need them again. The language is tremendous that these kids have learned. You can tell right away the kids that have been in counseling groups . . . So many have been in counseling groups in our elementary schools so by the time I get them they’ve got language to use, and they – I don’t know if overall behaviors have improved or not (laughter) but, maybe . . . you can see it in their faces, you can see it in what we’re doing and in the connections we’re constantly making. These kids can’t get away with anything. And families can’t get away with anything ’cause we know them. But it comes from the elementary program, that’s what people don’t see.

The familiarity that the students in this school district have of their counseling program not only breeds a positive relationship with it, but also brings about the basis for growth and constructive change. This growth is evident to the counselor by virtue of the language the students use to express themselves (as well as seeing the results in the kids’ faces). The students are demonstrating an increased awareness and growth in their self-understanding. The continuity of this district’s program provides the opportunity for students to gradually and continually make connections, thus allowing
growth to occur. Such connections extend to the students’ families, as well, demonstrating that developmental guidance is community wide.

The counselor in the preceding passage, although in favor of developmental guidance, conceptualized it as building relationships as a bridge for growth and constructive change, but also presents a challenge of implementing this type of program: “That’s what people don’t see.” What people don’t see is how developmental guidance with its attachment to prevention works. What people don’t see is the transgression that didn’t happen, the well-ed-up anger that was managed, or the fight that was averted. More importantly, what people don’t see is the power of the relationship in which growth and constructive change becomes possible. In the following passage, the counselor gives an example of a program based on sole idea of prevention.

We teach them [selected students] how to intervene, only with their friends. You start thinking of those numbers and you think, if 45 kids intervene 1 day a week, that’s 45 interventions a week. That’s 45 preventions, when you think about it. And so some of these things can be quantified and …… my point is, I go back to, is — my principal saw the power of prevention. But the hardest thing is to keep these programs running because it takes so much time to prevent. But we’re really seeing the value of it. I can’t tell you long term results.

This counselor describes a developmental activity, and in referring to the prevention, identified another challenge. Prevention is not a static, stagnant thing, or product. It’s a process. It means knowing others, nurturing relationships, building and maintaining relationships with students, parents, teachers, and other counselors. It means establishing stability, a continuity of services that parallels students’ natural development, and in which knowledge becomes embedded.
In an environment where counselors may receive little support or in a situation in which counselors may lack the knowledge of a developmental philosophy and or the skills to implement developmental guidance, counselors' roles can become overwhelming. Many students have serious problems in need of remediation. Therefore, it is a common experience for counselors to be viewed by teachers as someone who “fixes” students. Within this environment, the idea of touting prevention seems futile. Given this “reality,” all of the counselors in the study expressed certain reservations about developmental guidance, another theme that emerged during the interviews.

Implementation Realities

Although developmental guidance is, as one counselor stated, “the ideal,” the counselors in the study also identified another theme that underscores, not the strength of developmental guidance, but the limitations of developmental guidance as an approach. That theme is reality. There is a reality that counselors must contend with. The overriding realities that the counselors identified were: a vast number of students have problems that need remediation; there’s not enough time to give students the attention they require and deserve; and, although it is unfortunate, counselors must shape students to fit the environment regardless of their developmental stages. Each of these realities will be discussed in the sub-themes below.
Remediation Issues

All counselors were asked if they had a model or theory of development that they used in their work with students. One counselor recalled Piaget as a developmental theorist and another counselor replied “Rogerian . . . that with some of the kids you just sit back and just let them bring out the information. Mostly, though Ellis.” No one made the claim that they used a developmental theory or model in their work with children. The various theoretical modalities used by these counselors were largely cognitive, rational emotive, reality based, and solution focused. However, there was a sense that the counselors appreciated that each child is unique and therefore saw the need to adapt their strategies depending on the individual student. However, the consensus was that a majority of students were in need of remediation and the theoretical modalities, such as the ones identified above, work well in a school environment. One counselor asserted: “You know there are more students that are, quote-on-quote, needing repair, in this day and age . . . I feel that there are a lot more that I’m dealing with in trying to repair to get them to a developmental stage.”

According to this respondent, the reality is that students have problems, and the numbers of students with problems appears to be increasing. This counselor also referred, again, to the need for counseling in the elementary grades, “especially now more than ever.” In the following passage a different counselor relayed the same message:
What we're seeing as early as kindergarten is a lack of school readiness. [Students are] coming to school really not knowing what school's about. Not color recognition, number recognition, the ability to hold a pen, or a crayon or a pencil, or anything as far as just kind of pre-schoolish, or toddlerish type developmental skills . . . Some of them deficient, but many of them not exposed in, not deficient, but not much exposure or stimulation, and that's where they're plopping in, in kindergarten.

The participants of this study all emphasized the challenge of implementing developmental guidance “based on the regular order of progressive change in the dynamic human being.” They considered “repair” work a necessary element of developmental guidance.

Well the level of crisis in schools today, the level in anguish and turmoil and the severity of the issues, behaviorally, environmentally are so intense. And kids are open when they're young, and they're more malleable. And I think for me, the developmental part of this job, this work, was such a challenge with learning about using art to help kids express their feelings, using puppets . . . or, and just using toys to help kids illustrate what’s going on and to help them deal with their aggression and impulsivity. All of these myriad of tools that we have at our disposal and, the language, the appropriate language, how to interpret their body language and how to help them de-escalate when they’re enraged about something. That has been a tremendous learning curve. I guess I’ve been doing it ... this is my fifth year and I feel like I’m still learning a lot all the time.

In this passage, the counselor conceptualized developmental guidance as “repair” work, with a strong emphasis on the application of developmental skills and interventions. Still, what’s apparent is the reality that this counselor’s experience within a school environment is one in which students require a great deal of crisis and remedial intervention. In the next passage another counselor discussed the reality that students have problems in need of remediation. In addition, the counselor introduced another variable within the same theme: the reality that there’s not enough time to give students the attention they require and deserve.
I look at it as an analogy. Using an analogy of, we're sort of like mechanics, and because the way the car is built, but it sometimes goes out of alignment. The human being is a dynamic human being and it's already born with its personality, it's wired a certain way. And so we're just bringing them in, we're fine tuning, and we're sending them out. And here they come. Although I don't like to look at them as machines, as robots, that's sometimes what it feels like because of the influx of kids that, behaviors, and so forth. Based on their age, you fine tune them based on that developmental criterion of that age group.

Again, the counselor in this passage conceptualized developmental guidance as "repair" work, while highlighting the application of developmental theory. Specifically, the counselor uses developmental theory to understand, and "fine-tune" students toward the developmental stage that is characteristic of that age. In some way, the counselor seems resigned to this application, in that, the reality is, that students require and need more attention than can be afforded.

Many aspects of the job, like the one described in the above passage, is a personal struggle for many of the counselors. Where students' needs are great, and the numbers of students on counselors' caseloads are many, counselors working within a developmental framework struggle to define the boundaries of their role.

Two counselors shared the experience of this dilemma:

You know those eight multiple intelligences? And the times do not allow to look at the child, and sometimes you know, it's case by case, how much are you willing to put into this person, your school population, etc.

It's easy for me to get lost in what I want for that child and what I'd like to see transform for their life. And that's like waking up and, yeah, you got those other 32 or 72 or 112 slips there, there are other kids you have to see and this is what we're - we're not therapists.

In this situation these counselors grapple with their beliefs as professionals, as counselors, and as human beings. Within the reality of remediation issues and the
demands of their job, they forgo the quality of their beliefs. There is a line that is
drawn, a boundary between the ideal and the actual, between developmental guidance
and reality, between the needs of a unique child on an individual journey and the
overwhelming number of “referrals.” Developmental guidance, with its power in
prevention, is ultimate, but it doesn’t fit with the demands of the job, nor does it fit
with the demands of the school environment, as described in the following theme.

*The Press of the School Environment*

Developmental guidance speaks to the individuality and uniqueness of each
child. It’s an approach based on the belief that all children are dynamic, on a journey
of self awareness and actualization, where individuals’ potentials can be realized.
However, according to the counselors in the study, a third shortcoming of
implementing developmental guidance is that a school’s environment does not always
fit with the developmental philosophy. The reality is that counselors are often
challenged by many expectations inherent in the system in which they work.
Developmental guidance, therefore, is not practical, and the unique child must be
directed to fit into a sometimes developmentally inappropriate environment. One
counselor illustrated: “There are normal norms to function by. Although you’re a
dynamic human being, but, you know this is the path that you must follow.”.

The counselor in the following passage is responding to a remark made by
another participant who stated that counselors often have to push students to meet the
requirements for learning in the classroom, regardless of the conflict it presents for
the student in terms of the student’s developmental capacity. Although this counselor recognized, “This is what a 6 year old does” the counselor also surrendered to the demands of the environment: “We need to meet other demands on this student.” In the following passage, the counselor expounded upon the reality of the situation:

... And part of our trying to help kids be successful in society is how to fit back in society. So even if maybe it goes against the grain, or isn’t developmentally friendly, it may be the truth. And so how do you suck it up and get back in that teacher’s class, or how are you going to make it through . . . . I think, my own opinion, this is an opinion, I’ve been watching the trend in the last 20 years ... there’s more of an academic push in kindergarten and first grade than ever was, 20 years ago anyway . . . I think our whole society is sort of accelerated.

Developmental guidance may be viewed as an approach that is unrealistic when placed in the context of its environment. This counselor perceived the situation as one in which there is a choice: to either use a developmental approach, or not to use a developmental approach. This counselors perceived the situation as one in which developmental guidance does not adequately accommodate the problem. There is a perception that there is only one reality: the requirements of the classroom. However, there is another reality present in this situation that has been overlooked. That is the student’s developmental capacity. To overlook students’ developmental capacities yet challenge students to meet the very requirements they are struggling to meet seems counterproductive.

A developmental approach can meet the demands of the environment as well as the needs of students. However, if counselors are unacquainted with a developmental philosophy, or if the demands of the environment conflict with a developmental philosophy, then developmental guidance cannot exist as an option.
So students are guided to “suck it up” and just do what is necessary to become successful citizens. This may be considered a strategy, but it is a strategy that neglects process, with little attention given to how to suck it up. A developmental approach, in contrast, would focus on the “how to.” Focusing on how to suck it up is the learning that can take place within the child, the growth enhancing component of what urges the child to move from one place to another, to fit back into the classroom and meet the demands of the environment. In developmentally appropriate practices, counselors and teachers understand that educational planning is a continuum, in that a certain child at a given time may require an experience that is unique to that student. It is through this type of planning, through considering where the child is developmentally and then by intervening appropriately, that the child learns to fit back into the classroom (Kostelnik, 1992). And in doing so, the uniqueness of the child is not diminished but respected.

This is not to underestimate the challenges that school counselors face. The respondent in the previous passage conveyed the vastness of the challenge. Our society is in rapid movement, perhaps moving at a pace faster than individuals’ development. The time which children need to be ready for certain tasks is therefore condensed, and as one counselor stated, in order to help students meet these tasks, “it takes skill.” This is not an understatement. This is a succinct and wise appreciation of developmental guidance.

A final theme that emerged shared a common characteristic to the previous theme that is, there is a reality that seems to work against the ideal. However,
whereas the preceding theme highlighted the challenges associated with the application of developmental guidance in counselors' work with students, the upcoming theme's focus is on challenges that are not directly related to counselors' work with children. These are the challenges that counselors encounter in the attitudes of other school personnel and parents in their reaction to the counseling program.

Managing Resistance

The following sub-themes presented illustrated others' (school personnel and parents) tendencies to foster a resistance to change. That is, a resistance to change from a crisis oriented, position oriented guidance program to a CG&CP. Two sub-themes emerged and will be described: Changing Perceptions of Program and Overcoming Challenges.

Changing Perceptions

For the counselors in the study who are working toward implementing a CG&CP, moving from a “traditional way of doing things” toward a developmental and preventive program has been difficult. In addition, one counselor in the study who has been implementing an established CG&CP for a number of years has experienced others’ (teachers’ and administrators’) resistance to CG&CPs. This counselor stated:

When we first started our program . . . the two key words for us were developmental and preventive. That was our big goal because we didn’t want
to be crisis counselors. And, there’s that poem that was written about the ambulance down in the valley, [it exemplifies the vision of prevention as an aspect of a CG&CP]. But we have to bring that poem, and bring that whole thing before our board, before our administrators and managers, over and over again, because they fall back into the crisis. And that’s the hardest thing, to keep that focus. Because given what they have, and it’s understandable when you’re a teacher and you have somebody who’s really disrupting everything.

Due to the needs of the students and teachers in the school, CG&CPs are at risk of becoming crisis driven. Counselors are hypervigilant, aware that the preventive focus to guidance can be lost in others’ needs and demands for immediate corrective action. Counselors in the school district must persist in reiterating their “new” role to school personnel. Resistance to change from the old into the new was experienced by another counselor as well:

That’s all I get, is go fix these kids – here, call this person, call this person. How about: “Well, let’s maybe not let them get broken to begin with” (Laugh). That’s a very tough ... it’s just not the traditional way it’s been done and change is very hard.

To further complicate others’ resistance to change, this counselor factored in the expectations of others (teachers and administrators) regarding counselors’ roles. The expectations of these teachers and administrators is based on their understanding of counseling services as they may have been in the past, and with no knowledge of the preventive component built into CG&CPs of the present.

We’re up against the bureaucracy of the district and we’re up against, in my district, elementary teachers who have never had the opportunity [to receive CG&C services], so how do they know. And, we’re dealing with kind of the traditional role of counselors which changed tremendously. And everybody has their own vision of what a counselor should do, being very drastically different. It could be paper pushing, and scheduling, and discipline, and supervision all the way, or it could be kids, and individual, and group and class lessons.
Overcoming Challenges

Another sub-theme of resistance that emerged was the challenges that counselors faced regarding others’ perceptions of the purposes and goals of CG&CPs. A host of other persons, be they administrators, teachers, or parents, have erroneous understandings of CG&CPs and oppose comprehensive programs based on their misunderstandings. However, because a common characteristic of the experience of resistance is one of ambiguity, it was difficult to distinguish between others’ resistance as a simple misunderstanding of CG&CPs and others’ resistance as stemming from something more complex. On one level, others’ resistance stemmed from a lack of understanding, and on another level it may be a result from something entirely different.

In this next passage a counselor speaks to others’ resistance as derived from a lack of knowledge about CG&CPs, but also described others’ resistance in terms of opposing values and fears about counselors and counseling.

A lot of parents, I think, and a lot of community members . . . look at it [the counselors’ role] as getting them [students] in the right classes. Not really looking at the social, emotional part, that’s such the heavy necessity . . . meaty part of it. A lot of people are so very anxious about that, suspicious of it. There’s really strong religious beliefs that you shouldn’t be going there, there’s strong political beliefs that that’s not the school’s role. So there’s a lot of tension around counseling, that’s not around teaching or speech therapy, or other roles. So I think that comes into it more than other professions. A couple principals I’m thinking of that I worked for . . . have a distrust of the touchy feely or what that might do to her, where you might go with that, or totally blocked off themselves from that and therefore not acknowledging it or wanting to acknowledge it, or able to acknowledge it.
Parents' views of counselors as solely responsible for scheduling students' classes is a common misunderstanding of the counselors' role. That is if the counselor is implementing a CG&CP. This is clearly an example of parents' being uninformed. Within this conception of counselors as master schedulers, parents may be indifferent to guidance programs based on what little knowledge they have of counselors' roles and the programs' purposes, aims, or objectives. However, in the above passage, this counselor quickly turned toward establishing the sources of others' resistance as being much more profound than a simple misunderstanding. The sources the respondent described are still others' misunderstandings of the counseling profession, but the resistance is motivated by the values that these "others" embrace.

The source of others' misunderstanding is a key component of the resistance that counselors experience in the schools. The resistance of others may derive from personal or professional values and can manifest in hidden or overt ways – it can be innocent or deceptive and therefore it is difficult to be certain of the sources of another's resistance to CG&CPs. The following passage describes such an occasion.

Prevention and reaching all kids: Like I said, I could do lessons I would easily adjust to all grade levels, and what their needs were. This is one thing that I think, at least my district, the higher ups, they don't get it. What they're doing is, "Well, we need more help with students, we'll hire these agencies to come in and work with these kids who are at risk, or who need . . ." And they're feeling like OH, we're supporting you we're giving you more counseling [support]. And I'm just, NO! NO! NO! That's not the way we do it all. And some people recognize that, and some don't.

This counselor experienced the administration as uninformed about the services CG&CPs provide to students. In addition, the administrations' efforts to support this counselor are quite paradoxical. Due to this administrations' ill-formed
understanding of CG&CPs, the support it offered to the counselor promotes the remedial-oriented approach that this counselor is striving to change. However, further inquiry would be necessary in order to identify the motives behind this administration’s resistance. Although the counselor perceived the administration’s resistance as ignorance of CG&CPs, this may not be the case. The administration, based on its decision to focus on supporting a remedial-oriented approach, may not necessarily have a desire to support the counselor in her efforts to implement a preventive and developmental approach to guidance. As this counselor stated, some people ("higher ups") recognize and understand prevention as an aspect of guidance and counseling programs, and others don’t. However, to not recognize and understand prevention as an aspect of guidance and counseling programs may not be due to a lack of knowledge; it may be a matter or choice. Therefore when an administrator elects to subscribe to a misunderstanding of the counselor’s role, that choice may typify resistance. The subsequent passage exemplifies a similar, and yet more obvious recognition of ambiguity regarding motives behind administrators’ resistance.

We [our counseling staff] sit down, we do a lot of planning and we develop results based goals and then all of the sudden the day starts and the discipline starts coming in and we’ve got to start taking care of these kids. And as much as we have our plan, the counseling staff does get called upon to do discipline, constantly. It’s a challenge, we feel we have the support of our administration, and then at the same time we have demands to do these other things too. I guess they think we can do both.

The ambiguity that this counselor is experiencing is apparent. In this passage, does the administration support this staff and is lacking knowledge to support the
programs' vision and goals? Or does the administration not support this staff? More significantly, why is it that the counselor is uncertain about the administration's support of the counseling staff? According to this counselor's report, it almost seems as if both the counseling staff and the administration are dependent upon one another for maintaining the status of the counseling program as one in which discipline is the primary counselor function. The counseling staff, dependent on the level of support they do receive from the administration, and the administration, dependent on the counseling staffs' uncertainty of their support enables the program to remain as is: status quo. If an administration supports the CG&CP, then it allows the counseling staff to implement a CG&CP. It's a matter of choice.

In the next excerpt, a respondent described two different administrators' motives behind their resistance to CG&CPs. The resistance was described as a mixture of administrators' lack of knowledge of the counselor's role, but it is also clear that the counselor recognized the source of the resistance. This counselor works in a district that designates counseling personnel as part-time. However, this counselor's site administrator pays for an additional 3 days supplement. Therefore, this counselor is employed full-time.

Your site administrator makes a difference. So my administrator pays for that additional 3 days supplement. And then we have a couple of [administrators] who are really more intent on taking . . . the two days because it's given. But I think, should they be given the choice [of whether or not to employ a counselor] they might even take a reading specialist instead because [counseling's] not their bent . . . those are the people that you really have to work on. With those administrators, they have a counselor but they don't really know how to use them.
The respondent characterized some administrators as valuing guidance counseling and its role in the schools. The respondent also described other administrators as uninformed and indifferent, if not clearly positioned against the need for counselors in the schools. Administrators who prefer hiring reading specialists as opposed to counselors may arrive at their choices based on the value they assign to both types of services. Valuing one program over another does not suggest an opposition to guidance and counseling. It is most likely an objective decision based on individuals’ values and the needs of the school. That is, administrators who chose reading services over counseling services are not resistant when they are acting out of awareness of their values and the needs of the students. It is the lack of awareness of values and how this manifests itself that defines resistance.

The following passages illustrate how others’ lack of awareness of values manifested itself in a personal and hostile manner. Both passages refer to others’ resistance regarding CG&CPs. The respondents in the study who discussed their experiences with meeting this hostility reveal how the attitudes that administrators hold towards guidance and counseling may be acted out.

For me, I think it would be more principal specific, more administration specific. I’m trying to think of how many principals I’ve worked with. At least 10, maybe, close to 15 . . . and not because there’s a lot of turnover at one site, but because being part time you could end up being 2 days at this school, 2 days at that school, then there’s a change of principal in that school; so I would say between 10 and 12, And . . . with two of those it was not ignorance [as a form of resistance to what we do], it was their attitude towards the profession. And I feel like it’s futile. My spirits are dampened. I start out with the cheerleader attitude – you know, they just need to be filled-in; they just need to see it at work, or whatever . . . They just came from a school that didn’t have one. But after working with them for 2 years or 3 years and
seeing and hearing certain things shot down or things not respected, or just, sarcastic comments.

For this counselor, attempting to implement a CG&CP seems futile. A repeated effort at educating school personnel is met with negativity or sarcasm and these dampen the counselor’s morale. As another counselor asserted, “I was tempted to leave the situation many times because of these frustrations . . . of putting out fires . . . what I’m trying to keep are my counselors from getting burned out because . . . I do believe it’s a very overwhelming profession.” When there is such a high level of opposition to implementing a structure for counselors that supports their role and lessens the need for immediate intervention, there needs to be some explanation.

Change is always challenging. But within a school system, a change from the traditional, crisis-oriented, master-scheduler, disciplinarian role of the counselor to one of a process-oriented, developmental, and preventive approach to guidance and counseling is waged with heavy convictions, as the following passage illustrates:

But the attitude isn’t [changing along with the changes of guidance and counseling programs]. And, when I was kind of the spokesperson in our district . . . I was the one who first went through the training and to present it to a group of middle school principals. If those eyes could shoot daggers at me while I was presenting right out of the standards about what counselors should do versus what isn’t appropriate. The hate in that room, it was awful. It was.

This is an example of the long established rules embedded in a practice.

Challenging the traditional way of delivering guidance and counseling is to challenge the system in which it is entrenched and a tall task for school counselors. This school counselor, who was deemed the spokesperson in the district, probably did not anticipate the level of resistance the national standards would incur from middle
school principals in the district. If the principals were asked to identify the source of their resistance I wonder how they might explain their reactions. In some instances, the challenge of implementing a CG&CP is emotionally charged and may come with a price.

And then of course, I get the reputation of being the complaining trouble-making counselor [who won't conform to the standard] and you know what, I stood by that. And I don’t compromise. I happen to have a principal who is very supportive. She was new to the district and she would be pressured by the other principals to follow this path, and I just told her no – I can’t do that, and this is why. And when she heard why, she said, “that makes good sense.”

The implementation of a CG&CP can be hard won. For this counselor, it is being won by persistence and courage, by believing in CG&CPs, and by challenging attitudes of other persons’ about a system that is entrenched in an outdated conception of guidance programs. If these attitudes and traditions are not challenged, they will more likely than not continue to thrive. The school principal in the above passage, for instance, who was new to the district, not only felt the pressure to conform, but had no knowledge of CG&CPs. Without this knowledge, CG&CPs cannot be considered, not to mention respected, as a viable approach to guidance and counseling. Attitudes that are not reflected upon are often unconsciously acted upon and they drive the system.

In the final passage, a respondent discussed how one school district participated in a study regarding CG&CPs at the elementary level. Part of the research included acquiring input from parents. The counselor shared an experience in which a school personnel’s resistance to CG&CPs was unveiled:
But one of the superintendents heard that they were doing that [interviewing parents about CG&CPs] and said “No, you cannot interview parents, because we wouldn’t want them [parents] to expect a program that we don’t intend to provide”. Now to me, that covers a whole gamut, because they know parents are going to want it. And I know parents are going to want it. But don’t put it out there for them . . . That’s the attitude that you’re up against.

Summary

A number of findings have resulted from the study of school counselors’ perceptions of developmental guidance. First, the findings suggested that all of the counselors in the study described developmental guidance as a link between connection and prevention. That is, the counselors perceived developmental guidance as a connection between relationships with each other, students and their families, and the purpose of CG&CPs.

A broad inquiry into counselors’ perceptions of developmental guidance revealed that the majority of respondents perceived obtaining positive results as necessary to job security. For some counselors, obtaining results dominated the focus in that it overshadowed other aspects of CG&CPs, and to the detriment of its developmental foundation. In a more focused inquiry into the counselors’ perceptions of developmental guidance, the respondents had overwhelming favorable views of a developmental approach to guidance; however, they considered developmental guidance as an unrealistic approach within a school setting. All of the respondents described experiencing others’ (school personnel and parents) resistance to CG&CPs.
There were four dominant themes that influenced the respondents’ perceptions of developmental guidance: (1) The Demand to Justify CG&CPs, (2) CG&CPs as Related to Developmental Guidance and Relationships, (3) Implementation Realities, and (4) Managing Resistance. Further, a total of 6 sub-themes that illustrated the respondents’ knowledge, understanding, and experiences with developmental guidance emerged: (1) Data Production, (2) Program Building, (3) Remediation Issues, (4) The Press of School Environment, (5) Changing Perceptions of Program, and (6) Overcoming Challenges.

The findings were presented and arranged as independent factors that influenced counselors’ perceptions of developmental guidance. The following chapter explores the possible connection among the major themes and their influence on the application of developmental guidance.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Overview

This study focused on elementary and middle school counselors' perceptions of developmental guidance. It explored counselors' perceptions of developmental guidance via a qualitative inquiry into counselors' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences regarding CG&CPs and its developmental foundation. Nine counselors were placed into one of two groups. The interviews yielded themes related to the justification of CG&CPs, the perceived philosophy of developmental guidance, and the resistance counselors experience toward CG&CPs. This chapter provides an understanding of the dominant themes that emerged from the interviews. A discussion of the themes will be presented in connection with the literature.

Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling: The Relevance of Results

The challenges that school counselors face are complex. Counselors are pushed and pulled in many directions and asked to accomplish challenging if not impossible missions. For this reason alone, the counselors interviewed perceived the
importance of establishing and implementing CG&CPs. It is through implementing
CG&CPs that counselors are able to assist students, teachers, and families in an
effective manner. All of the counselors had adopted a CG&CP and perceived
CG&CPs to be the ultimate framework in which to serve students and families, and in
which they as counselors could exist and be visible. The counselors, however,
conceptualized CG&CPs from two separate and different perspectives: (1) as a
framework built on results and as (2) a framework built on demonstrating the
program. Both frameworks will be discussed.

It was clear throughout the interviews that all counselors believed in the
importance of establishing a program based on results, to be able to provide others
within the school and community empirical evidence of CG&CPs value to students.
For some of the counselors the necessity to empirically demonstrate the value of their
guidance program to teachers and administrators was a central theme. Obtaining
results seemed to have dominated the focus of some counselors in that it
overshadowed other aspects of CG&CPs, and to the detriment of its developmental
foundation.

Counselors who focused primarily on results communicated this focus
throughout the entirety of the interview. The attainment of results governed their
roles. Within this results-based focus, the characteristics of CG&CPs, such as the
programs’ interventions – counseling, classroom guidance, consultation, coordination
– and its developmental foundation (ASCA, 1997; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000;
Schmidt, 1999) were absent. The counselors’ focus on obtaining results to the
exclusion of the principles inherent in CG&CPs led me to conclude that there were
two possibilities for this viewpoint: either counselors perceived their positions to be
so overwhelming and at risk as to latch-on to results-based guidance as a life saver, or
that counselors’ knowledge of CG&CPs were incomplete. It is likely that both
possibilities exist.

While the dominant view of CG&CPs was discussed by counselors as
showing, documenting, and illustrating results, another view of CG&CPs emerged.
This other view was contrary to a results-based framework. Some respondents
described how they built their program by demonstrating its value. The counselors
invited others, specifically teachers, to experience them (and their comprehensive
guidance and counseling programs) as a resource. They gained access into
classrooms in an unassuming way, either by waiting for the right opportunity or by
creating an opportunity. Once in the classroom, they provided students with guidance
lessons, or they offered teachers their support (i.e., they demonstrated the role of the
counselor). More significantly, they demonstrated the possibilities of CG&CPs.

Counselors who focused on building their program discussed CG&CPs as a
vehicle by which they would use to demonstrate their roles. These counselors
discussed operating as a resource to teachers and students by offering them the
opportunity to experience elements of a CG&CP. Within this context, and in
comparison to the theme of results-based guidance, I detected the underpinnings of a
developmental philosophy in the sense that comprehensive guidance is not simply a
program; it is a living breathing entity. It is something that exists and is, therefore,
experienced. It is developmental in the sense that it emphasizes the process, not the product. This is an elusive concept, but one that I believe is very important for school counselors to recognize. CG&CPs are not plans or agendas imparted to students, nor are they interventions that exist to produce results. They are experiences to be lived. When counselors, for whatever reason, focus on a framework of results-based guidance, and have little understanding of CG&CPs, this crucial concept runs the risk of being overlooked. Following the interviews, I deliberated upon results-based CG&CPs and how such a framework might influence the way CG&CPs are conceptualized.

The intention of results-based comprehensive guidance and counseling programs is to assess the effects of school counseling program interventions. This would entail interventions based on developmental and preventive principles that promote student growth in the social/emotional, career, and academic domains (Lapan, 2001). The effects of the program are measured, however, and comprehensive guidance is not lost in a search for the results. Following the interviews, however, I was left with an impression of a much narrower perception of a results-based framework. The counselors appeared to conceive the purpose of a results-based framework as a means to an end. The purpose is the data, not necessarily the program. An example of this conception was described by counselors in their abilities to increase students' attendance or academic grades. I interpreted this perception to sound something like a formula: First, a problem is detected; second, an intervention is implemented; and third, results are assessed. The outcome:
A broader and more accurate purpose of a results-based framework is similar to this formula, however, the formula begins with the implementation of a CG&CP, it begins with the philosophical understanding and practical application of a CG&CP. Counselors, therefore, do not assess a program so that they may implement the program; they implement a program in which they may assess. Generally, counselors offer comprehensive programs and measure their effects on students’ development and the overall school environment (Herr, 2001; Paisley, 2001).

Still, within this broader perspective, how might using a results-based framework influence the way CG&CPs are conceptualized? It is true that results-based CG&CPs are structures that can enable counselors to promote their programs and seize control of their roles (Herr, 2001; Lapan, 2001). The benefits of results-based comprehensive programs are undoubtedly and strongly associated to the school counseling profession’s accountability. Within this framework school counselors are actively involved in the outcomes of the planned interventions, and supported in understanding the success of the interventions (Garner, 1990). In order to support the developmental foundation of comprehensive programs, however, evaluations that assess students’ psychological growth and development are essential. Gerler (1990) suggests that the challenges of evaluating programs embedded in a developmental philosophy, and policymakers lack of interest in students’ psychological development, may encourage easier methods of evaluation (i.e., test scores, attendance, grades). In addition, Myrick (1990) stated that “global measures such as achievement test scores, grades, and scores of various inventories, which are only
tangentially related to counselor’s intervention” (p. 28) may avert attention away from other valuable differences that counselors bring about.

It is likely that, in circumstances in which counselors do not possess a sound understanding of CG&CPs, a results-based framework can influence how CG&CPs are conceptualized. It seems apparent that they may lessen the significance of the theoretical base of developmental guidance. In addition, if counselors’ knowledge of CG&CPs is incomplete and not fully understood, how do counselors decide what to measure and how do they promote comprehensive programs? CG&CPs must be fully understood by counselors if they are to be successfully implemented and effectively measured.

Two other issues in the study emerged and were associated with a results-based framework: time and integrity. Some counselors described feeling conflicted about assessing their program outcomes to justify implementing CG&CPs. There was some trepidation about the level of effort and time that would be needed to develop pre- and posttests, or to participate on committees, or to find the time to fit tasks such as these into their already overwhelming schedules.

A second and more significant issue regarding result-based comprehensive guidance was raised. Although respondents were genuine in their desires to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs, they also expressed an appreciation of the complexity and ambiguity of individuals’ growth and change. Three respondents in particular voiced a sense of isolation and frustration they experience when asked to provide evidence of an often complicated practice. What counselors understand
about counseling and the counseling process is not generally understood by non-professionals, hence the isolation. Yet counselors are being asked by non-counselors to “prove” a programs’ effectiveness; hence the frustration.

For one respondent in the study, being asked to prove the value of the program was insulting, an offense to this counselor’s professionalism. For two others, this phenomenon placed stress on their integrity. As explained by one counselor, the counseling process that individuals experience and move through is implicit and its lessons are not always fully recognized until years later. Further, there are a number of variables at work in the counseling process for which the counselor has little control. Perhaps the counselors are in a position of little control on two fronts. One is that they have little control over their roles, and the other is that they do not have control over all the program outcomes.

Thus, such conflicts that counselors experience when asked to produce data to justify a CG&CP placed stress on their integrity. By being asked to directly demonstrate increases in students’ attendance or academic grades, some counselors may feel they are being asked to forgo their understanding of a process-oriented approach and to set aside their knowledge of the complexities and ambiguities of growth and change. These counselors appear to be struggling with not only how to measure a process-oriented approach to growth and learning, or how to measure psychological constructs, but how to provide evidence of the link between psychological growth and academic development. The authenticity of a developmentally founded program warrants measurement that is designed to assess
psychological development and maturity (Gerler, 1990). However, counselors in the study understand that they are being asked by administrators and by the national standards to directly affect students' test scores and improve academic grades.

Developmental Guidance and the Perception of the Mythical Boundary Between the Ideal and the Actual

During the interview counselors were asked to read and reflect upon this definition of developmental guidance (Peters, Shertzer, & VanHoose, 1965):

Based on the regular order of progressive change in the dynamic human being. This is in contrast with guidance focused on repair work to bring an individual to a level of adequacy so that he then may proceed once again along the developmental path toward maturity and responsible adult living. Developmental guidance focuses on the characteristic behaviors considered typical for the various ages of development. (p. 7)

To begin, I replicated part of a paragraph that I composed in the preceding section of this chapter, and added a few additional thoughts (the additional thoughts are in italics): The challenges that school counselors face are complex. Counselors are pushed and pulled in many directions and asked to accomplish challenging if not impossible missions. *In the face of such overwhelming challenges, the theoretical developmental foundation of a CG&CP can become perceived as ineffective for the job that lies ahead.* However, the counselors interviewed understood the importance of establishing and implementing CG&CPs. The reason for these school counselors' endorsements of CG&CPs: the preventive feature that is built into its framework. Prevention was perceived as a cornerstone to CG&CPs and shared a unique union with developmental guidance. The union between prevention and developmental
guidance will be discussed in the manner in which it was presented, an approach described as having two diametrically opposing features. Developmental guidance was discussed as (1) the ultimate approach to guidance and counseling, as well as (2) an impractical approach to guidance and counseling. Furthermore, implications of counselors’ perceptions about developmental guidance will be discussed.

There was no evidence in the study that counselors possessed a strong developmental theoretical knowledge base. Counselors did, however, in the absence of a developmental theoretical base discuss developmental guidance as an approach that was labeled, “the ideal,” “the ultimate,” a solution that fulfills the purpose of CG&CPs and supports their positions as school counselors. In addition, there was evidence that developmental guidance was considered from a philosophical perspective. Almost all the counselors spoke of developmental guidance within the context of connection: a connection between counselors and students, parents, teachers, the community, and other counselors within their districts, a connection between the experiences of the past and the circumstances of the present, and a connection between the circumstances of the present and the possibilities of the future.

More concretely, developmental guidance was perceived as a bridge, a bridge built of relationships, and more importantly the power of the connection between the relationships counselors had with each other, the students and their families, and the purpose of CG&CPs. Counselors identified the power of these connections as prevention. To illustrate the respondents’ view of developmental guidance (i.e.,
prevention), the middle school counselors in the study suggested that when students received comprehensive guidance and counseling in the elementary grades, they advanced to the next level of their education with the benefits of their experiences. These benefits are grounded in students’ self knowledge, the knowledge they have of others, and the knowledge that a guidance and counseling program exists as a means to assist them in their growth and with their struggles. When students participate in a CG&CP in the elementary grades they advance to the next level of their education armed with tools to deal with their worlds. The American Counseling Association (1984, Appendix C) asserts:

For the concept of a sequential and developmental guidance program to be truly meaningful to both the professional staff as well as parents and students, it must be part of a comprehensive K-12 guidance plan. (p. 287)

The counselors in the study described such a direction. They believed that when students received counseling service at the start of their education, they not only received the benefits of such services, but also the benefits attributed to the continuity of those services. However, for the counselors involved in the study, the understanding of guidance within a developmental context begins and ends here. It is within this context in which the respondents embraced developmental guidance (i.e., prevention) as the ultimate approach to guidance and counseling. However, it is also at this point in their conceptualizations of developmental guidance that they viewed the developmental approach to guidance as impractical and in conflict with the realities of the school environment. This division between developmental guidance
as an ultimate approach and an impractical approach emerged during the interviews as the theme Implementation Realities.

The theme of Implementation Realities ran counter to the theme of CG&CPs as Related to Developmental Guidance and Relationships. The counselors seemed to argue against the fundamental principles of development that were once celebrated as “ultimate.” Where connection and relationships were viewed as the cornerstones of prevention, and developmental guidance was understood as a continuum, reality emerged and the counselors seemed to have drawn a line between the ideal and the actual. It could be that the counselors were articulating the limits of their understanding about developmental guidance, that their view of developmental guidance is simply a program that must begin at the elementary level if it is to have an impact on students’ lives in the upper levels. But I do not agree with that interpretation. I think the counselors discussed developmental guidance within the context of a developmental philosophy, however undeveloped their understanding. The realities the counselors suggested were not so much an opinion or a position they took against developmental guidance, it seemed more of a position in reaction to the culture in which they worked.

The reality and the reasons for their positions of developmental guidance as an impractical approach is that it does not adequately address students’ needs. One reality is that students are entering school are developmentally unprepared to fulfill what is expected of them, cognitively and emotionally, and developmental guidance as an approach does not assist these students who are in need of remediation.
Another reality is that the demands within a school environment upon students are more advanced than the developmental level of the student and therefore the student must be assisted to fit the environment. And a final reality is that counselors have many responsibilities and because of these responsibilities it is a challenge to attend to the uniqueness of each student.

All of these realities are ones that school counselors face daily. The challenges counselors encounter are to be appreciated for what they are, and counselors are to be respected for their courage to meet them in their efforts to help others. Yet, however real these experiences and challenges are, they are not to be accepted as the rationale behind assigning the developmental approach to guidance as impractical. The reasons for viewing developmental guidance as impractical are not necessarily the reality of developmental guidance, especially when this view is formulated in the absence of understanding developmental theoretical concepts and its applications.

Based on the challenges that counselors experience implementing CG&CPs, it is understandable that they perceive developmental guidance as unrealistic. Overall, developmental guidance as an approach is not really understood and is only generally supported by administrators and teachers. As one counselor stated during the interview, “That’s all I get is: ‘Go fix these kids.’” Counselors are expected to be in the position to be reactive and crisis-oriented, and, because they do not have a strong grasp of developmental concepts and the knowledge of the inner workings of developmental guidance, they cannot adequately defend their positions. At present,
counselors do not possess a complete understanding of developmental theory and lack the skills for its application in their work with students (Paisley, & Benshoff, 1996; Paisley, 2001).

Dinkmeyer and Caldwell (as cited in Muro & Dinkmeyer, 1977), explain how developmental counseling, as a theory, fits the CG&C model in that it is pro-active, and process oriented. "Developmental counseling . . . is more concerned with the development of human potential and replaces the emphasis from counseling as a remedial service to counseling as a vital force in personalizing the educational process" (p. 60). Focusing on the regular order of progressive change in the dynamic human being in contrast to focusing on repair work (Peters, Shertzer, & Vanhoose, 1965) suggests that developmental counseling programs are perceived humanistically, holistically, and comprehensively (ASCA, 1984, Appendix C).

It is through this theoretical lens that students are perceived. A developmental approach to guidance does not suggest that students will proceed through stages in a standardized fashion and without crises. In fact, the very nature of individuals' development is a unique process in which crises are an elemental aspect of growth. In order to understand this process, all that is required is self-reflection, an examination of ones' own journey, of ones' past experiences, and of how these experiences influence the very nature of the individual. No one person's experience is the same as another's, and it is through this journey we develop into the persons we are today.
To further summarize a perception of growth and development, Wellman and Moore, (as cited in Gysbers & Henderson, 2000, pp. 64-65) stated:

The stage, or level, of individuals’ development at any given point is related to the nature and accuracy of their perceptions, the level of complexity of their conceptualizations, and the subsequent development rate and direction. No individual in an educational setting is at a zero point in development; hence change must be measured from some relative point rather than from an absolute.

When students are viewed through a developmental lens, they are accepted for all that they are. When obstacles are placed before them, students are not seen as problems to be fixed. When students fail to meet adult expectations, they are not perceived as proceeding on a path in need of adjustment. Developmental guidance and counseling honors the uniqueness of each child and understands and respects the process of growth and development. Myrick (1968) described the influence of the process in which students are listened to and accepted for all that they are:

The child will eventually come to know himself better. He will also see himself more positively as a person. For, he does not have to feel guilty about who he is and he can fully explore the implications of his behavior in his environment. Because the environment is less hostile to him, he identifies positively with people. Because he identifies positively, he can learn then how to socially vent those feelings and behaviors that are less acceptable in our society; yet, he can still accept them as part of what he is. Because he is less anxious about himself as a person, he is free to learn more of the information and skills that receive so much attention in school. Cognitive learning without affect are limited. And, it is the affect, or emotional part of man, that is central to all his behavior and keeps him motivated to learn. (pp. 6-9)

This is the foundation of CG&CPs. This is the foundation by which students are given the opportunity to thrive, in which interventions are conducted and measured, and the possibilities for growth are recognized. Yet counselors in the
study are compelled, perhaps for reasons of their own, due to outside pressures, or to a lack of understanding about the developmental foundation of CG&CPs, to shape, mold, and fix students to fit the environment. When developmental guidance is not fully understood counselors are left with little defense, or the inability to educate others in response to what is asked of them.

Resistance as a Natural State

There is an overarching theme that seems to permeate all aspects of the respondents’ perceptions of developmental guidance. That theme is Managing Resistance. Resistance, as described by the respondents, is not a single isolated event; it is an influential occurrence. They described not only explicit experiences involving school personnel and parent resistance to CG&CPs, but conveyed a pervasiveness that lingers throughout all of the identified themes. This chapter explored resistance as an integral and influential factor of the respondents’ experiences with CG&CPs. Counselors’ experiences with resistance were discussed in relation to a results-based framework and a developmental approach to guidance. Initially, however, resistance as a psychological reaction to change will be delineated. Resistance is “the wish to change and the wish not to change” (Trembley, 1999, p. 111). Resistance, at its best is a natural and expected reaction to change. At its worst, it is a controlling and indefinable character with the potential to obstruct the best of plans. Resistance can be specific to an individual’s reaction to change, or can be observed as an organizational reaction to change (Dougherty, Dougherty, &
Prucell, 1991). The sources of resistance that is specific to individuals’ reactions to change within a school setting, be that individual a student, teacher, administrator, or parent, are varied and can be difficult to detect. Resistance has also been described (Egan, 2002) as reacting to coercion and can be both active and passive. Some sources of resistance specific to individuals are: misconception, fear of intensity, lack of trust, fear of disorganization, shame, fear of change, fear of success, motivated by rebelliousness, and cognitive distortions (Egan, 2002; Dougherty, Dougherty, & Prucell, 1991).

The counselors in the study made reference to some of these sources of resistance, indicating that they had observed administrators, parents, and teachers misunderstand counseling and the counseling process. In addition, respondents described school personnel and parent resistance due to fear of discomfort that often accompanies change, and fear of disclosure that can occur during the counseling process. As a respondent in the study stated, “Counseling is a different animal,” and for whatever reason, others may react to guidance and counseling out of their own biases and emotional defenses. Regardless of the reason, however, within a school environment, there is an organizational dynamic that exists, and attempts to generate change may cause resistance (Dougherty, Dougherty, & Prucell, 1991).

Respondents discussed two approaches to justifying the implementation of their programs: evaluation and demonstration; (1) through a results-based approach to guidance and (2) through demonstrating “how their work contributes to the overall school environment and the development of students” (Hardesty & Dillard, 1994, p.
90), counselors in the study hoped for control over their roles. These two approaches were described as a means to prove the programs effectiveness therefore increasing others acceptance of CG&CPs and the counselors role. However, both approaches seem more of a strategy that is related to managing others’ resistance than it is related to limiting role confusion and increasing professional identification of counselors.

Role confusion and resistance are two separate phenomena with distinct attributes. Defined previously as “the wish to change and the wish not to change” (Trembley, 1999, p. 111) resistance hinders the likelihood of a successful outcome (Cormier & Cormier, 1985). It is a passive or active behavior that blocks attempts at change. Role confusion, in contrast,

... is promoted through a myriad of tasks that a counselor performs, school sites having various needs relating to counseling activities, and a difference of perception between principal and counselor in determining congruency between an administrative role and that of helping students (Ponec & Brock, 2000, p. 209).

Encountering resistance will undoubtedly be a different experience from encountering role confusion. Each experience, therefore, requires a different approach or solution, and resistance cannot be dealt with effectively if it is not recognized (Campbell, 1993). Whereas accountability studies can be an influential tool for effecting change and promoting the counselors role (Myrick, 1990), other strategies, such as patience, collaboration, and education can minimize resistance (Dougherty, Dougherty, & Prucell, 1991).

One respondent in the study revealed using such strategies to deal with resistance. This respondent waited for an opportunity for access into classrooms and
invited teachers to experience CG&CP services. Through this approach, others’ resistance was minimized and this respondent seemed to have made progress implementing the CG&CP. However, in the face of this resistance, the counselor's experience was one of isolation, conflict, and personalization. This respondent described an experience in which, as the spokesperson responsible for presenting information regarding the National Standards to a group of principals in the district, encountered strong reactions. She experienced their reactions as “hate”. However, the issue is not whether the principals felt “hatred” toward this counselor for her position regarding the National Standards. The issue is that this counselor encountered strong reactions from the principals and interpreted their reactions as “hate.” It is doubtful that this interpretation is accurate. Most likely the counselor personalized the principals' reactions, nonetheless, the counselor's experience is real, and therefore, a matter that would be better off addressed for the wellbeing of both the counselor and CG&CPs. Learning to identify and deal with resistance, since it is prevalent when implementing CG&CPs, would greatly enhance the development of CG&CPs, as well as support counselors who work in the schools.

In addition, with regards to justifying implementing a CG&CP, through a results-based approach, it is my interpretation that the respondents, although they may themselves be resistant to accountability do not consider measuring the value of their program as an unreasonable request. It seems that what the respondents may perceive as undeserved is not what is being asked of them, but it is the attitude in which they are being asked. The counselors in the interview revealed that some administrators
have little knowledge or understanding of the counseling program or the counseling process and, more importantly, care little about gaining that knowledge. The respondents described at length the resistance they encountered in their attempts at implementing CG&CPs, specifically, the resistance they encountered with regards to the developmental approach to guidance.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

This study explored school counselors' perceptions of developmental guidance, their beliefs, attitudes, understandings, and experiences of the developmental foundation embedded in CG&CPs. In an attempt to gain insight into counselors' perceptions of the theoretical aspects of developmental guidance, the study focused on comprehensive programs as a whole, and developmental guidance as an approach. This expansive as well as specific inquiry yielded themes regarding the perceptions' of the counselors' present situations. Some counselors described an established CG&CP and a supportive working environment. Other counselors indicated that they were working toward implementing a CG&CP. All counselors, to some degree, revealed the struggles they experienced as they attempted to facilitate their programs. Regardless of the level of support, four major factors influenced their perceptions of CG&CPs and a developmental approach to guidance: (1) the demand to justify CG&CPs, (2) a lack of a developmental theoretical knowledge base, (3) others' resistance, and (4) the press of the school environment.
The study highlighted counselors’ perceptions regarding developmental guidance. It offered insight into their attitudes about comprehensive programs however, it did not disclose counselors’ depth of knowledge, nor did it address the respondents’ own resistance to CG&CPs. The following research is recommended:

1. How do school counselors’ own barriers affect the implementation of CG&CPs?

2. How do school counselors reconcile developmental guidance as an ultimate approach to school counseling programs and, yet, believe that other approaches fit into the school environment better?

3. What are school counselors’ perceptions of developmental guidance who are supported by their administration?

Implications for Training

In summary, this study illustrated counselors’ misconceptions of developmental guidance and emphasized the lack of understanding about theoretical developmental concepts. It underscored the need to enhance school counselors’ training to include a knowledge base that expounds upon developmental theory in such a way as to provide counselors with the tools to implement development guidance. If a developmental foundation is to exist, a serious effort aimed at supplying school counselors with the depth of knowledge and practical application of developmental guidance that they deserve in order to be effective. This would mean that counselor educators prepare prospective school counselors with knowledge
regarding developmental theory and concepts, and assist them in applying the skills associated with developmental principles (Paisley & Benshoff, 1996). Prospective school counselors require in-depth knowledge about the development of children in terms of physical maturity, cognitive skills, emotional experience, expression, and regulation, and social influences (Straus, 1999).

With a proper understanding of developmental theoretical principles, school counselors will have in their possession a map in which to serve all students. This map will not only provide school counselors with direction for understanding the complexities of child development, but will provide counselors with the knowledge to educate administrators, teachers, and parents about CG&CPs and developmental guidance. With a proper understanding of developmental principles school counselors will be more prepared to lead and manage, as well as to promote and implement their CG&CP.
Appendix A

Phone Script / Screener Questionnaire
Appendix A
Phone Script / Screener Questionnaire

In order to determine the perceptions' of school counselors regarding developmental guidance, a criteria-based selective sampling will be used. Criteria for participation will include counselors who: (a) possess a state credential to practice school counseling, (b) are currently practicing in an elementary or middle school setting, (c) have been employed full-time for a minimum of two years, or part-time if more than 2 years, (d) state that they are implementing a comprehensive guidance program that is developmental in nature, (e) demonstrate familiarity with CG&CPs, and (f) demonstrate a willingness to talk about CG&CPs. A phone script containing a verbal consent process, the criteria for participation, and a follow-up interview script, is provided below.

Phone Script

Verbal Consent for Screener Questionnaire

"My name is Lori Pashnik and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology Department at Western Michigan University. I am currently working on my doctoral dissertation. I am calling you today because I am in the process of recruiting elementary and middle school counselors for my research. I was given your name by ____________. I am very interested in talking to a group of elementary and middle school counselors about their perceptions of developmental guidance. I have eight very short questions to ask you to determine if you would be eligible to participate in the study. Any information you give me is strictly confidential. If you choose to answer the questions and then decide you do not want to participate in the study, the information you will have given me will be discarded. Would you be willing to take a moment answer the questions"?

To be eligible for the study the counselor must give verbal consent to answer the screener questionnaire.
Screener Questionnaire

At any time during the line of questioning should the potential participant become ineligible for participation in the study, refer to the phone script labeled: Ineligibility for Participation.

1. What is your job title? *To be eligible for the study the job title must be school counselor*

2. Are you credentialed to practice school counseling in the state of ____________? *To be eligible for the study the school counselor must answer yes*

3. How many years have you been an elementary school counselor? *To be eligible for the study the school counselor must have at least 2 years of experience*

4. Do you work full or part time? *To be eligible for the study the counselor must currently be working on a full-time basis. Exception will be give to counselors with more than 2 years of experience*

5. Would you say that the counseling program at your school is a Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program that is developmental or that your are working at implementing a CG&CP that is developmental? *To be eligible for the study the counselor must answer yes*

6. On a scale of one to 10 (1 Being not knowledgeable, and 10 Being very knowledgeable), how knowledgeable would you rate yourself about Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Programs? *To be eligible for the study the counselor must rate at a 5 or above*

7. As part of this research project, would you be willing to discuss your understanding of, experience of, and beliefs about Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling in a small
of group of five other elementary and middle school counselors for approximately 1.5 hours? *To be eligible for the study the counselor must answer yes*

8. In addition, would you be willing to discuss your understanding of, experience of, and beliefs about Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling in a second, individual follow-up interview (which will be conducted over the phone) for approximately 30 minutes? *To be eligible for the study the counselor must answer yes*

9. And finally, would you be willing to have the group discussion audio and video recorded for the purpose of research? *To be eligible for the study the counselor must answer yes*

10. The interview is scheduled to take place on (date or date) at (time) at (facility). Which group interview would you be available to attend? In the event the counselor is not available for either interview: *Ask them when they can be available and tell them you will call them back regarding dates and times*.

11. What is your mailing address so that I may mail to you a letter of confirmation? Could you provide me with your home phone number (in the event that I do not have it) so that I may contact you for a second follow-up phone interview?

12. Do you know of anyone else who may be interested in participating in this study?

**Ineligibility for Participation**

At any time during the line of questioning should the potential participant become ineligible for participation in the study they will be given the following explanation:

"In order to be eligible to participate in the study, you need to *(cite eligibility requirement)*".

For questions 5, 6, 7, 8: "Is this a question you want to reconsider, or are you satisfied with your response"?
(a) If the respondent is satisfied with his or her response: "Okay, well I really appreciate the time you've taken to answer these questions and I'd like to thank you for your work with the kids and families in our community. Do you know of anyone else who may be interested in participating in this study"?

(b) If the respondent reflected upon his or her response and reconsidered his or her answer (for questions 5, 6, 7, 8), proceed with the list of questions.

Follow-up Individual Interview

"Hi (participant's name). This is Lori Pashnik from Western Michigan University. I'm calling regarding the focus group study that you participated in: School Counselors' Perceptions of Developmental Guidance. I've been going over the transcripts from our group interview and have run across some interesting comments that you made that I would like to follow-up on. It shouldn't take more than 30 minutes, is this a good time or, should I call you back?"

If it is a good time for the participant, proceed with follow-up interview. If it is not a good time, ask for a date and time that would be more convenient.

Conclusion of the Follow-Up Interview. "Thanks again for your time and participation in my study (participant's name). Your knowledge about school counseling and your thoughts and opinions on the subject has been invaluable to this project. I hope, too, that you gained something from your involvement as well. I wish you the best, and appreciate your contribution”. Do you have any questions?

Phone Message. "Hi (participant's name). This is Lori Pashnik from Western Michigan University. I'm calling regarding the focus group study that you participated in: School Counselors’ Perceptions of Developmental Guidance. I've been going over the transcripts from our group interview and have run across some interesting comments
that you made that I would like to follow-up on. It shouldn’t take more than 30 minutes. I will call you again tomorrow after 4:00 p.m. so that we can conduct the follow-up interview or to set up a time that would more convenient for you. Thanks, bye”.

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Appendix B

Letter of Confirmation
Appendix B
Letter of Confirmation

(Date)

Name
Address

Dear (Participant),

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this project: School Counselors’ Perceptions of Developmental Guidance: A Qualitative Study. I am looking forward to the opportunity to explore with you your beliefs, understandings, and experiences about the developmental foundation of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program. Likewise, I hope you will find this opportunity to exchange ideas with other school counselors a stimulating and useful experience for your practice.

A group interview has been scheduled to meet on ___(date)___ at ___(time)____. Enclosed you will find a copy of a Consent Form. Please read the Consent Form. When we meet I will answer any questions you have and ask you to sign the Consent. You may withdraw from participating in the study at any time.

Also enclosed are directions to the facility, instructions for parking, and a Supplemental Information Form. Please complete the Supplemental Form before we meet on ___(date)___ at ___(time)____. Should a time conflict arise between now and the time of our meeting, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me.

Again, I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Lori Pashnik, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate, Western Michigan University
Appendix C
Supplemental Information Form

Please answer the questions below and bring them, along with your Consent Form, to the group interview.

The date of my interview is: _________________________________

How many years have you been a practicing school counselor?
(a) Elementary: ____________ years (full or part time)  Please circle
(b) Middle School: ____________ years (full or part time)  Please circle
(c) High School: ____________ years (full or part time)  Please circle
(d) Total: ____________ years

What credential(s) or endorsements do you currently hold?

Name: ___________________________________________________________________

Gender: _____Male  _____Female

Ethnicity: _____African American  _____Hispanic
____Alaskan Native  _____International/Non US Resident
_____American Indian  _____Multiracial
_____Asian American  _____Pacific Islander
_____Caucasian  Other _________________

Did you graduate from a CACREP accredited program?  _____Yes  _____No  _____Not Sure

Highest Degree Earned:  _____M.A  _____Ph.D./Ed.D

Would you like to receive a copy of the findings?  _____Yes  _____No

Name/Address/phone: _______________________________________________________

How did you learn about Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling programs?
_____Training workshops  _____College Courses  _____Research/Articles
_____Conferences,  other: __________________________________________________
Appendix D

Consent
I have been invited to participate in a research project entitled: *School Counselors' Perception of Developmental Guidance: A Qualitative Study*. The purpose of this research is to study elementary and middle school counselors’ understanding and experiences about the developmental foundation of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs. This study is Lori Pashnik’s dissertation project.

My consent to participate in this project indicates that I will be asked to participate in a one and one half hour group interview with four other elementary and/or middle school counselors and with Lori Pashnik. Following the group interview I may be contacted by Lori Pashnik and asked to participate in a 15-30 minute follow-up interview by phone. The setting and time of the group interview will be arranged for my convenience. The interview will involve a discussion regarding my perception of developmental guidance.

One way in which I may benefit from this activity is having the chance to talk about the strengths and challenges of implementing a comprehensive guidance and counseling program. Research in this area may assist counselor educators in the training and supervision of school counselors, as well as benefit the students who attend our schools.

The focus groups will be video and audio recorded, and tapes will be transcribed by Lori Pashnik. All of the information collected from me is confidential. That means that my name, the name of my school, or school district, and other identifying information will not appear on any presentations or publications which this information is video and audio recorded. The forms will all be coded, and Lori Pashnik will keep a separate master list with the names of participants and the corresponding code numbers. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list and the audio and video tapes will be destroyed. All other forms will be retained for at least 3 years in a locked file in the principal investigator’s office.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate if the stamped date is more than one year old.
I may refuse to participate or quit at any time during the study without prejudice or penalty. If I have questions or concerns about this study, I may contact either Lori Pashnik at (858) 794-1847 or Dr. John Geisler at (269) 387-5110. I may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (269) 387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at (269) 387-8298 with any concerns that I may have. My signature below indicates that I have read and/or had explained to me the purpose and requirements of the study and that I agree to participate.

_________________________________________  ___________
Signature                                Date

My signature below indicates that I agree not to discuss outside of this focus group any comments made by the other participants.

_________________________________________  ___________
Signature                                Date

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Appendix E

Discussion / Interview Guide
Appendix E
Discussion/Interview Guide

(a) The interview will begin by reviewing the Consent Form. The purpose of the study, confidentiality, and the amount of time the interview will be expected to last will be highlighted. Participants will be asked to sign the Consent Form.

(b) A brief statement about this researcher’s experience and interest in the study will be made.

(c) In order to receive salient data, participants will be instructed to answer questions based on what they think, believe, and understand about comprehensive and developmental guidance and to refrain from sharing examples or stories about their program.

1. Tell me what you think about comprehensive guidance and counseling?

2. A comprehensive guidance and counseling model is built on a developmental philosophy and a preventive approach to guidance. The two terms are defined below:

*Developmental guidance*: based on the regular order of progressive change in the dynamic human being. This is in contrast with guidance focused on repair work to bring an individual to a level of adequacy so that he then may proceed once again along the developmental path toward maturity and responsible adult living. Developmental guidance focuses on the characteristic behaviors considered typical for the various ages or stages of development (Peters, Shertzer, & Vanhoose, 1965, p. 7).

*Preventive approach*: one that emphasizes the circumvention of potential problems (Myrick, 1968).

3. What are your experiences, beliefs, and opinions about developmental guidance?
Appendix F

HSIRB Clearance Letter
Date: October 8, 2003

To: John Geisler, Principal Investigator
   Lori Pashnik, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Mary Lagerwey, Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 03-05-25

This letter will serve as confirmation that the changes to your research project "School Counselors' Perceptions of Developmental Guidance: A Qualitative Study" requested in your memo receive October 8, 2003 have been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: June 11, 2004


