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Best Practices in Counseling the Gifted in Schools: What's Really Happening?

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Abstract

School counselors play a vital role in meeting the needs of gifted students in their buildings. However, because there is a lack of structured, standardized, and empirically tested best practices for counseling gifted students, school counselors may not know how best to serve this unique population. The purpose of this study was to investigate gifted and talented adolescents' experiences with the counseling techniques, strategies, and approaches most frequently cited in the gifted education literature in order to determine if any of these best practices were actually occurring. Few of these best practices were experienced by gifted and talented adolescents surveyed. School counselor preparation programs should consider providing training curriculum that addresses issues unique to the learning and development of gifted students.

Putting the research to use

School counselors play an integral role in supporting the talent development of gifted students. While there is an abundance of suggested best practices in counseling the gifted in the literature, there are few studies which ascertain if the suggested best practices are being provided by school counselors or the relationship between the gifted student and their counselor. This study was designed to enlighten both the fields of school counseling and gifted education as to what students are experiencing with their school counselors, what if any best practices are being delivered, and what programmatic options gifted students would like to see in their high schools. Findings indicate that few of the best practices are being experienced by high school students. Hence, while future research is needed to further explore this disconnect, the critical issue is the need for school counselors to have more exposure to these best practices in their preparation programs and beyond.

Keywords

Counseling, best practices, school counseling, high school students, visual and performing arts, humanities, adolescents, quantitative methods

In 2000, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) developed a set of socioemotional guidance and counseling program criterion. These criteria rested on a provision of an affective curriculum and differentiated guidance strategies to support gifted learners in schools with an emphasis on meeting the needs of underachieving and at-risk gifted students. Generally, it has fallen to the gifted educator to provide a great deal of the programming to meet the social, emotional, and career needs of the gifted in addition to their academic needs. However, the program standards require the delivery of affective curriculum and career guidance by a counselor who is familiar with the characteristics and needs of the gifted learner.

Recently, the school counseling profession has drawn attention to and highlighted the school counselor's involvement with their gifted students (Milsom & Peterson, 2006). The American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) position statement on the school counselor's involvement with his or her school's gifted population states that the

school counselor "assists in providing technical assistance and an organized support system within the developmental comprehensive school counseling program for gifted and talented students to meet their extensive and diverse needs as well as the needs of all students" (ASCA, 2007). This assistance and support includes participating in identification, acting as an advocate, providing group and individual counseling, recommending resources, engaging in professional development regarding gifted services, and promoting an understanding and awareness of gifted students' unique needs. This latter clause refers to 10 specific areas of underachievement: perfectionism, depression, dropping out, delinquency,

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difficulty in peer relationships, career development, meeting expectations, goal setting, and questioning others' values (ASCA, 2007).

However, school counselors are responsible for supporting the needs of all students in three primary domain areas: academic, personal-social, and career (ASCA, 2003). Following the ASCA national model (2003), the ASCA position statement (ASCA, 2007) and domain standards (ASCA, 1998) as well as the programming principles from NAGC, a school counselor is well informed of *what* needs to target but not necessarily *how* to meet those needs. Professional school counselors need an easily-accessed repertoire of best practices to serve the counseling needs of gifted students in all three areas with a special "eye" toward how these students experience these needs because of their unique gifts and development.

Best Practices in Counseling the Gifted Student

Gifted students may present a challenge to school counselors because of their unique abilities and development. General counseling approaches geared toward the majority of students in the building may not meet the needs of the gifted student; hence, counseling the gifted student requires differentiating current school counseling practices (Mendaglio & Peterson, 2007; Peterson, 2006, 2008) to reflect new awareness, knowledge, and skill sets. To be successful with their gifted students, counselors must be aware of this population's unique psychology and needs and be knowledgeable about specific counseling activities, techniques, and strategies that can meet these needs, which may require the counselor to differentiate their own service delivery methods (e.g., facilitating small groups of female gifted students to discuss career exploration in male-dominated fields).

The field of gifted education has already established a variety of activities and service delivery models designed to aid gifted educators and counselors in their programming for services supporting academic, personal-social, and career needs of the gifted (Colangelo, 2003; Coleman & Cross, 2001; Cross, 2004; Greene, 2002; Mendaglio & Peterson, 2007; Moon, 2002; Peterson, 2006; Reis & Moon, 2002; Siegle & McCoach, 2002; Silverman, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1993d; VanTassel-Baska, 1998a, 1998b). However, very few of these have made their way into the general school counseling literature base and nor have the majority of these best practices been tested empirically to ascertain their levels of effectiveness (Peterson, 2008; Robinson, Reis, Neihart, & Moon, 2002). In fact, "there is almost no outcome research available on the efficacy of specific counseling modalities, approaches, or strategies, with gifted individuals and their families" (Moon, 2002, p. 218).

Because of the lack of empirical research evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies, modalities, and approaches, the field of gifted education or counseling does not have a

set of standardized "best practices;" instead, the professions have a loose organization of methods and techniques that fall into a variety of domains. These include strategies designed to nourish the talent development process within the academic, career, and social-emotional domains and techniques and strategies that specifically address the issues stemming from gifted psychology and asynchronous development.

The following discussion of best practices is far from exhaustive, but it does represent perhaps the most frequently suggested and used techniques, strategies, and activities that can be employed in individual, group, building and community-wide settings to support gifted students.

The Counseling Relationship

One nonnegotiable requirement in serving the gifted student is that the counselor must be knowledgeable about the nature and development of the gifted student (Robinson et al., 2002; Silverman, 1993c). Common characteristics of the gifted manifest themselves in all domain areas. Hence, school counselors must be fluent in the developmental aspects of giftedness such as asynchrony, passion for learning, intensity, drive to achieve, need for mental stimulation and understanding, desire for precision and/or perfection, moral awareness, and introversion (Lovecky, 1992, 1993).

With this knowledge and awareness of gifted development, school counselors should be able to better serve the needs of their students when they arise. Both conceptual literature and empirical research in the gifted education profession point to the need for school counselors to be prepared to address needed concrete skill sets and provide venues to facilitate self-awareness in specific areas in addition to working with issues unique to the gifted student as discussed above.

Skill Sets

Social-emotional and academic concerns frequently stem from a lack of proper identification and placement in appropriately challenging classes. Lack of challenge and rigor often result in boredom, withdrawal, and underachievement (Rimm, 2003). However, for some students, with correct placement comes their first experience with challenge or the need to know certain skills for success that may never have been formally taught but are now required (VanTassel-Baska, 1998a; VanTassel-Baska & Baska, 1993). Basic skills such as organization, time management, test taking, and decision making or prioritization are general necessities for academic success; educators and parents may assume that gifted students may already have these basic skill sets when they do not (Silverman, 1993c). Although the students' natural abilities may have compensated for not knowing these skills in the past, at some point the individual's knowledge

and application of these skills and others necessary for project completion is required. Hence, counselors must know how to help gifted students master a variety of skills when they are needed.

Other skills are social in nature. Because of gifted students' asynchronous development, the smaller pool of like-minded peers, and the potential for stigma, social relationships may be challenging for gifted students (Cross, Coleman, & Terhaar-Yonkers, 1991; Robinson, 2002; Schultz & Delisle, 2003). Again, it may be taken for granted that gifted students have mastered such skills as perspective taking, boundary setting, and appropriate communication, but that may not be the case (Betts, 1986; Blackburn & Erickson, 1986; Delisle, 1992). School counselors can provide safe individual and group settings in which gifted students can discuss and practice these skills (Colangelo & Peterson, 1993). School counselors can also provide services to prevent hostile peer interactions such as bullying, train students to defuse conflict, and help gifted students develop positive coping skills to cope with lack of understanding from their peers (Silverman, 1993c).

Additional skills may not be easily categorized by area and are more overarching life skills. Both academic and personal-social challenges may call for skills such as using positive self-talk, stress reduction and visualization techniques, problem solving, and identifying areas of personal control and ways to sustain motivation.

Developing Awareness

Although skills tend to be more concrete and can be behaviorally measured, much of what a school counselor can help a gifted student with is intangible. The development of self-awareness in a variety of arenas can then be linked to skill development. Through group and individual counseling, school counselors can facilitate self-awareness around how gifted students interact with their peers by discussing perceptions, fitting in, feelings of differentness, self/other acceptance, and self-esteem (Colangelo, 2003). Exploration of issues surrounding quality or excellence in academic work, learning styles and preferences, and the student's unique talent areas can also enhance self-awareness in relation to the classroom (VanTassel-Baska, 1998a, 1998b). Gaining a better understanding and awareness of personal growth, learning experiences, and mistake making may lead to a gradual and healthy acceptance of self (Schuler, 2002; Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1982).

School counselors cannot overlook the importance of helping students understand themselves as gifted (Galbraith, 1985). According to Silverman (1993c), one of the primary aspects of counseling the gifted student is to explore student's beliefs and conceptualizations of the term *gifted*. School counselors should be prepared to acknowledge and listen empathically to a student's experience regarding what it is like to be a person with a gift and talent, including what it may feel to be set apart from others.

Gifted students' academic and personal-social experiences can include pressure to achieve, unhealthy perfectionism, and feelings of frustration, anxiety, and loneliness. In adolescence, gifted students encounter additional pressure to determine how they will apply their gifts, engage in leadership activities, and make future contributions that will make a difference to society (Buescher & Higham, 1990; Colangelo, 2003; Colangelo & Fleuridas, 1986). Decision making concerning postsecondary school plans can be confusing as students try to balance the expectations they have of themselves and the expectations others have for them (Greene, 2002).

Programs, Services, and Interventions

A variety of programs, services, and interventions can provide the venues for skill development and the facilitation of self-awareness. In the area of academics, school counselors can use small groups as a way of teaching concrete skills or helping students work from idea to product with an emphasis on multiple rough drafts and editing (Colangelo, 2003; Colangelo & Peterson, 1993; VanTassel-Baska, 1998a). Individual academic and career planning can facilitate the development of flexible academic blueprints that can help students plan their 4 years in high school, sketch potential futures in colleges or the world of work, and illuminate personal strengths, learning styles, and leadership opportunities (Greene, 2002; VanTassel-Baska, 1998a).

Provisions for gifted students after high school should be considered a long-range, developmental process versus a one-shot planning opportunity (Greene, 2002). Addressing student concerns can result in a rich and thorough exploration of possible lifestyles and college/career options (Colangelo, 2003). School counselors, working with community partners, can provide a variety of venues such as apprenticeships, mentorships, job shadowing, part-time jobs, and opportunities for volunteer and service learning to their gifted students (Greene, 2002; Silverman, 1993d). In addition, career, personal-social and academic counseling can incorporate decision making, timelines, goal setting, and exploration of life themes and values.

Although skills, self-awareness, and specific program offerings are all designed to promote the overall positive functioning of the gifted student, few of them have been empirically tested to determine their worth and effectiveness when applied to gifted and talented students (Peterson, 2008). Reis and Moon (2002) state the following:

There are many good ideas in the literature for developmental interventions by parents, teachers, and counselors, but few suggestions for how to help professional counselors best address the needs of their clients who are gifted and talented. What is needed most, however, is solid, empirical research on patterns and interventions that promote the healthy development of gifted students into gifted adults who lead satisfying personal and professional lives. (p. 262)

Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate gifted and talented adolescents' experiences with counseling techniques, strategies, and approaches most frequently cited in the gifted education literature to determine if any of these best practices were actually occurring. Because the students who participated in this study were identified as gifted and talented in the visual and performing arts and humanities, it is important to discuss some of their needs and how the school counselor can further develop their skill sets and self-awareness and work toward providing necessary services and interventions.

Jarvin and Subotnik (2006) suggest that students gifted in academic domains (such as humanities) need analytical skills, the ability to employ creativity, and practical intelligence. Teachers, families, and communities play an important role as they provide resources, mental stimulation, venues for promotion of their abilities, motivation, and praise (Jarvin & Subotnik, 2006). As students develop, they become indoctrinated into the norms and values of the community and culture of their specific talent area. Expert teachers in their domain area help students acquire the specific techniques and knowledge and facilitate student transition from looking to others for feedback to becoming self-critics (Jarvis & Subotnik, 2006). School counselors are in a unique position to help gifted students in academic domains by involving themselves in activities such as working with students' self-doubt and unhealthy perfectionism in product and performance, teaching stress and anxiety-reducing techniques, supporting intrinsic motivation, coaching students in organization and time management, and facilitating the necessary communication and social skills that will help students work with colleagues, peers, and reviewers (Peterson, 2006). Most important, school counselors can ensure that students are appropriately challenged in their class work, use partnerships to provide clubs and other after-school opportunities, assist students with postsecondary career planning, and help teachers recognize student strengths and areas of challenge so that students gain that self-evaluative skill for themselves (Jarvis & Subotnik, 2006).

Students in the visual and performing arts, however, have different needs. Clark and Zimmerman (2004) write that artistic students have a different conceptualization of what giftedness is; they believe that talents can be attained by hard work (Clark & Zimmerman, 2004). Artistic students view themselves as competent but do not want to be seen as too different from other students, a finding corroborated by Kerr, Colangelo, and Gaeth (1988). Clark and Zimmerman (2004) underscore this point by writing that these students may believe that their talents will be misunderstood or considered strange and opt to hide their artistic abilities in school. However, students who participated in summer and other artistic enrichment opportunities not only benefitted from an opportunity to work with peers with similar abilities and interests but also by working with expert teachers who challenged them in ways their traditional school curriculum did not (Clark & Zimmerman, 2004). Family and educator support

are vital to these students' artistic development (Bloom, 1985; Freeman, 2000), as are the characteristics of perseverance, sustained concentration, focus, and time to practice in the talent area (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Sabol, 2006). These students also need to have early opportunities for performance and achievement in their artistic domain (Bloom, 1985).

School counselors can facilitate the talent development of these gifted visual and performing artists. Specifically school counselors can address, through individual or small-group counseling, what giftedness means, experiences with unsupportive families, feelings of being different, peer resentment and stigma, stereotypes, and common myths associating creativity and art with mental instability and drug and alcohol abuse (Oreck, Baum, & McCartney, 2000; Sabol, 2006). School counselors can facilitate early identification, positive instructional opportunities, and student entrance into arts programs. Working as brokers of resources within the community, school counselors can assist in obtaining needed equipment and tools that the student's family may not be able to supply (Oreck et al., 2000). School counselors can dialogue with both students and parents about postsecondary options in terms of schools, various career paths, reconciling personal dreams about the future and reality, and the practicalities behind artists and performers supporting themselves (Zimmerman, 1995). Artistic young women may need extra support from school counselors, such as the provision of adult female role models in the arts, time management, and balance of their artistic opportunities with academic or other school commitments, and working toward a strong sense of self-identity (Clark & Zimmerman, 2004). However, none of these suggested activities, discussions, or counseling roles have been empirically tested to determine their effectiveness with gifted students in general, let alone those gifted in the areas of humanities and visual and performing arts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide information on what techniques and strategies or "best practices" frequently cited in the gifted education literature are occurring in the school counseling setting and which academic and career interventions and services that gifted students would like to see included in their school counseling programs. Because the primary stakeholder in the counseling experience is the gifted student, this study seeks to determine the students' experiences with these suggested "best practices" in school counseling from the students' point of view. This study includes three primary research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the aspects of the school counseling relationship that gifted students are experiencing, and what is the nature of the high school counseling relationship as described and experienced by gifted and talented students?

Table 1. Frequently Cited Counseling Concerns and Corresponding Items in GT-AESC II

Best Practices of Counseling Gifted Students	Corresponding Item
The counseling relationship: required knowledge/understanding of gifted traits (Cross, 1998; Culross, 1995; Levine & Tucker, 1986; Rogers, 1995; Silverman, 1993c)	To what extent did you feel that:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing of client concerns • Counselor understanding • Counselor empathy • Rights and respect • Core conditions: genuineness, unconditional positive regard • Accurate empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Your concerns were dismissed 10. Your time was well spent 11. You were supported and encouraged 12. You were misunderstood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active listening 	To what extent do I believe the counselor:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love of/passion for learning (Lovecky, 1994; Robinson, 1996; Silverman, 1993b) • Drive/motivation to achieve (Robinson, 1996) • Asynchronous development (Robinson, 1996, 2002; Silverman, 2002) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Was empathic towards my concerns 14. Genuinely desired to understand me 15. Told me/implied I was worried about nothing 16. Took time to truly listen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of client's personal values/beliefs/philosophy (Culross, 1995; Cross, 1998; Levine & Tucker, 1986) 	To what degree did I feel that the following were understood in counseling:
Personal and interpersonal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17. My love of learning 19. My desire to understand things 18. My drive and motivation to achieve 20. That not all parts of myself work at the same level (e.g., my thoughts are way ahead of my feelings) 21. My personal philosophy/what I believe to be important in life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem-solving skills (Culross, 1982; Reis & Moon, 2002; Webb et al., 1982) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24. Problem-solving skills 25. Setting appropriate boundaries for myself 26. Communicating with others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues regarding relationships (boundary setting, communication, hostility, perspective taking, conflict, developmental changes in relationships; Betts, 1986; Blackburn & Eriskon, 1986; Brown, 1993; Colangelo & Assouline, 2000; Cross, 2001; Galbraith, 1985; Kerr, 1990; Rimm, 2002; Van Tassel-Baska, 1991) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 27. Dealing with hostility from others 32. Taking another person's perspective 33. Using humor to defuse conflict 43. Viewing myself and events with a sense of humor 35. Identifying things that are in or out of my control 30. Positive self-talk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to view self and situations with humor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 31. Visualization of worst- and best-case scenarios 34. How to relieve and cope with stress 36. Sustaining motivation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal/internally driven control (Kerr, 1990; Keiley, 2002; Perrone, 1986) • Stress management/stress reduction techniques and skills (Betts, 1986; Colangelo & Peterson, 1993; Cross, 1998; Genshaft & Broyles, 1991; Reis & Moon, 2002; Yadusky-Holahan & Holahan, 1983) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent were the following discussed in counseling? 37. How inner conflict is sometimes a part of growth 38. How mistakes are learning experiences
Self-knowledge and awareness	39. My different learning styles and preferences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding internal conflict and growth • Viewing and accepting mistakes as learning experiences (Blackburn & Erikson, 1986; Siegle & Schuler, 2000) • Awareness of options, choices, learning styles, strengths, and talents (Betts, 1985; Greene, 2002; Kerr, 1991) • Awareness of self in relation to others (developmental changes in relationships, acceptance of others; Betts, 1986) • Self-acceptance (Culross, 1982; Jenkins-Friedman & Murphy, 1988) • Issues surrounding demonstration of gift/talent/achievement in public domain in relation to peer acceptance (Brown & Steinberg, 1990; Colangelo, 2003; Colangelo & Assouline, 2000; Coleman & Cross, 2001; Cross, 1998; Cross et al., 1991; Ford, 1989; Kerr et al., 1988; Manaster, Chan, Watt, & Wiehe, 1994; Reis & Moon, 2002; Rimm, 2002; Santmire, 1990; Schultz & Delisle, 2003; Sowa & McIntire, 1994; Swiatek, 1995) 	40. Personal options and choices
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 51. My strengths and talents 41. How people change and develop 42. The give and take of healthy relationships

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Best Practices of Counseling Gifted Students	Corresponding Item
Pursuit of excellence (issues unique to the gifted student)	45. Acceptance of others (both strengths and limitations) 44. Acceptance of myself (both strengths and limitations) 49. How I feel about myself 47. How others perceive me 48. Fitting in 50. What it is like to be different To what extent did these characterize your experience with school counseling? 52. My school's definition of "gifted" and/or "talented"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of the term <i>gifted</i> and its personal application (Colangelo & Peterson, 1993; Cross, Galbraith, 1985; Silverman, 1993c; VanTassel-Baska, 1998) • Discussion of what it is like to be gifted (Galbraith, 1985; Silverman, 1993c) • Pressure, perfectionism, and motivation (Dixon, Lapsley, & Hanchon, 2004; LoCicero & Ashby, 2000; Nugent, 2000; Pacht, 1984; Parker & Adkins, 1995; Schuler, 2002; Siegle & Schuler, 2000; Speirs Neumeister & Finch, 2006) 	53. What it is like to be a person with a gift or talent 28. Finishing projects I began 46. The difference between "pursuit of excellence" versus "pursuit of perfection"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations (self and other; Buescher & Higham, 1990; Ford, 1989; Roberts & Lovett, 1994; Yoo & Moon, 2006) 	58. Pressure to achieve 54. My desire/need to be perfect 55. Pressures to hide gifts and talents from others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently cited feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and frustration (Dirkes, 1983; Galbraith, 1985; Kaiser & Berndt, 1985; Levine & Tucker, 1986; Lovecky, 1994; Peterson, 2003; Robinson, 1996; Silverman, 1993c; Yadusky-Holahan & Holahan, 1983) 	62. Expectations I have for myself 63. Expectations others have of me 56. Loneliness/isolation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution of talent to society/ownership and application of talent/gift (Buescher & Higham, 1990; Schultz & Delisle, 2003) 	57. Anxiety 64. Frustration 29. Leadership
	59. Issues of justice and fairness 60. Ability to produce a high level of work (creative, scientific, etc.) 61. My contributions to society

Note: GT-AESC = Gifted and Talented Adolescents' Experiences in School Counseling.

Research Question 2: To what extent do the counseling best practices of personal and interpersonal skills, self-awareness and knowledge, and excellence and perfection, as cited in the literature, characterize the school counseling experience according to the gifted and talented adolescent?

Research Question 3: What school counseling services or interventions do gifted and talented adolescents perceive as beneficial to them and students like themselves?

For the purposes of this study the frequently cited strategies, techniques, activities, and specific areas of programming for supporting the social, emotional, career, and academic needs of the gifted will be conceptualized as "best practices." In this study, the word *student* is defined as a gifted adolescent

around the age of 15 to 16 years. The term *gifted* is defined as applying to those students who demonstrate a specific talent in the visual and performing arts or humanities. School counselor refers to high school counselors serving gifted students through a variety of techniques, strategies, and programming activities. Table 1 reflects the literature citations linked to items developed for a questionnaire used to assess gifted students' experiences with these best practices.

Method

Participants

Participants were 153 gifted and talented adolescents in a southeastern state identified as gifted in visual and performing arts and humanities. This state conceptualized gifted

students per the Marland (1972) report as students whose abilities and potential for accomplishment in areas (intellectual aptitude, specific academic aptitude, technical and practical arts aptitude, visual and performing arts aptitude) are so outstanding that they require special programs to meet their educational needs (Stephens & Karnes, 2000). In this state, participants were identified as gifted by demonstrating outstanding abilities or potential for accomplishments through the screening of multiple criteria including assessments of appropriate student products, performance and/or portfolios, and additional valid and reliable measures or procedures (Stephens & Karnes, 2000). Participants were enrolled in a summer residential program specifically for aptitudes in the visual and performing arts and humanities during the summer of their sophomore or junior year of high school. Participants' entrance into the program was based on multiple criteria, including an adjudicated performance or portfolio, grade point average requirements, nominations, recommendations, and essays.

The total number of students enrolled for the summer 2005 program was 400. Of the 400 parent permission forms that were sent, 178 were returned, constituting a 45% return rate. Of those, approximately 86 participants completed the instrument online, whereas another 71 completed the instrument on paper, making a total of 157 participants. Of the 157 participants, 153 (97%) completed all sections of the Gifted and Talented Adolescents' Experiences in School Counseling (GT-AESC II) survey, with four participants not completing at least two parts of the survey. The data provided by these four participants were not used the following data analyses.

Demographics. The 153 participants represented 38% of the original 400 eligible students. Of the 153 participant cases analyzed, 38 males (24.8%) and 114 females (74.5%) were represented, with one participant choosing not to identify his/her gender (.7%). Of the participants who completed the instrument, 115 (75.2%) identified themselves as White/Caucasian, 9 (5.9%) as Hispanic/Latino, 3 (2.0%) as African American, 12 (7.8%) as Asian/Pacific Islander, 2 (1.3%) as American Indian/Alaskan Native, 0 indicated they were Native Hawaiian, and 7 (4.6%) identified their race/ethnicity as "Other." Five (3.3%) chose not to complete the item. The majority of participants were identified as gifted in the southeastern state where the summer program was held (86.9%), identified in the first to third grades (55.6%), and attended public school (90.2%). Participants also identified themselves by the talent domain area in which they were accepted into the summer program. Twenty-four (15.7%) identified themselves as attending for music, 15 (9.8%) for theater, 15 (9.8%) for dance, 13 (8.5%) for visual arts, and 86 (56.2%) for humanities. Age was not used as a demographic variable; however, the majority of students in the summer program were juniors in high school with the average age of 16 years. Participants were part of a single-stage convenience sample.

The sample was limited in generalizability to gifted adolescents talented in the performing arts and humanities in

Table 2. Final Factor Analysis for the GT-AESC I Pilot With Four Factors

Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1 The counseling relationship	18.981	39.545	39.545
2 Personal and interpersonal Skills	5.232	10.899	50.444
3 Self-knowledge and awareness	3.502	7.296	57.740
4 Pursuit of excellence	2.090	4.345	62.094

Note: GT-AESC = Gifted and Talented Adolescents' Experiences in School Counseling.

one southeastern state. There was no comparison sample of nongifted peers nor were students considered talented in other domains such as math and science. The diversity of the sample, including race and gender, although representative of the summer program's population at the time, was limited. In addition, there were only 153 participants. Although the total pool of accessible students was approximately 400, parental consent and student voluntary assent decreased the amount of participant responses.

Instrument

The GT-AESC II survey was a 67-item questionnaire designed to measure gifted adolescents' experiences in school counseling. Table 1 illustrates items 9 to 64, which were developed from a thematic analysis of best practices for counseling the gifted student found in the literature; specifically, the literature concerning the suggested counseling concerns of gifted students, counselor-student relationship, activities and areas of exploration, as well as suggested resources, activities, and skill. Items for the instrument were also reviewed by one expert in the field of gifted education with more than 30 years of experience.

The instrument was initially piloted with 73 college students in the same southeastern state as a convenience sample. The majority of pilot participants reported they were identified as gifted in that state during their K-12 education. To reduce the initial 98 items from the pilot, a principal components analysis with varimax rotation was performed. This factor analysis resulted in four components that accounted for 62.1% of the total variance (Table 2). The four factors were subsequently retitled as follows: "The Counseling Relationship," "Personal and Interpersonal Skills," "Self-Knowledge and Awareness," and "The Pursuit of Excellence."

The Counseling Relationship subsection included items that asked participants the degree to which they experienced facilitative conditions of counseling (e.g., unconditional positive regard and empathy) as well as to what extent they believed their school counselor understood common gifted developmental characteristics such as asynchrony or intensity.

Items in the form of phrases or prompts were created by examining the best practices for counseling gifted students

that appeared the most frequently in the literature as suggestions for all counselors in working with gifted youth (e.g., discussion of the meaning of giftedness). Items asked respondents to rank the degree to which a counseling strategy, technique, or programming aspect happened to them on a Likert-type scale of 1 (*not at all or did not apply*) to 4 (*completely or all the time*). *Personal and Interpersonal Skills* contained items that seemed to point to specific skills or behaviors that might be seen as coping abilities that could be implemented to meet the challenges of interpersonal relationships or other situations where the gifted participant might have felt challenged. *Self-knowledge and Awareness* included items that dealt with counseling issues pertaining to student issues of personal growth, self-awareness, and individual ability. *The Pursuit of Excellence* held items from the pilot that described counseling topics such as perfectionism, anxiety, performance and achievement, and gifted identity and functioning.

In the last section participants were asked to choose two potential school counseling services or interventions in both the academic and career areas that they believed would be helpful to them. Possible academic offerings included the following: meeting other students with similar interests, making flexible academic blueprints, biblio/cinematherapy, meeting adults with similar talents, discussing the structure and challenge of classes, and help with time management and organization. Career and college service and intervention options included the following services: shadowing professionals, exploring life themes, opportunities for community or volunteer service, apprenticeships, parental education, part-time employment, having a mentor in their field of talent, help with making difficult decisions regarding careers, and designing a career path.

Procedure

Parents and guardians of the participating students at a southeastern residential summer program for individuals who were gifted in visual and performing arts and humanities received a consent form for their gifted adolescent to take part in the study approximately 2 weeks before the opening of the program. Parents completed this form and returned it by U.S. mail or to a staff member on the opening day of the program. On receipt of parent permission forms, formal invitation forms were sent to those members of the sample with parental permission the first weekend of the program. Invitations described the nature of the study, procedures for completing the instrument online, and contained a randomized digit at the upper right-hand corner, which served to identify the participant responses when they were submitted online across multiple Web "pages." This digit did not serve to identify the participant in any way. No master list of random digits was kept that could link participant responses to participant identity. Participants with parent permission were sent reminders at the end of the 2nd week of the program and again at the end of Week 3.

Participants were able to complete the survey online at any time during the program. Paper copies of the survey were made available the last week of the program to students with parent permission who did not have either time or computer access to complete the survey online. Students were emailed with an additional request to complete the survey online within a 1-week window if they did not already do so during the program.

Although several studies have determined that the use of online surveys is a viable way of capturing data, this format also may be limited in several ways, including response rates, social desirability, familiarity with online survey formats, and time (Granello & Wheaton, 2004; Kraut et al., 2004; Richman, Kiesler, Weisband, & Drasgow, 1999; Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliott, 2001). If computer access or time was a constraint for them, participants were able to complete the survey by paper in the last week of the program or online 1 week subsequent to the completion of the program.

Results

The four subsections of the GT-AESC II asked participants to determine the frequency of a variety of counselor interaction, personal and interpersonal skills, self-knowledge and awareness topics, and issues pertaining to perfectionism and excellence that were experienced by them in school counseling. Each subsection asked participants to respond on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*almost always*) to indicate the extent of occurrence. Table 3 illustrates the mean and standard deviation of participant responses for the four subsections of the survey: *The Counseling Relationship*, *Personal and Interpersonal Skills*, *Self-Knowledge and Awareness*, and *The Pursuit of Excellence*. For purposes of clarity and reading, Table 3 and the following sections provide dichotomous participant responses rather than the distribution by each possible response (1 "never" to 4 "almost always"). Although each item had four possible responses, in this case, participant responses have been grouped dichotomously by the actual occurrence of the best practice: Either the participant encountered the topic or skill or he/she did not. Table 3 reflects these as participant responses "Yes" or "No."

The Counseling Relationship

The majority of participants reported that their time with the counselor was well spent (79.7%), that they were supported (83.7%), and that their school counselor was empathic toward their concerns (88.2%), took time to listen (83.7%), and genuinely desired to understand them (84.3%). In addition, participants reported that their school counselor understood their love of learning (88.2%) and to understand things (86.9%), their drive and motivation to achieve (91.5%), and their personal philosophy (59.5%). Although participants felt that their counselor did not imply that something was wrong with them, almost half of the participants (47.2%) reported

Table 3. Items Describing Best Practices and Participant Responses

Item	N Yes	% Yes	N No	% No	M	SD
Nature of the counseling Relationship						
9. Your concerns were dismissed.	76	49.7	77	50.3	1.77	0.928
10. Your time was well spent.	122	79.7	31	20.3	2.58	1.09
11. You were supported and encouraged.	128	83.7	25	16.3	2.84	1.095
12. You were misunderstood.	72	47.8	81	52.9	1.63	0.809
13. The counselor was empathic towards your concerns.	135	88.2	18	11.8	2.77	0.977
14. The counselor genuinely desired to understand you.	129	84.3	25	15.7	2.84	1.095
15. The counselor implied something was wrong with you or your concerns.	31	20.3	122	79.7	1.34	0.762
16. The counselor took time to truly listen.	128	83.7	25	16.3	2.82	1.10
17. The counselor understood my love of learning.	135	88.2	18	11.8	2.80	1.00
18. The counselor understood my drive and motivation to achieve.	140	91.5	13	8.5	2.96	0.973
19. The counselor understood my desire to understand things.	133	86.9	20	13.1	2.80	1.02
20. The counselor understood that not all parts of myself work at the same level.	92	60.8	60	39.2	1.95	0.992
21. The counselor understood my personal philosophy/what I believed to be important in life.	91	59.5	62	40.5	2.08	1.082
Personal and interpersonal skills						
24. Problem-solving skills	30	19.6	123	80.4	1.25	0.566
25. Setting appropriate interpersonal boundaries between myself and others	19	14.2	134	87.6	1.15	0.441
26. Communicating with others	30	19.6	123	80.4	1.25	0.580
27. Dealing with hostility from others	13	8.5	140	91.5	1.14	0.487
28. Finishing projects that I began	28	18.3	125	81.7	1.23	0.532
29. Leadership	75	49.0	78	51.0	1.79	0.957
30. Positive self-talk	33	21.6	120	78.4	1.37	0.809
31. Visualization of worst and best case scenarios	46	22.9	118	77.1	1.41	0.847
32. Taking another person's perspective	36	22.9	118	77.1	1.41	0.847
33. Using humor to defuse conflict	15	9.8	138	90.2	1.17	0.571
34. How to relieve and cope with stress	43	28.1	110	71.9	1.44	0.826
35. Identifying things that are in or out of my control	42	27.5	110	71.9	1.40	0.766
36. Sustaining motivation	55	35.9	97	63.4	1.61	0.950
Self-knowledge/Awareness						
37. How inner conflict is sometimes a part of growth	17	11.1	136	88.9	1.16	0.488
38. How mistakes are learning experiences	28	18.3	120	78.5	1.35	0.746
39. My different learning styles and preferences	77	50.3	76	49.7	1.75	0.898
40. Personal options and choices	113	73.9	40	15.3	2.39	1.04
41. How people change and develop	23	15.0	130	85.0	1.23	0.623
42. The give and take of healthy relationships	11	7.2	142	92.8	1.12	0.486
43. Viewing myself and events with a sense of humor	15	9.8	138	90.2	1.16	0.544
44. Acceptance of myself (both strengths and limitations)	42	27.5	111	72.5	1.43	0.833
45. Acceptance of others (both strengths and limitations)	29	19.0	124	81.0	1.30	0.717
46. The difference between the "pursuit of excellence" and the "pursuit of perfection"	38	24.8	115	75.3	1.34	0.690
47. How other people perceive me	16	10.5	137	89.5	1.15	0.484
48. Fitting in	12	7.8	141	92.2	1.11	0.406
49. How I feel about myself	31	20.3	122	79.7	1.31	0.702
50. What it is like to be different	13	8.5	140	91.5	1.10	0.340
51. My strengths and talents	106	69.3	47	30.7	2.29	1.07
Pursuit of Excellence						
52. My school's definition of "gifted" and/or "talented"	44	28.8	109	71.2	1.38	0.669
53. What it is like to be a person with a gift or talent	39	24.5	114	74.5	1.37	0.705
54. My desire/need for perfection	43	28.1	110	71.9	1.38	0.698
55. Pressure to hide my gifts or talents from others	6	3.9	147	96.1	1.04	0.195
56. Loneliness/isolation	8	5.2	145	94.8	1.07	0.339
57. Anxiety	34	22.2	116	75.8	1.33	0.711
58. Pressure to achieve	50	32.7	103	67.3	1.55	0.872

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Item	N Yes	% Yes	N No	% No	M	SD
59. Issues of justice and fairness	25	16.3	128	83.7	1.24	0.587
60. Ability to produce a high level of work (creative, scientific, etc.)	61	39.9	92	60.1	1.66	0.928
61. My contribution to society	54	35.3	99	64.7	1.46	0.692
62. Expectations I have for myself	85	55.6	68	44.4	2.06	1.11
63. Expectations others have of me	54	35.3	99	64.7	1.57	0.880
64. Frustration	38	24.8	115	75.2	1.42	0.830

that they felt misunderstood by their counselor, and exactly half (50.3%) felt that their concerns were dismissed.

Personal and Interpersonal Skills

The majority of participant responses indicated that personal and interpersonal skills did *not* occur in their experiences with high school counseling. Of the 153 responses, more than 100 participants indicated that the level of frequency of occurrence of 11 personal and interpersonal skills was “never.” Two items, Item 29 “leadership” and Item 36 “sustaining motivation” were ranked slightly more in their level of occurrence in the school counseling experience. Seventy-eight (Item 29, $M = 1.79$, $SD = .957$) participants reported that they never experienced issues of “leadership,” whereas 75 participants experienced this topic in counseling ranging from “a bit” to “almost always in frequency. When asked to determine the level of frequency with which “sustaining motivation” occurred, 97 (Item 36, $M = 1.61$, $SD = .950$) reported that it never occurred, whereas 56 participants reported they did experience the topic ranging from “a bit” to “almost always” in frequency.

Self-Knowledge/Awareness

More than 100 participants reported that 12 of the 15 items pertaining to self-knowledge and awareness were *not* experienced by them in counseling. However, three exceptions occurred, namely, Item 39, “my different learning styles and preferences;” Item 40, “personal options and choices;” and Item 51, “my strengths and talents.” When asked to determine the level of frequency with which topics pertaining to different learning styles and preferences were experienced, 76 participants indicated that this topic was never experienced (Item 39, $M = 1.75$, $SD = .898$), whereas 77 participants indicated that they experienced this topic ranging from “a bit” to “almost always” in frequency. Likewise, 40 participants responded that the topic of “personal options and choices” were never experienced by them in school counseling (Item 40, $M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.040$), whereas 113 indicated that this topic was experienced ranging from “a bit” to “almost always” in frequency. Forty-seven participants responded to Item 51 “my strengths and talents” as never

having experienced this topic ($M = 2.29$; $SD = 1.074$), whereas 106 indicated that this topic was experienced “a bit” to “almost always” in frequency of occurrence.

Pursuit of Excellence

More than 100 participants reported that issues described in 9 of the 13 items in the section *did not* occur in their experiences with school counseling. Of the 13 items in the *Pursuit of Excellence* subsection, there were 4 in which less than 100 participants reported that a certain topic or event never happened to them. These include “ability to produce a high level of work” (Item 60, $M = 1.66$, $SD = .928$) in which 88 participants indicated that this topic was never experienced, whereas 61 reported it was experienced ranging from “a bit” to “almost always” in frequency and “my contribution to society” (Item 61, $M = 1.46$, $SD = .692$) in which 96 participants indicated this topic never was experienced and 54 did in the same range of frequency described. Last, in the area of expectations, 65 participants indicated that the topic of “expectations I have for myself” (Item 62, $M = 2.06$, $SD = 1.113$) never occurred in their experience, whereas 85 indicated that it was experienced and 95 participants reported that “expectations others have of me” (Item 63, $M = 1.57$, $SD = .880$) was never experienced, whereas 54 indicated it was experienced in frequency ranging from “a bit” to “almost always.

Preferred Services and Interventions

Participants were asked to choose two out of six possible program offerings related to academic development that they believed would be helpful to them if provided by their high schools. Of the six possible offerings, 90 (58.8%) participants responded that meeting adults who had careers in similar fields of talent or interest would be beneficial; 31 (20.3%) participants indicated that they felt meeting other students with similar interests would be helpful; 41 (26.8%) participants reported that they felt discussing class structure and challenge would be helpful; 73 (47.7%) participants chose making academic blueprints or flexible outlines as a helpful program offering; 23 (15.0%) participants felt that discussing movies or books that are of

Table 4. Participant Choices for Academic and Career Counseling Program Options by Number of Participants

Program Component	N
Academic	
Meeting adults with careers in my field of interest or talent	90
Making a flexible outline or blueprint of a course of study best tailored to my needs and interests	73
Discussing the way classes are structured and their level of challenge	41
Meeting other students with the same interests and talents as myself	31
Help with time management, organization, and prioritization	29
Discussing movies or books which are of importance to me	23
Career	
Working as an apprentice or intern at a place which emphasizes my talents or interests	99
Having a mentor in my field of talent or interest that I can talk to on a consistent basis	69
Shadowing a professional who is working in the field I want to work in	59
Help with making difficult decisions about what paths I can take toward a career	56
Designing a career path which includes timelines, my interests and talents, and future goals	44
Part time employment or work/study opportunities	40
Exploring life themes and discussing issues that might be important when I choose a career	38
Opportunities for community service and/or volunteer work	31
Opportunities for my parents to learn about fields and opportunities that I am interested in so I can talk to them about it	13

importance to them would be helpful; and 29 (19.0%) participants indicated that help with time management or organization would be helpful. Table 4 illustrates participant responses to these items.

Participants then indicated which three school counseling service options would help them the most when considering a potential career path if their high school offered them. Of the 153 participants, 99 (64.7%) indicated that apprenticeships would be helpful, 38 (24.8%) responded that exploring life themes would be beneficial, 13 (8.5%) indicated that opportunities for parental education about career fields would be helpful, 59 (38.6%) responded that shadowing professionals who work in fields of the student's talent or interest would be helpful, 69 (45.1%) chose mentoring as a helpful program option, 56 (36.6%) believed that help with making difficult decisions would be helpful, 44 (28.8%) felt that designing a career path with their talents, interest, and goals in mind would be helpful, 31 (20.3%) responded that opportunities for community or volunteer service would be beneficial, and 40 (26.1) indicated that part-time employment or work/study opportunities would be helpful program options. Table 4 illustrates participant responses to these items.

Discussion

Specific services and best practices for counseling the gifted student within the school have been suggested in the gifted literature; however, there has been a considerable lack of outcome research that supports the degree of effectiveness of these programs and practices (Reis & Moon, 2002). In addition, little research has investigated what adolescents, as stakeholders in the counseling relationship, experience in school counseling. Hence, the purpose of this study was to determine

which of the best practices of counseling in the academic, career, and personal-social domains gifted students were actually experiencing, from their own perspective.

The Counseling Relationship

Participants conveyed that, on the whole, their school counselors demonstrated most of the counseling core conditions and basic techniques of providing support, demonstrating empathy, and active listening. Most participants felt their time was well spent with their school counselor. However, half the participants appeared to have experienced having their concerns dismissed or being misunderstood.

Participant responses indicated that areas of their giftedness, including love of learning, drive, motivation to achieve, and need to understand were somewhat understood by their counselor. Of all the areas mentioned in the instrument, asynchrony was reported by the participants as the area least understood by their counselor. The above should be stated with caution, however, because the participant might not have reported the experience if he or she did not believe the concept applied to them or did not understand the concept of asynchrony. Likewise, although participants reported that they did not experience having their personal philosophy or what they felt to be important in life understood in counseling, one explanation would have been that the students themselves did not know their own personal philosophy or how to communicate it, let alone have it be understood by their high school counselor.

Personal and Interpersonal Skills

Gifted literature has outlined several different strategies pertaining to counseling the gifted student in the realm of

personal and interpersonal skills to facilitate positive social interactions and build healthy self-coping skills. However, according to participant responses in this study, very few of these skills are introduced, discussed, or being experienced by gifted and talented adolescents in high school counseling. Of the 13 suggested best practices, more than 100 participants reported that 11 were never experienced by them. Leadership and sustaining motivation were the two skill areas that were experienced.

Research supports the fact that sustaining motivation is a critical issue for gifted students, hence, the experience of the topic by participants makes logical sense (Alexander & Schnick, 2007; Gottfried & Gottfried, 2004). Leadership would most likely have been a common topic within school counseling simply because of the students' decisions to pursue entrance into the southeastern state's summer program. Given that college academic credit was also awarded at the completion of the program and entrance into the program is itself considered a high honor, participants' decision to pursue the program and to gain entrance by being one of the best in their talent field, leadership would have been an inherent topic in discussions of pursuing this venue with the high school counselor. In addition, school counselors are often the nominees or advocates for student awards, requiring that the school counselor have active knowledge of leadership positions the participant had already filled.

Self-Knowledge and Awareness

Of the 15 items regarding self-knowledge and awareness, 12 were reported by more than 100 participants as never having been experienced by them in high school counseling. Three topics were experienced by the participants: different learning styles and preferences, personal options and choices, and strengths and talents. Participant responses indicate that their school counselors worked with them on issues surrounding academic performance. Discussing learning styles and preferences and options may have arisen if there had been concerns over academic performance or if a possible mismatch between teaching style and learning style had occurred and resulted in boredom or feelings of being unchallenged.

Pursuit of Excellence and Perfection

The cornerstone to counseling the gifted and talented student has been the exploration of issues pertaining to giftedness itself. Silverman (1993b, 1993c) and Galbraith (1985; Delisle & Galbraith, 2002) underscored the need for counselors to address students' experiences with feeling different, confusion about meanings and definitions of giftedness, lack of understanding from others, fear of failure, perfectionism, level of academic challenge, difficulties in finding like-minded peers, and existential depression. However, few of these topics were experienced in counseling by

the participants in this study. Of note were topics cited by participants as more frequently experienced by them in counseling, including the participant's ability to produce high levels of work, their contribution to society, expectations they had of themselves, and expectations others had of them.

The fact that these topics were experienced more frequently might be explained by several reasons. First, the degree to which a gifted student expects a certain quality of work would impact their level and quality of production and achievement rate. "Relentless self-criticism" about their performance and product is common among gifted students and the need for facilitating reasonable self-expectations has been suggested as a counseling goal (Silverman, 1993b; VanTassel-Baska, 1998a, p.489). If the majority of counseling sessions were academic in nature, it would make logical sense that the quality of the academic work would stem from the expectations the student had of it. Second, the future application of the student's talent toward society would be an outgrowth of what the student expected him or herself to accomplish. Some gifted students feel personally responsible for addressing the needs of society as a result of their sensitivity and early moral concern and thus feel their gifts should be applied toward those needs (Lovecky, 1993; Silverman, 1993b).

Last, the expectations a student has of himself or herself may be the outgrowth of what he or she perceived to be the expectations placed on him or her by others. In her qualitative study on perfectionism, Neumeister (2004a, 2004b) found that students believed their early successes increased others' expectations for continued perfection. Some students believed they were expected to meet their parents' high standards of achievement which were informed by the parents' own perfectionism (Speirs Neumeister, 2004a, 2004b).

High School Counseling Program Components

Of the six potential program offerings participants could choose from in the area of academic counseling components, the two ranked the highest were 1, "meeting adults with careers in [the participant's] area of interest or talent" ($N = 90$); and 2, "making a flexible outline or blueprint of a course of study best tailored to [the participant's] needs and interests" ($N = 73$). Of the nine potential program offerings pertaining to career counseling, the two options that were ranked highest by participants included 1, "working as an apprentice or an intern at a place which emphasizes my talents or interests" ($N = 99$); 2, "having a mentor in my field of talent or interest that I can talk to on a consistent basis"; and 3, "shadowing a professional who is working in the field I want to work in" ($N = 69$).

Participants' desire for discussions about the level of their classes' challenge and academic planning as well as for meeting adults in their fields makes sense as the majority of

them were high school juniors preparing to make choices about colleges and career paths. These findings underscore the need for opportunities to meet and work with adults who are already succeeding in the student's field of interest or talent (Callahan & Dickson, 2008). These opportunities provide the gifted adolescent with the needed role model with experience who could speak knowledgeably about the world of work in that field, paths toward entrance into that field, and the necessary education and training. Internships and apprenticeships grant students access to experiences in the world of work, acquire academic credit, learn from role models, and gain information on future careers (Kelly & Cobb, 1991; Silverman, 1993d). The provision of mentors in similar fields has been a well-documented component to counseling the gifted student (Callahan & Dickson, 2008; Clasen & Clasen, 2003; Silverman, 1993d). Mentorships have also been recommended for gifted students from disadvantaged backgrounds, underachieving gifted students, and gifted girls (Callahan & Dickson; Clasen & Clasen; Silverman, 1993d).

These findings also support the literature's suggestion that school counselors should plan and discuss academic blueprints that take into consideration the gifted student's abilities and can provide multiple paths for postsecondary planning (VanTassel-Baska, 1998a, 1998b). These blueprints can both outline classes that provide adequate academic challenge and rigor and reflect opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, or job shadowing.

A possible limitation in the discussion of these results is the fact that this study did not investigate what would actually happen to the participants if they were observed by a neutral third party. Participants' views of school counseling may have changed in light of their involvement with the summer program or as a response to the items in the survey itself.

Implications for School Counseling

Results from this study underscore the importance of the school counselor's relationship with their gifted students as well as a thorough understanding of basic traits and characteristics of gifted psychology and function. Results also point to the need for school counselors to be aware of the wide variety of best practices that can be used in working with their gifted population to implement them. One suggestion might be to use NAGC guidelines as well as the ASCA national model as frameworks to plan and develop programs and practices. However, to do so, school counselors must be exposed to and be familiar with both sets of standards.

The findings from this study emphasize the importance of training school counselors in their preparatory programs in the psychology and unique needs of gifted learners as well as how to structure school counseling programs to reflect the best practices in the literature. Current preparation program guidelines do not mandate school counselor training in gifted

education (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2001); but most programs do touch on gifted learners as a module in either life span development classes or in a unique learner class. However, findings from this study indicate that two to three modules would be far from sufficient if school counselors are to be able to provide the best practices of counseling the gifted in their school counseling program. School counselor training also includes at least one class in professional identity of school counselors and program development; these classes can provide a venue for discussing community-school partnerships. However, school counselors-in-training may not see the connection between partnerships and the provision of mentors, apprenticeships, or service learning as part of their services to gifted students or have the skill to develop these partnerships. School counseling preparation programs may wish to investigate how this information, for which all school counselors must be responsible because they serve all students, is applied to gifted students.

Implications for Research

This study only scratches the surface of the number of needed studies in the area of counseling the gifted. First, with the exception of a small body of information (Carlson, 2004; Dockery, 2005; Earle, 1998), there has been little research that documents gifted and talented students' experiences with counseling in general, especially with regard to school counseling (Moon, 2002; Robinson et al., 2002). Second, there has been almost no outcome research on the efficacy of specific counseling modalities, programs, or strategies as suggested by practitioners and researchers to use with gifted students (Moon, 2002; Peterson, 2008). However, there are numerous possibilities for research in this arena.

Future studies might include replication of this methodology with more and diverse gifted adolescents, including those talented in science, math, and technology and should include comparative samples of nongifted adolescents. Other venues for investigation could include the following: (a) the degree to which the type of issues affect the gifted student's decision to seek school counseling, (b) gifted students' satisfaction with the counseling relationship, and (c) which orientations and techniques used by counselors of gifted students are found to be the most beneficial in meeting their needs and concerns. Studies that match, compare, and contrast the perceptions of school counselors with the gifted students they specifically regarding the counseling relationship and the skills and techniques used would be most useful as well as a thorough examination of the results of the counseling.

Qualitative studies are greatly needed to capture the voice of the gifted and talented student as he or she experiences school counseling. Cross-sectional and longitudinal research that can determine differences in how gifted students are

served by their school counselors across elementary, middle, and high school levels is sorely needed. Last, intervention research focusing on training of school counselors in gifted and talented education and psychology can illuminate both fields by its attempts to determine definitively if the level of awareness, knowledge, and skill of school counselors makes a difference to their service delivery, gifted student achievement, and satisfactory counseling experience.

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Bio

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