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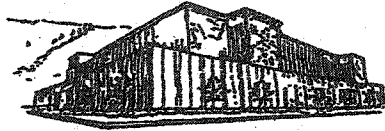
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PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER-ADVISORS

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Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Education

The University of Montana

2004

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Perceptions of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors

Chairperson: William M. McCaw, Ed.D. *WPM*

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to generate a theoretical model regarding middle school teacher-advisors who successfully implemented their middle school's advisory program in order to meet their students' affective needs. Utilizing Bushnell and George's (1993) criteria for effective teacher-advisors, a staff survey was administered to the middle school teacher-advisors who agreed to participate in this study. Data was sought from 14 subjects who were identified in the staff survey as effective middle school teacher-advisors. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted at two separate middle schools within one large Montana school district using an interview protocol as outlined by Creswell (1994).

The data analysis in this study followed the format suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998). The data were examined during the open coding process in order to identify major concepts along with their properties and dimensions. During the axial coding process, the categories were linked to one another at the level of properties and dimensions. Finally, the data were subjected to selective coding where the categories were integrated to form a larger theoretical theme. At the conclusion of the axial coding process five phenomena and their components were identified from the data. A sixth category emerged during the selective coding process that encompassed the original five categories and is referred to as the "core category." The core category is "Perceptions of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors," and it is significant because it is integrated with the following five sub-categories: (a) Effectiveness, (b) Relationships, (c) Caring, (d) Communication, and (e) Involvement.

This study produced three major postulations. First, all subjects in this study believed they were effective, and this may be the important link to actually practicing the teacher-advisor behaviors they believed made them effective. Second, being involved with advisees was critical in the positive outcomes expressed by the subjects in this study. Last, effective middle school teacher-advisors consist of individuals who perceive themselves as effective, develop positive relationships, care, communicate, and are involved with each of their advisees.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The roots of middle school advisory programs as an educational practice date back to the turn of the 20th century and the junior high school movement (Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998). One central goal of the middle school movement has been to foster student-teacher relationships that focus on the social and emotional growth of students (Alexander, Williams, Compton, Hines, & Prescott, 1968; Merenbloom, 1986; Romano & Georgiady, 1994; Wiles & Bondi, 1993). Wiles and Bondi (2001) stated that effective middle schools provide teacher-based advisor programs facilitated by guidance counselors so as to provide a stable, yet flexible, curriculum to meet each student's affective needs.

Middle school advisory programs have focused on finding ways to meet students' affective needs. In addition, middle school experts agree that advisory programs are fundamental to the middle school concept (Alexander et. al., 1968; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; George & Alexander, 1993; Wiles & Bondi, 2001; Mac Iver & Epstein, 1990; Romano & Georgiady, 1994; Ziegler and Mulhall, 1994).

Although there is support for advisory programs in the literature, some experts have reported difficulties planning and implementing the programs. For example, Wiles and Bondi (1993) noted that problems have been encountered when planners fail to consider the planning time and commitment required to establish a successful advisory program or provide parameters for ongoing staff development. Some of these implementation difficulties can be attributed directly to the teacher-advisor. Galassi, Gullede, and Cox (1998) reported advisory program implementation barriers when the teacher-advisors

perceived themselves as having inadequate skills to implement the program or insufficient consideration was given as to how planning advisory program activities would affect the teacher-advisors' workloads.

Advisory programs are an integral part of the middle school concept because they address the students' affective needs and provide guidance to students during a critical time in their physical and emotional development. Middle school advisory programs are documented in the literature as a means to provide guidance to students in middle level schools. Therefore, it was important to understand the perspective of middle school teacher-advisors in order to find out what the perceptions of effective middle school teacher-advisors are.

Statement of the Problem

Middle school advisory programs can do much to enrich the lives of young adolescents (Ayes, 1994; Cort, 1999; Trubowitz, 1994). Some middle schools have successfully implemented advisory programs, but for other middle schools, problems have arisen for a variety of reasons (Mac Iver & Epstein, 1990). According to Cole (1992), schools that have successfully implemented advisory programs have teacher-advisors who extend themselves to students as an advocate. However, Cole noted that some teacher-advisors are simply not willing or able to enter into the kind of relationship that is needed for an effective teacher-advisor program.

It is important to understand the middle school teacher-advisors' experiences when implementing an advisory program in order to examine why some teacher-advisors succeed while others experience difficulty implementing the same program. As Cole (1992) implied, the reason some teacher-advisors encounter problems implementing an

advisory program may not be directly related to the program itself. There is evidence that the problem of effective implementation may be related to the individual teacher-advisor and his/her inability to effectively implement the middle school's advisory program (Cole, 1992; Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998; and Myrick, Highland, & Highland, 1986). Many teacher-advisors may not accept advising as one of their responsibilities, and even those who do may feel unprepared to fulfill guidance responsibilities (Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998). Therefore, even though a middle school has implemented an advisory program that contains the components of an effective program, not all students may be having their affective needs met due to the specific teacher-advisor whom they have been assigned.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to generate a theoretical model regarding middle school teacher-advisors who successfully implemented their middle school's advisory program so that their advisory students have their affective needs met. Developing a theory about successful middle school teacher-advisors illuminated how some teacher-advisors are able to successfully implement a middle school's advisory program. Because few studies exist that explore middle school teacher-advisors' implementation of the advisory program, a grounded theory study devoted to understanding the characteristics of successful teacher-advisors' experiences implementing middle school advisory programs was appropriate for this study.

This study sought data from teacher-advisors in two middle schools that contained effective advisory program components outlined by The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989). The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989)

recommended the following effective advisory program components: (a) every student is well known by at least one adult; (b) small advisory groups are maintained; (c) teachers or other staff provide guidance and monitor the academic and social development of students; (d) teacher-advisors receive pre- and in-service education in adolescent development and principles of guidance but not engage in formal counseling; (e) teacher-advisors become mentors and advocate for their students; (f) teacher-advisors serve as the primary contact between the school and parents; and (g) teacher-advisors connect students to appropriate community resources when the school cannot adequately meet a youth's need. Therefore, this study sought data from 14 teacher-advisors at two middle schools with advisory programs that met the criteria for effective as outlined by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989).

Central Question

Creswell (1998) recommended reducing the entire qualitative study to a single, overarching question referred to as the central question. According to Creswell, the central question is the broadest question that speaks directly to the issue being examined. This study was guided by the central question: From the perspective of middle school teacher-advisors, what are the characteristics that distinguish effective middle school teacher-advisors?

The central question is typically supported with several sub-questions (Creswell, 1998). One model for conceptualizing the sub-questions is to present them in two sets: issue questions and topical questions (Creswell, 1998). Issue sub-questions address the major problems to be resolved; whereas, the topical sub-questions cover the anticipated

needs for information (Creswell, 1998). This study was guided by the following sub-questions:

Sub-questions

The central question will be supported by the following issue and topical sub-questions:

Issue Sub-Question:

1. What characteristics and behaviors distinguish an effective middle school teacher-advisor?

Topical Sub-Question:

2. What thoughts and feelings do teacher-advisors have that form the basis of their perceived level of effectiveness?
3. When do teacher-advisors first become aware of their level of effectiveness?

Following the structure of a grounded theory study, these questions guided this study in order to construct an understanding of middle school teacher-advisors, as it was understood by practicing middle school teacher-advisors. It was important to examine their experiences in order to fully understand why some teachers are able to successfully implement their middle school's advisory program.

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

Advisee

Student involved in an advisory program.

Advisement Program

See Advisory Program.

Advisor-Advisee Program

See Advisory Program.

Advisory Program

An education program with a regularly scheduled period during which students interact with peers and adults about school-related and personal concerns (Wiles & Bondi, 1993).

Affective Education

Instruction related to attitudes and values (Slavin, 1988).

Adolescence

A period of time between childhood and adulthood, generally between the ages of 10-14 (Wiles & Bondi, 1993).

Effective Teacher-Advisor

Teacher-advisors who (a) care about students in their advisory group, (b) relate to the individuality of their advisees, (c) are available to their advisees, (d) have a positive attitude toward advisement, and (e) have their own unique style of advisement (George & Bushnell, 1993).

Homebase

See Advisory Program.

Homeroom

See Advisory Program.

Teacher-Advisor

Teacher involved in implementing an advisory program.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

Delimitations

Delimitations suggest how the study was narrowed in scope (Creswell, 1994). This study confined itself to interviewing teacher-advisors who were identified by their colleagues as effective and who have implemented an advisory program in their school. Two Montana middle schools from one large school district were the selected sites because they both have advisory programs that meet the criteria for effective outlined by The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989).

Limitations

This study utilized a purposefully selected sample. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggested that subjects are purposefully selected in a qualitative study because it is assumed they will facilitate the expansion of the developing theory. Since a purposeful sample will be selected rather than a random sample, the findings of this study were not generalizable, although users of this study may find transferability (Creswell, 1998) or explanatory power (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) of the findings to their particular situation.

This study used the interview format to gather data. Creswell (1994) stated that a potential limitation for interviews to gather data is that interviews provide indirect

information filtered through the views of the interviewees. Another limitation of interviews is that they provide information in a designated place rather than the natural field setting (Creswell, 1994). The delimitations and limitations did not detract from the significance of this study.

Significance of the Study

This study contributed to the existing body of known research on middle school advisory programs by examining middle school teachers' experiences when implementing an advisory program. Data were analyzed in order to generate a theory about the perceptions of effective teacher-advisors. To date, research on middle school advisory programs has been limited to single, one-time investigations, and the components of advisory programs they studied varied widely making the generalization across studies difficult (Galassi, Gullledge, & Cox, 1998). Instead of examining an advisory program itself, this study contributed new information by examining selected middle school teacher-advisors' experiences implementing an effective advisory program. Perceptions of effective middle school teacher-advisors yielded supporting evidence that the best teacher-advisors perceive themselves as effective, develop positive relationships with their advisees, care about their advisees, communicate with their advisees, and are involved with each of their advisees.

This is important information for administrators who strive to achieve what is best for students in their building. The testimonies of the teacher-advisors in this study supported the belief that students will work to achieve their best when they have teacher-advisors who strive to make a difference in their lives.

Middle schools have been charged with providing guidance to young adolescents; yet, this responsibility has been one of the middle schools' most elusive and contested goals (Johnston, 1997). Middle school advisory programs have played essential roles in improving school climate and conditions for many young adolescents; however, in too many instances confusion and misunderstanding about these programs still persists (Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998). This confusion and misunderstanding has resulted in some middle school students not having their affective needs effectively met (Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998).

This study provided new information for understanding and improving middle school advisory program practices through a greater awareness of teacher-advisor behaviors and perceptions. To date, a number of studies have focused on middle school advisory program components with little consideration given to the teacher-advisors who implement such programs. Therefore, this study provided important insight into the perceptions of teacher-advisors for the purpose of improving middle school advisory program practices.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to the developmental characteristics of adolescents, the transition from junior high school to middle school, the middle school advisory program, and the teacher-advisors who implement the advisory program. The review begins with a philosophical overview that led to the development separate schools for the adolescents.

The history of the middle school movement can be traced to the latter part of the nineteenth century when educators began to advocate for separate schools for young adolescents. In February 1898, Harvard University President Charles Eliot urged the National Education Association to consider reorganizing the structure of U.S. elementary and secondary schools (Toepfer, 1992). Eliot recommended adding two years to the secondary program so that it would serve students in grades 7 through 12 (Lounsbury, 1992; Toepfer, 1992). Eliot and other scholars of this time were concerned because students spent too much time in elementary school and not enough time studying the more difficult subjects that were important for college preparation (Clark & Clark, 1994). As a result, the National Education Association and their Committee of Ten on Secondary Education supported Eliot's proposal that secondary school begin at the seventh grade so that math, science, and foreign language, subjects reserved for high school, could be taught before high school (Clark & Clark, 1994).

As these early recommendations for reorganization were being considered, G. Stanley Hall (1904), the founder of American developmental psychology, used the term

“adolescence” to describe a stage of human development characterized by rapid growth in height, weight, and strength. Regarding adolescent development, Hall observed, “some linger long in the childish stage and advance late or slowly, while others push on with a sudden outburst of impulsion to early maturity” (p. xiii). The work of Hall sparked interest in the need to focus on the physical, emotional, mental, and social changes that take place during puberty. His writing encouraged educators to give special consideration in meeting the needs of young adolescents (Clark & Clark, 1994). Since that time, social scientists, educators, and psychoanalytic theorists have made efforts to understand adolescents and make recommendations as to how best meet the needs of this age group (Berger, 1986).

Developmental Characteristics of Early Adolescents

Regarding early adolescents, Hall (1904) observed the following:

As for years, an almost passionate lover of childhood and a teacher of youth, the adolescent stage of life has long seemed to me one of the most fascinating of all themes, more worthy, perhaps, than anything else in the world of reverence, most inviting study, and in most crying need of a service we do not yet understand how to render aright. (p. xviii)

Early adolescence, ages 10-14 years, is one of the most unique stages of human growth and development in which significant growth and change takes place physically, socially, morally, emotionally, and intellectually (Clark & Clark, 1994; Hall, 1904, Ingwalson, 1998; Milgram, 1992; National Middle School Association [NMSA], 1995). The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) asserted that the early adolescent years are crucial in determining the future success or failure of millions of

American youth. In 1995, the National Middle School Association recognized the need for American middle schools to be grounded in the diverse needs of early adolescents in order to be developmentally responsive. The success of the middle school depends on teachers and administrators understanding the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual characteristics of early adolescent learners (Clark & Clark, 1994; Wiles & Bondi, 1993). In dealing with early adolescent students, Wiles and Bondi (1993) suggested two terms: “transition” and “difference”. These authors stated, “We must develop a school to encompass the transitional nature of the group as a whole and to consider the vast differences within the group,” (p. 28).

The physical biological transition that occurs during the onset of puberty is among the most dramatic and visible changes. Accelerated growth occurs in height, weight, heart size, and lung capacity as well as bone and muscle growth and development (Clark & Clark, 1994; Hall, 1904; Wiles & Bondi, 1993). Though this growth spurt varies with the individual, girls tend to be one to two years ahead of boys. Girls may begin the process of reproduction maturity as early as eight or nine or as late as thirteen or fourteen (Clark & Clark, 1994). Boys may begin as early as nine and a half or as late as fourteen or fifteen (Clark & Clark, 1994). Rapid physical changes combined with multiple societal pressures to try sex, alcohol, and drugs make this time period critical for early adolescents to be well-informed so they may make positive choices for healthy personal growth (NMSA, 1995).

Social Development

Socially, adolescents turn to significant peers and adults for support and advocacy (NMSA, 1995; Wiles & Bondi, 1993). The need to belong to a particular social group

sometimes supersedes issues of right or wrong; however, parents and school authorities are encouraged to understand young adolescents' search for personal identity and take care to keep lines of communication open (NMSA, 1995).

Modern life has influenced changes in family structure. Traditional families have given way to mixed or blended family structures and often teens are left without adequate supervision (NMSA, 1995). Clark and Clark (1994) and Wiles and Bondi (1993) suggested that middle schools should promote "family" grouping of students, clubs, and interdisciplinary units that allow for positive and productive peer interaction among various groups of students. The National Middle School Association (1995) pointed out that the information age and economy have greatly influenced early adolescents. Advertising and marketing strategies have targeted youth, many of whom have considerable disposable income. Many of today's youth are confronted with negative influences including poverty, racism, sexism, crime, drugs, and abuse. Therefore, developmentally responsive middle schools must have in place educational goals, curriculum content, and instructional processes that are based on the awareness and understanding of these unique aspects and needs of young adolescents (NMSA, 1995). In addition, education and community groups need to provide programs that foster opportunities for responsible, informed decision-making (NMSA, 1995).

Emotional Development

The emotional development of early adolescents can be affected by rapid growth and hormonal imbalances that can trigger emotional responses (NMSA, 1995). Wiles and Bondi (2001) asserted that adults should not pressure students to explain their emotional reactions but should provide opportunities for releasing emotional stress and

call on pediatricians, counselors, and psychologists to help students understand these developmental changes. Middle school counselors are trained to help adolescents deal with issues that involve their emotional well-being (NMSA, 1995).

Intellectual Development

In discussing early adolescent growth and development, it is important to note the wide range of intellectual skills and abilities unique to this age group. As some students begin to grasp abstract concepts, many students are still in the concrete-manipulatory stage (Clark and Clark, 1994; Wiles & Bondi, 1993). Even though there is a wide range of intellectual development, early adolescents prefer active over passive learning activities (Clark & Clark, 1994; Wiles & Bondi, 1993).

The more educators are able to fully understand early adolescent growth and development, the more apt they are to provide the essential foundation for making wise decisions about middle level educational programs (NMSA, 1995). Understanding these emotional, psychosocial issues is critical in the restructuring of middle schools to be more developmentally responsive to their students (Clark & Clark, 1994).

Transition to Junior High School Programs

During the timeframe 1908-1911, the Committee on the Economy of Time supported the reorganization of secondary school into junior high and high school divisions (Van Til, Vars, & Lounsbury, 1961). The primary concern of the Committee on the Economy of Time was for students to spend more time exposed to more difficult subjects so as to be better prepared for college (Clark & Clark, 1994).

In an effort to reorganize the grade pattern of elementary grades one through eight and secondary grades nine through twelve, Eliot presented the idea of establishing a

secondary grade seven through twelve program, so the proposed pattern of elementary grades one through six and secondary grades seven through twelve pattern would better prepare students for college (Clark & Clark, 1994). Clark and Clark (1994), Lounsbury (1992), and Toepfer (1992) credit Eliot for influencing the development of the junior high school philosophy.

Another concern for educators of the early twentieth century was the low number of students who completed high school (Clark & Clark, 1994). In an effort to retain students in school, a series of dropout studies were conducted between 1907 and 1911 which led researchers to the startling revelation that less than half of the students completing school through grade eight went on to grade nine (Lounsbury, 1992). Many scholars believed that the high dropout rate was related to the gap between the nurturing elementary philosophy and single-subject specialist secondary philosophy (Lounsbury, 1992). These studies helped gain support for Eliot's proposal to reorganize the grade pattern of elementary and secondary schools.

The creation of developmentally appropriate curriculum for early adolescents was also a concern for educators in the 1920's (Briggs, 1920; Smith, 1926). Briggs (1920) and Smith (1926) advocated for curriculum that was relevant to the individual needs of early adolescents and supported the use of instructional strategies that actively involved learners. Smith (1926) believed that the early adolescent needed to explore several fields of human knowledge and that the practical subjects should be organized so the individual would get the largest possible overview of vocational opportunities available to students at that time.

As a result of reorganizing the elementary and secondary programs, the first junior high schools containing grades seven through nine opened in 1909-10 in Columbus, Ohio, and Berkeley, California (Clark & Clark, 1994; Wiles & Bondi, 1993). By 1925 there were 880 separate junior high schools. Every state reported some junior high schools by the early 1930's (Lounsbury, 1992). By 1934, there were 1,950 junior high schools, and by 1970 the number of junior high schools numbered close to 8,000. With the advent of junior high schools came support for the concept of a teacher-advisory and homeroom advisory period (Briggs, 1920; Smith, 1926).

Agencies of Guidance

The history and development of teacher-advisor programs can be traced to American schools in the late 1880's where vocational and moral guidance was included as part of the English curriculum and was documented as an innovation by a Detroit high school principal (Wittmer, 1989). Thomas Briggs (1920) and William Smith (1926) formulated the earliest ideas about how to best meet the unique cognitive and affective needs of early adolescents. Exploratory courses for early adolescents came into being with the advent of junior high schools (Briggs, 1920; Smith, 1926). Junior high schools offered guidance counseling to students in grades seven through nine to help them discover their dominant interests. Students were offered exploratory courses they could continue taking in high school and college, and it was hoped that these courses would prepare them with skills to enter the work force (Briggs, 1920). In an effort to reach out to adolescent students and to try to reduce the dropout rate, Thomas Briggs (1920) advocated the teacher-advisor concept in which teachers were able to advise students assigned to them during scheduled homeroom periods. He believed the homeroom

teacher to be the embodiment of social, moral, civic, and educational guidance (Briggs, 1920).

The agencies or means of guidance most commonly employed in junior high schools during the 1920's were: (a) exploratory and try-out courses, (b) the study of individual traits through cumulative records and mental tests, (c) analysis of the social and economic background of the individual, (d) excursions, (e) the vocational counselor, and (f) the advisory period (Smith, 1926). William Smith (1926) believed that the purpose of guidance in junior high schools was three-fold: (a) to gain broad and useful experiences that would guide students to try courses based on their interests and abilities, (b) to study the opportunities and the problems of the occupational world, and (c) to aid in choosing a vocation.

Supporters of junior high school philosophy believed that students should be looking toward definite careers (Briggs, 1920; Smith 1926). The less fortunate students, according to Smith (1926), would be leaving the junior high school to work in their community; whereas, the more fortunate students would pursue senior high school courses, and, in the case of a few, college and the professional school.

Smith (1926) believed that junior high schools should provide opportunities for students to explore several fields of training so that they could make intelligent choices about the kind of work they would be doing, thus, facilitating transition to high school, a vocational school, or prospective field of industry. The greatest progress toward the organization of subject matter for purposes of exploration and guidance was made in the field of industrial arts for boys (Smith, 1926). Within this early model, students rotated

through a half semester in each shop, so that at the end of a two-year period, they had sampled eight industrial occupations (Smith, 1926).

Additionally, Smith (1926) believed most of the responsibility in pupil guidance fell largely upon the classroom teacher, and he suggested that schools set aside one or more periods each week for pupil guidance under the immediate direction of the teachers. Smith also made note of an advisory period administered at the Lattimer School, a junior high school in Pittsburgh. At the Lattimer School, one period each morning, known as the activities period, was set aside so that the teacher could get acquainted with her home room class, check on home conditions, learn about her students' vocational plans, check up on pupils' grades, anticipate a child dropping out of school, and aid the counselor in preventing students from dropping out of school. The home room teacher's work was considered very important because she would get to know the individual pupil better than any other teacher in the building if she were sympathetic and tactful (Smith, 1926).

As junior high schools evolved, so did the homeroom period. By the 1950's the average homeroom period was twenty-eight minutes long (Van Til, Vars, & Lounsbury, 1961). During the homeroom period, announcements were read, attendance was taken, and other typical school routines were handled; however, for some homerooms, the time was utilized as a study period (Van Til, Vars, & Lounsbury, 1961). According to Van Til, Vars, and Lounsbury (1961), the better teachers reportedly utilized the homeroom time for group guidance, individual conferences to counsel students about absences, schoolwork, and related matters. In addition, two or three times a month, junior high school homerooms attended an assembly, and twice a year, socials were held after school (Van Til, Vars, & Lounsbury, 1961).

Transition from Junior High School to Middle School

The evolution of middle level education has been ongoing and complex (Clark & Clark, 1994). After the Civil War, the U.S. experienced a period of reconstruction, and by 1872 states were legally mandated to have tax-supported secondary education. The Committee of Ten recommended a standardization of courses and credits required for college entrance, which served to “lock in” the high school curriculum (Wiles & Bondi, 1993). By the 1920’s, junior high school philosophy began to address the needs of the adolescent learner (Briggs, 1920; Smith, 1926), and by the late 1940’s a separate junior high school followed by a separate three-year high school became the most predominant form of school organization in the United States (Lounsbury, 1992).

In addition to grade level organization, other administrative considerations included utilization of existing buildings, economic factors, increasing or decreasing student populations, and other demographic factors and considerations have taken precedence over educational factors when it came to determining how schools are organized (Briggs, 1920; Lounsbury, 1992). For example, many junior high and middle school buildings were originally high school buildings that supposedly became obsolete (Briggs, 1920; Clark & Clark, 1994; Lounsbury, 1992; Wiles & Bondi, 1993).

Junior high school philosophy revolutionized school organization and course offerings. Adolescent learners were exposed to expanded curriculum that went beyond math, English, social studies, and science and included industrial arts, home economics, laboratory sciences, foreign languages, and other related exploratory courses (Briggs, 1920; Lounsbury, 1992; Smith, 1926). Guidance was offered via homerooms, and school counselors were employed to test and guide students with regard to their interests and

academic strengths and weaknesses (Lounsbury, 1992). Extracurricular, service-oriented, and interest-centered activities and clubs were organized to give young adolescents opportunities to socialize and develop leadership skills (Lounsbury, 1992). As John Lounsbury (1992) pointed out, the junior high school served as a center for experimentation. Core curriculum, block scheduling, resource units, correlation of content, and a concerted effort to address the affective as well as cognitive needs of young adolescent learners were all a direct result of the junior high school movement.

Although junior high schools did much to advance addressing the needs of young adolescent learners, they were not without criticism. Unable to establish a separate identity, junior high school failed to fulfill some of its promises. Junior high school teachers did not receive specialized training. They had been trained to teach content specific subjects but were not trained specifically to work toward meeting the needs of early adolescent learners (Clark & Clark, 1994; Lounsbury, 1992; Wiles & Bondi, 1993). There were no standards, policies, or regulations to guide junior high school development (Lounsbury, 1992). The Carnegie unit assigned to grades nine through twelve for the purpose of uniform preparation for high school influenced the departmentalized 50-minute, six-period-day format of a typical junior high school program (Wiles & Bondi, 1993).

Junior high critics began to call for serious reform in the 1940's and 1950's. These critics expressed dissatisfaction with the junior high as it evolved (Lounsbury, 1992; Wiles & Bondi, 1993). Russia's launch of Sputnik in 1957 spurred educators into calling for serious academic mastery, especially in the areas of math, science, and foreign language. Leading educators including William Alexander, John Lounsbury, and Gordon

Vars were ready to answer the call for reform (Wiles & Bondi, 1993). In 1967 William Alexander coined the term “middle school” to describe innovative junior high school reform, and the middle school movement was underway (Wiles & Bondi, 1993).

Several factors led to the emergence of the middle school (Clark & Clark, 1994; Wiles & Bondi, 1993). Overcrowding of high schools and teacher shortages in the 1950's and 1960's led to concerns about the quality of U.S. schooling (Clark & Clark, 1994; Wiles & Bondi, 1993). The shortage of buildings resulted in double and triple sessions in school districts (Wiles & Bondi, 1993). The “bandwagon effect” which resulted from one middle school receiving favorable reviews in periodicals convinced some administrators that middle school was “the thing to do” (Clark & Clark, 1994; Wiles & Bondi, 1993).

Alexander (cited in Alexander and George, 1981) defined middle school as a “school providing a program planned for a range of older children, preadolescents, and early adolescents that builds upon the elementary school program for earlier childhood and in turn is built upon by the high school's program for adolescence” (p. 2). The middle school was conceived to “bridge the gap” between elementary and high school, and was proposed to be developmentally responsive to the needs of the preadolescent learner (Clark & Clark, 1994; Eichhorn, 1966; George, Stevenson, Thomason, & Beane, 1992; National Middle School Association, 1995; Wiles & Bondi, 1993; Wiles & Bondi, 2001).

Middle School Advisory Programs

There have been few published studies done with regard to the outcome of middle school advisory programs; however, as Galassi, Gullede, and Cox (1998) pointed out,

the components of the advisory programs these researchers studied vary widely which makes it difficult to generalize findings across studies (p. 14).

Findings from Espe (1993) and Totten and Nielson (1994) indicated that advisory programs might improve teacher-student relationships because the majority of students perceived their teacher-advisors as someone they could get to know on a more personal level and someone they could approach about topics of interest to them. Putbrese (1989) found that advisory programs are making a positive impact on girls as well as boys; however, girls in schools with advisory programs related that what was happening to them in their school epitomized the ideals for which affective education programs are implemented. Those ideals, according to Putbrese (1989), were reported as follows: (a) developing student-teacher relationships, (b) having a share of the power, (c) pursuing altruistic activities, (d) developing their own personal values, and (e) not feeling inhibited in expressing to others their hopes/dreams/fears (p. 114). Studies also noted that older students may be less positive than younger students about advisory programs (Sardo-Brown & Shetlar, 1994; Totten & Nielson, 1994). Most of the seventh and eighth grade students participating in the Sardo-Brown and Shetlar (1994) survey reported they felt advisory was a place to do homework and take a break. Whereas, most of the sixth grade respondents thought the purpose of advisory time was to take a break followed by socializing and doing homework.

Successful Characteristics of Middle School Advisory Programs

At the core of the middle school philosophy is the belief that every student should be known well by at least one adult (Alexander, et. al. 1968; Anfara & Brown, 2000; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Clark & Clark, 1994; Romano &

Georgiady, 1994; Smith, 1926; Wiles & Bondi, 1993). Involvement with a caring and supportive adult and interaction with a small number of peers in advisory period was designed to provide the basis for building relationships (Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998). Therefore, it is recommended that advisory groups should be smaller than average class sizes and should range between 15-20 students (NMSA, 2000). The fundamental notion that a student will be well known by at least one adult is advocated by a plethora of middle school scholars and advocates, and smaller groups of students are a way for positive student-teacher relationships to develop (Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998). Activities that build school spirit, involve community service, interpret policies, and explain procedures of the school, improve study skills and explore current events are examples of advisory activities that are vital in middle school curriculum (Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998).

Most middle school authorities believed that the advisory groups should meet daily for around 25 minutes (Clark & Clark, 1994; NMSA, 2000; Romano & Georgiady, 1994; Wiles & Bondi, 1993). Staff training and development in the area of advisor-advisee programs was also recommended (Anfara & Brown, 2000; Romano & Georgiady, 1994; Vars, 1997). One decision the advisory planning team must make is deciding the needs and goals of the advisory program (Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998). Further, Galassi, Gullede, and Cox (1998) stated that establishing broad goals is important to establish agreement, and without agreement, support for the program can erode. The most effective advisors seemed to give the program considerable additional thought and design activities on the basis of the goals they have established (Alexander & George, 1981).

Other characteristics of effective advisory programs included: establishing broad goals so that the group's attention is focused, values-based, and goal-oriented (Wiles & Bondi, 1993); planning and evaluating the program (Alexander, et. al., 1968) in order to achieve the program goals and plan for improvement; and support of school administration (Romano & Georgiady, 1994) so that the advisory program is a team effort among school personnel, not just the pet project of a few (Cole, 1992). The design of the advisory program is based on the specific culture of the individual school and community and is developed to meet the needs of those particular students. Teacher-advisors receive ongoing staff development to help them fulfill this vital role (NMSA, 1995).

Teacher Perceptions

Most teachers have judged advisory programs as beneficial and necessary (Espe, 1993; Putbrese, 1989; Sardo-Brown & Shetlar, 1994; Ziegler & Mulhall, 1994). In their study, Ziegler and Mulhall (1994) reported that teachers perceived that their advisory classes had a positive impact on reducing class absences and tardies. Espe (1993) reported that teachers who served as advisors believed their students confided in them and sought their advice on academic matters. Sardo-Brown and Shetlar (1994) indicated that teachers in their survey believed an advisor-advisee program was necessary. Further, these researchers reported that the majority of teachers they surveyed believed the purpose of the advisor-advisee program was to build positive teacher-student relationships, to help students with the transition between grade levels, to teach social skills, to monitor students' academic progress, to inform students about issues such as AIDS, and to give students a time to relax (p. 24).

Effective Teacher Advisor Characteristics

Regardless of the differences in advisory programs, Bushnell and George (1993) reported the following five characteristics of effective middle school advisors: (a) they care about the students in their advisory group and demonstrate that care in a variety of ways, (b) they are able to relate to the individuality of various advisees, (c) they are available to their advisees, (d) they have a positive attitude toward advisement, and (e) they have their own unique style of advisement (p. 10). Bushnell and George (1993) reported that boys were more concerned with having advisors who respected their opinions and joked with them; whereas, girls were more interested in having advisors who cared about what happened to them at school and were available to talk. Effective advisors encourage administrative support by inviting principals to advisement classes and discussing advisement activities at faculty meetings (Bushnell & George, 1993). If middle schools decide that relationship-building is a goal, teacher-advisors become advocates, cheerleaders, confidantes, and nurturers (Cole, 1992).

Summary of the Literature Review

Middle schools have evolved preserving the notion that adolescence is a time in which many changes take place. As such, educators have come to recognize the need to create curricula that is developmentally appropriate. Advisory programs were first mentioned in early junior high school literature as a way to connect school with home and to try to prevent students from dropping out of school.

Junior high schools fell under heavy criticism in the 1940's and 50's for failing to establish an identity separate from the high school. Middle schools began to emerge in response to criticism of junior high schools. They were touted as a way to "bridge the

gap” between elementary and high school and meet the needs of the preadolescent learner. Early adolescence is one of the most unique stages of human growth and development. Significant growth and changes take place physically, socially, morally, emotionally, and intellectually. Middle schools have attempted to meet these needs with programs that are developmentally appropriate.

Middle school advisory programs have been supported in the literature; however, advisory program components vary widely. Even though advisory programs vary from middle school to middle school, in middle school studies teachers regarded them as worthwhile. As a result of Bushnell and George’s (1993) survey of middle school teachers and students, five characteristics of effective teacher-advisors emerged: (a) they care about their advisees, (b) they are able to relate to their advisees, (c) they are available to their advisees, (d) they have a positive attitude toward advisement, and (e) they develop their own style of advisement. In their findings, Bushnell and George (1993) reported that caring was the single most important characteristic of effective teacher-advisors. In addition, they reported that effective advisors must be sensitive to treating everyone fairly and equally as well as interested and available to their students. With regard to positive attitude, effective teacher-advisors are enthusiastic and creative about advisory activities and want them to be fun. Finally, Bushnell and George reported that effective advisors must be able to meet the needs of the individual student.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Research Paradigm

The two types of research paradigms used in the social sciences are quantitative and qualitative (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Creswell, 1994). The use of quantitative methodology requires researchers to collect numerical data on observable behaviors of samples and subject these data to statistical analysis (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Whereas, the use of qualitative methodology requires researchers to discover meanings and interpretations by studying cases in natural settings and subjecting the resulting data to analytic induction (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

Social psychologists Giorgi (1965) and Polkinghorne (1989) expressed a growing concern regarding the use of quantitative methodology, which was the established methodology in scientific research during the past three centuries (Polkinghorne, 1989). Their concern was grounded in the belief that quantitative methodology should not be the only research methodology. The social sciences began using the term “qualitative research” in the late 1960’s to represent a method of research that utilizes participant observation and in-depth interviewing as a way to gather data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Based on his background in qualitative research at the University of Chicago, Anselm Strauss recognized the need for researchers to get out into the field to discover what was really going on (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Creswell (1998) later defined qualitative research as “an inquiry process that explores a social or human problem where the

researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15).

Currently, research on advisory programs is limited. The vast majority of studies on advisory programs focused on components of advisory programs that varied widely making the generalizations across studies difficult. Further, existing literature on successful middle school teacher-advisor characteristics is limited, and very few studies have focused on the actual teacher-advisor and their experiences implementing a middle school advisory program. There is no theoretical model that exists to explain middle school teacher-advisor effectiveness. Therefore, a qualitative paradigm was best for this study because it allowed for a theory to develop from rich data collected through semi-structured interviews.

Developing a Theory

This study focused on developing a theory with regard to effective middle school teacher-advisor characteristics. Thus, the intent of this study was to generate a theory grounded in data from the field rather than disprove a hypothesis held *a priori* (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1998). The process of inductive reasoning, which is the basis for qualitative inquiry (Eisner, 1991), allows the researcher the opportunity to build a theory grounded in qualitative data because the researcher cannot predetermine what themes will emerge.

Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967) first expressed their ideas about grounded theory research in 1967. The focus of grounded theory is the generation of a theory related to the central phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1998). Theorizing entails conceiving

ideas and formulating them into a logical, systematic, and explanatory scheme (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated, "Theory denotes a set of well-developed categories that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant social, psychological, educational, nursing, or other phenomenon" (p. 22). This study utilized a grounded theory approach by collecting and analyzing data.

Data

Subjects

In a qualitative grounded theory study, it is important to select subjects who have the ability to contribute to an evolving theory (Creswell, 1998). Therefore, subjects were chosen because they were practicing middle school teacher-advisors who have implemented an advisory program in one of two Montana middle schools. Using Bushnell and George's (1993) list of essential characteristics of effective middle school advisors (Appendix A), middle school teacher-advisors who agreed to participate in this study identified up to ten of their colleagues they believed met the criteria for effective advisors. Creswell (1998) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) referred to this type of homogenous sampling as theoretical sampling because all subjects were middle school teacher-advisors who have experienced implementing their middle school's advisory program. This study sought data from teacher-advisors in two Montana middle schools.

Sample Size

For a qualitative grounded theory study, Creswell (1998) recommended interviewing multiple individuals who have participated in a process about a central phenomenon. In this study the sample consisted of 14 subjects who have implemented

their middle school's advisory program. Using Bushnell and George's (1993) list of essential characteristics of effective middle school advisors (Appendix A), middle school teacher-advisors who agreed to participate in this study identified up to ten of their colleagues they believed met the criteria for effective advisors. Of all the teacher-advisors identified as effective in the survey, 14 of them consented to be interviewed. Regarding sites, sample size, and data saturation, J.W. Creswell (personal communication, January 6, 2003) stated:

The number of sites or number of participants is not really the issue.

The issue is obtaining enough data to get to the essence of the phenomenon in order to achieve saturation. Using long and/or multiple interviews with the individuals leads to this saturation. Qualitative research provides an in depth, detailed picture with a few people.

Data Collection

Data were collected at the two selected middle schools through one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with the 14 selected subjects. Prior to collecting the data, permission was obtained to conduct the interviews from school district gatekeepers. Following the suggestions of Creswell (1994) and Bogdan and Biklen (1992), the gatekeepers were contacted in advance and apprised of the focus for the research, how the data would be gathered, how the results would be reported, and what the gatekeepers might gain from the study.

Procedures

Gatekeepers. The gatekeepers were individuals responsible for providing access to the middle school teacher-advisor interviewees. In this study, the gatekeepers were the

school district central administration as well as the building principal at the two selected middle school sites. They were contacted with an introductory letter (Appendix B) explaining: (a) the importance of the study, (b) an explanation of the interview process, (c) an explanation of any perceived inconveniences to the interviewees or middle school, (d) assurances of confidentiality, (e) oversight by the Institutional Review Board at The University of Montana-Missoula, and (f) an offer of a summary of the study when it is completed. Additionally, a letter of support for this study from William P. McCaw, Ed.D, dissertation chairman, accompanied the introductory letter (Appendix B). A few days after the introductory and support letters were sent, the gatekeepers were contacted by telephone by the researcher for the purpose of securing access to the middle school and setting up the interviews. As soon as permission to conduct the study was granted, the interviews were confirmed by e-mail.

Interviews. Creswell (1998) suggested that the focus for the interview should be to develop a theory grounded in data. In this study, the focus for the interview was on the teacher-advisors' perceptions of their effectiveness as they implemented their school's advisory program. For purposes of this study, the teacher-advisors' perceptions about implementing their school's advisory program was explored in depth. The interview process sought data to describe and understand what it was like for the selected middle school teacher-advisors to implement their school's advisory program because it was believed that these subjects would contribute to developing a theory about the perceptions of effective middle school teacher-advisors.

Creswell (1998) recommended asking several open-ended questions so as to explore the perceptions of the subjects. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) recommended a semi-

structured interview format because it can increase the confidence of obtaining comparable data across subjects. This study employed the use of a semi-structured interview format in which the interviewer asked several open-ended questions designed to focus on the perceptions of middle school teacher-advisors who have implemented a middle school advisory program. In order to accomplish this, an interview protocol was utilized so as to establish uniformity of the interview for all subjects.

Interview Protocol. Creswell (1994, 1998) recommended using an interview protocol to take notes during the interview about the responses of the interviewee. According to Creswell, interview protocols help a researcher organize thoughts and should include the following items: (a) a heading, (b) instructions to the interviewer (opening statements), (c) the key research questions to be asked, (d) probes to follow key questions, (e) transition messages for the interviewer, (f) space for recording the interviewer's comments, and (g) space in which the researcher records reflective notes (Creswell, 1994). Besides the open-ended questions, Creswell (1998) suggested: (a) using a header to record essential information about the project and to use it as a reminder to go over the purpose of the study and the assurance of confidentiality with the interviewee, (b) placing space between the questions in the protocol form (this allows the interviewer to take notes on the interviewee's responses); (c) memorizing the questions and their order to minimize losing eye contact; (d) writing out the closing comments that thank the individual for the interview and a request for any follow-up information that may be needed. The protocol format and suggestions outlined by Creswell (1994, 1998) were utilized for the purpose of conducting interviews for this study and can be found in Appendix C.

It was also recommended that researchers record information by taking notes or recording the interviews (Creswell, 1994; Giorgi, 1965; Polkinghorne, 1989). The interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. For the purpose of this study the resulting responses of all interviewees were tape recorded and then later transcribed by the researcher to ensure accuracy of the data. Creswell (1998), Giorgi (1965), and Polkinghorne (1989) suggested writing down interviewee answers just in case there is a malfunction of the recording equipment; therefore, all interviewee answers were written down as well as tape recorded.

Development of Questions

For qualitative grounded theory studies, researchers primarily rely on interviews to gather data (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Individual subjects in this study were interviewed because they were considered by their colleagues to be effective middle school teacher-advisors and because it was believed by the researcher that these subjects would contribute to a developing theory regarding characteristics of effective teacher-advisors. Therefore, this study focused on gathering the perceptions of the interviewees related to implementing their school's advisory program and was guided by the central and sub-questions for this study.

Creswell (1998) recommended reducing the entire study to a single, overarching question and several sub-questions (p. 99). Creswell pointed out that the central question should be encoded with the language of a tradition of inquiry. In qualitative grounded theory studies, for example, Creswell stated that one finds process questions. The sub-questions follow the central question and are presented in two sets: issue questions and topical questions. In differentiating between the two types of sub-questions, Creswell

(1998) stated that issue questions address the major concerns to be resolved and bring out the problems of the case. The topical sub-questions, he noted, cover the anticipated needs for information and call for information needed for description of the case.

Creswell (1998) suggested developing sub-questions that address both the issues and topics related to the central question. Therefore, the sub-questions for this study were developed to construct an understanding of the issues and topics of being an effective middle school teacher-advisor as they are understood by practicing middle school teacher-advisors.

Central Question. This study was guided by the following central question:

From the perspective of middle school teacher-advisors, what are the characteristics that distinguish effective middle school teacher-advisors?

Sub-questions. The central question was supported by the following three sub-questions:

Issue sub-question:

1. What characteristics and behaviors distinguish an effective middle school teacher-advisor?

Topical sub-questions:

2. What thoughts and feelings do teacher-advisors have that form the basis of their perceived level of effectiveness?
3. When do teacher-advisors first become aware they are effective teacher-advisors?

The interviews plays a central role in the data collection of a qualitative grounded theory study and should be focused on collecting data with the intent of developing a model or theory until the categories are saturated (Creswell, 1998). The central and sub-questions provided the framework for the interview format and were influenced by existing literature synthesized in this study's Chapter Two: Review of the Literature. The rationale for the questions is provided below.

Central Question Rationale

The interview questions for this dissertation were developed from the central and sub-questions and can be found in Appendix C. The central question for this study evolved from a review of the literature that revealed five characteristics of effective middle school teacher-advisors espoused by Bushnell and George (1993).

Central Question: From the perspective of middle school teacher-advisors, what are the characteristics that distinguish effective middle school teacher-advisors?

The notion that middle school guidance is everybody's responsibility can be problematic from the beginning (Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998). According to these scholars, many staff members have difficulty accepting advisory as one of their responsibilities and may feel unprepared to fulfill the guidance responsibilities. Middle school teachers, especially those who were prepared at the secondary level view themselves as content specialists and do not feel comfortable facilitating small advisory groups (Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998). An ongoing concern for teachers is adequacy of preparation for their role as advisors (Cole, 1994). In 1991 DonnaLee Bushnell and Paul S. George conducted a survey of middle school teacher-advisors and students in a

Florida middle school to discover what characteristics constitute an effective teacher-advisor. Bushnell and George (1993) reported five characteristics of effective teacher-advisors: (a) they care about the students in their advisory group; (b) they are able to relate to the individuality of various advisees; (c) they are available to their advisees; (d) they have a positive attitude toward advisement; and (e) they have their own unique style of advisement. This study addresses the issue of teacher-advisors and specifically what characteristics distinguish effective teacher-advisors when the structure of the middle school advisory program meets the criteria for an effective program as espoused by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989). The sub-questions for this study were developed to construct an understanding of effective middle school teacher-advisors as it is understood by practicing middle school teacher-advisors who are considered effective by their colleagues.

Sub-question #1: What characteristics and behaviors distinguish effective teacher-advisors from ineffective teacher-advisors?

Bushnell and George (1993) reported five characteristics of effective advisors. Caring was continually mentioned by the students and teachers who were interviewed as the single most important advisor characteristic. In addition, Bushnell and George reported that effective teacher-advisors know that there are differences in the needs and preferences among their advisees. Further, they reported that effective teacher-advisors are interested in students and available to them. According to these authors, the environment in an effective teacher's advisement tends to be cheerful, relaxed, and stress-free for their advisees. Therefore, it was important to construct an understanding of effective middle school teacher-advisors as it is understood by practicing middle school

teacher-advisors who are considered effective by their colleagues. The following eight interview questions were designed to answer sub-question #1.

Interview Question #2: How important do you think it is for your middle school to have an advisory program? Why? Without agreement on the importance of an advisory program, support for the program can erode over time as different priorities surface and come into conflict (Galassi, Gullledge, & Cox, 1998). Therefore, this question sought to determine the level of importance that teacher-advisors give their school's advisory program.

Interview Question #6: Describe your level of comfort when you spend time with the students in your advisory group. This question seeks data that addresses the individual teacher-advisor's comfort level with the responsibilities associated with dealing with the advisees in their advisory group. Effective teacher-advisors are interested in their students and available to them as well as being advocates for them (Bushnell & George, 1993).

Interview Question #7: How do you attempt to demonstrate you care about the students in your advisory group? Caring was the single most important advisor characteristic that was mentioned over and over by students and teachers as reported by Bushnell and George (1993). Almost all teachers care about their students, but some do not know how to express that caring to individual students (Cole, 1992). Thus, a well-designed advisory program gives teachers the vehicle for getting to know their advisees (Cole, 1992). For the purpose of this study, it was important to know how advisors demonstrate a caring attitude toward students.

Interview Question #10: Think of a time when you believed you were an effective teacher-advisor. Describe how you felt during this advisory situation. Knowing the advisee better than anyone else in the school and doing whatever is necessary for that individual to function optimally in the school is the advisor's responsibility (Cole, 1992). Effective, caring teacher-advisors tend to become adult friends to their advisees (Bushnell & George, 1993). Therefore, this question sought to gather data supporting whether or not the teacher-advisor believes he/she is effective because these characteristics are important in developing effective teacher-advisor relationships (Bushnell & George, 1993).

Interview Question #11: Describe what you believe are effective teacher-advisor practices. Effective teacher-advisors care about their advisees, relate to their advisees as individuals, are available, have a positive attitude toward advisement, and have a unique advisement style (Bushnell & George, 1993). This question sought to find out from the teacher-advisor's perspective what he/she believes are the most important practices for a teacher-advisor.

Interview Question #12: Describe what you believe are ineffective teacher-advisor practices. Most teachers have had little formal preparation for service as an advisor and do not understand the goal(s) of their advisory program (Van Hoose, 1991). According to Van Hoose, advisory takes time that many teachers believe could be invested more effectively in preparing to teach their subject(s). Requiring all middle school staff members to take an advisory group virtually assures that some staff members will be unwilling or incapable of carrying out the role of advisor (Johnston, 1997). In addition Johnston believed that if preparing for advisory time is viewed as burdensome,

staff resentment may destroy the program. Fibkins (1999) believed that effective advisors must receive training to know how to appropriately respond to their advisees. This question was designed to determine if teacher-advisors are aware of limitations and practices associated with ineffective teacher-advisor program practices.

Interview Question #13: What opportunities do your advisees have to contact you? The best advisors are those who extend themselves to students, not as buddies, but as adults who are available to their students when they need an advocate or someone to listen to their concerns (Cole, 1992). It was important to determine, from the teacher-advisor's perspective, how available they believe they are to their advisees.

Interview Question #22: What could you do to improve your school's advisory program? Effective advisors have a positive attitude toward advisement and know how important it is for middle school students (Bushnell & George, 1993). Students suggested that teachers should become advisors because they want to, not because they have to. Advisement can be a positive experience for any caring middle school educator who is willing to keep trying to make advisement successful for his/her advisees (Bushnell & George, 1993). According to Bushnell and George (1993) effective advisors are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and are aware of areas that need improvement. Therefore, it was important to find out what areas teacher-advisors believe they can improve upon. The following sub-question was designed to create an understanding of the subjects' perceived level of effectiveness.

Sub-question #2: What thoughts and feelings do teacher-advisors have that form the basis of their perceived level of effectiveness?

DonnaLee Bushnell and Paul S. George (1993) surveyed and interviewed teachers and students during the Spring of 1991 to discover what makes middle school teachers effective advisors. Caring was the most important teacher-advisor characteristic that was continually mentioned by students and teachers (Bushnell & George, 1993). Effective, caring teacher-advisors tend to become adult friends to their advisees (Bushnell and George, 1993). According to the National Middle School Association (1995), middle schools that are developmentally responsive to the adolescents they serve are characterized by an adult advocate for every student (NMSA, 1995). One essential element of a “true” middle school is incorporating an advisor-advisee program to provide individuals with regular opportunities for interaction with a small group of peers and a caring adult (NMSA, 1992). Therefore, it was important to interview teacher-advisors to find out what thoughts and feelings they have that lead them to believe they are effective. The following eight questions were designed to help answer sub-question #2.

Interview Question #1: In general, would you describe yourself as an effective or ineffective teacher-advisor? Why? Bushnell and George (1993) articulated five characteristics of effective teacher-advisors. It was important to know from the teacher-advisor’s perspective whether or not they see themselves as effective and how the advisors align with Bushnell and George’s (1993) criteria.

Interview Question #4: Describe the types of activities that take place in your advisory group during the school year. Effective teacher-advisors are creative and enthusiastic about advisement activities, and they want advisement to be fun for the advisees (Bushnell & George, 1993). Virtually every successful advisory program

includes group activities for students and teachers to get to know one another and to discuss ideas of importance (Cole, 1992).

Interview Question #8: How well do you think you relate to the students in your advisory group? What experiences do you base these feelings on? Explain. Effective teacher-advisors know there are differences in the needs and preferences among their advisees (Bushnell & George, 1993). In addition, Bushnell and George stated that effective advisors must be sensitive to treating everyone fairly and equally and trying to involve all students in advisement activities. According to Bushnell and George, both students and teachers stressed how important it is to try and reach all students, especially those who are most difficult to involve. Effective advisors know how to develop trusting relationships (Fibkins, 1999). Therefore, it was important to determine how well teacher-advisors believe they relate to the students in their advisory group.

Interview Question #9: Think of a time when you have visited or held individual conferences with students in your advisory group. Describe how it made you feel when you visited or conferenced with individual students. Caring advisors are trustworthy and respect student confidentiality (Bushnell & George, 1993). It is important for students to be able to discuss sensitive issues and to support confidentiality (Bushnell & George, 1993). Effective advisors need skills that enable them to respond appropriately during advisory sessions and one-on-one conferences (Fibkins, 1999). Advisors do not need to know how to solve all their advisees' problems, but they must know how to refer them to others who can help (Cole, 1992). Therefore, it was meaningful to find out if teacher-advisors are able or willing to listen to their advisees and refer them to others who are able to offer assistance.

Interview Question #14: Think of a time when your advisees asked you for advice about situations that arise in their personal lives. As a teacher-advisor, describe how that made you feel when your advisees have asked you for this type of advice.

Respecting student confidentiality is essential to developing trustworthiness (Bushnell & George, 1993; Fibkins, 1999). Further, students need to know they won't be singled out (Fibkins, 1999). Effective, caring teacher-advisors tend to become adult friends with their advisees (Bushnell & George, 1993). This question was designed to determine how teacher-advisors view their ability to communicate and offer advice to their advisees.

Interview Question #15: Think of a time when you were able to respond to your advisory students when they asked you for advice in their personal lives. Describe the situation and your response. It is important to be trustworthy and up front with students (Bushnell & George, 1993). Further, Bushnell and George stated that students felt it was important for their advisors to tune into what their advisees are saying. Effective advisors should know how to listen and offer constructive feedback (Fibkins, 1999). Therefore, it was be important to find out from the individual teacher-advisor's perspective what it was like to give advice to their advisees.

Interview Question #16: Describe what types of activities the students in your advisory group seem to enjoy the most. Explain how you can tell when your advisees enjoy or do not enjoy a particular activity. Effective teacher-advisors want the activities they plan for their advisees to be fun and worthwhile (Bushnell & George, 1993). Every successful program includes group activities for advisors to get to know their advisees so they can discuss ideas and issues that are important to them (Cole, 1992). This question was designed to find out how teacher-advisors know when their students enjoy advisory

activities. Advisees want the opportunity to make some decisions about how advisement time is spent (Bushnell & George, 1993). Additionally, Bushnell and George stated that effective teacher-advisors know most students like working with small groups of peers and that they enjoy having activities that include things to make or do. It is important for teacher-advisors to affirm their skills as advisors and to become aware of areas that need improvement (Fibkins, 1999). Therefore, it was meaningful to find out, from the teacher-advisor's point of view, if they are aware when their students do not enjoy advisory activities.

Interview Question #18: How willing are the students in your advisory group to ask you for advice if they have a problem? Most students in Bushnell and George's (1993) survey said it would take up to one or two months to trust an advisor. Students need to feel they are respected and that they matter (Bushnell & George, 1993). Cole (1992) and Fibkins (1999) stated the importance of the teacher-advisor's ability to understand their advisees. Therefore, it was helpful to find out the individual teacher-advisor's perception of their advisees' willingness to seek advice.

Sub-question #3: When do teacher-advisors first become aware they are effective teacher-advisors?

There are teacher-advisor characteristics that are desirable regardless of the advisory program emphasis (Galassi, Gullledge, & Cox, 1998). As a result, it will be important to find out when teachers first begin to believe they are effective and what feedback or ideas they have access to that leads them to believe they were providing positive and effective experiences for the students in their advisory group.

Interview Question #3: Describe your first impression of your school's advisory program. Some teacher-advisors perceive themselves as having inadequate skills to implement the advisory program (Galassi, Gullledge, & Cox, (1998), or they are simply not willing or able to enter into the kind of relationship that is needed for an effective teacher-advisor program (Cole, 1992). This question was designed to determine the individual teacher-advisor's first impression of their advisory role.

Interview Question #5: Think of a time when a planned advisory activity went well. Not very well. Describe how each of these situations made you feel. Students react and give feedback (Bushnell & George, 1993; Fibkins, 1999). The environment in an effective teacher-advisor advisement tends to be cheerful, relaxed, and stress-free for advisees as well as advisors (Bushnell & George, 1993). Effective guidance is hard work (Fibkins, 1999); therefore, it was important to find out how the individual teacher-advisors are reflective and know when advisory activities went well as well as when the activities did not go well.

Interview Question #19: Think of a time when you felt effective as a teacher-advisor. Describe what happened and how it made you feel. It is the advisor's responsibility to get to know the advisee better than anyone else in the school, even the advisees who are difficult to get to know, so that the individual can function optimally (Cole, 1992). Good advisors are aware of their strengths and become aware of areas that need improvement (Bushnell & George, 1993); therefore, it was be important to find out if teacher-advisors believe they are effective or not.

Interview Question #21: Think of a time when you felt ineffective or inadequate as a teacher-advisor. Describe what happened and why you felt ineffective or inadequate.

Effective advisors care about their students, relate to them as individuals, are available to them for support, have a positive attitude toward advisement, and have a unique style of advisement (Bushnell & George, 1993). The intent of this question was to find out whether or not the interviewee has experienced feelings of ineffectiveness or inadequacy as a teacher-advisor.

Interview Question #17: What feedback, positive and/or negative, have you received from students in your advisory group regarding advisory program activities? Parents? Administrators? Please elaborate on the feedback, both positive and negative, that you have received and how you responded. Effective teacher-advisors relate well to their students and treat everyone fairly. Advisees want the opportunity to make some decisions as to how to spend advisory time. Students believed if they are able to give feedback, then advisement will go right (Bushnell & George, 1993). Administrative support for an advisory program is also important. The ideal school demonstrates a continuity of caring that extends over the student's entire middle level experience so that no student is neglected (NMSA, 1995). This concludes the section on data collection. The following section outlines the process of data analysis.

Data Analysis

After the data were collected, it was then subjected to analysis. Qualitative grounded theory research, advanced by Strauss and Corbin (1998), utilizes a set of procedures consisting of open, axial, and selective coding. During the initial stages of data analysis, Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested examining the data from a micro-analytic perspective. Initially, a detailed analysis was necessary in order to generate and identify initial categories along with their properties and dimensions. The preliminary

categories emerged during the open and axial coding processes and were examined for relationships to facilitate understanding of the emerging theory during the selective coding phase. This study's Chapter Three: Methodology includes a description of the procedures and data collection used in this qualitative grounded theory study.

Data obtained from this study were analyzed to identify emerging trends. Strauss and Corbin's (1998) process for developing grounded theory can be broken down into several steps that involve developing categories of information (open coding), relating the categories to each other (axial coding), and then constructing a narrative (selective coding) in order to generate or develop a grounded theory.

Analytic Induction. The concept of induction is often applied to qualitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Data for this study were collected from one-on-one semi-structured interviews of middle school teacher-advisors employed in two middle schools. The use of analytic induction can be employed when a researcher becomes focused on an issue, problem, or question (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Coding. The open coding process outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) began soon after the first interview. The interview was transcribed and examined for salient categories. This process continued throughout the open coding process until all 14 interviews were transcribed. By constantly comparing the data, categories emerged which were composed of properties which represented multiple perspectives about the categories. As the open coding process evolved, dimensions of the properties were presented. This procedure was outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and supported by Creswell (1998).

The next step in the coding process was axial coding in which the categories identified during the open coding process were related to sub-categories along the lines of their properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Explained by Strauss and Corbin, a category is actually a phenomenon or significant issue or event alluded to by respondents. A sub-category, also a category, answers questions such as when, where, why, who, how, or with what consequences about the category, thereby giving a substantial explanation. The goal of axial coding is to systematically develop and relate categories. This step of analysis is important in building theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The final step in the coding process is referred to as selective coding in which theory is integrated and refined (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin articulated that once the major categories are integrated to form a larger theoretical scheme, the outcome will often result in research findings taking the form of theory. Integration is an ongoing process that occurs over time. The integration process for this study is reported in Chapter Four.

Verification

Creswell (1998) approached verification from a standpoint of legitimacy by viewing verification as a distinct strength of qualitative research based on the extensive time the researcher spends in the field gathering detailed, thick description and the closeness to the participants in the study. Since the qualitative researcher works in the linguistic realm and does not rely on the power of statistical analysis, the data analysis of the qualitative researcher needs to include reasoned and convincing responses to the questions responsible readers are expected to ask of the research and to make explicit the

philosophical ground and specific world view on which the research is based (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Verification or validity can be established using a process called triangulation. Triangulation occurs when the researcher finds convergence among sources of information, different investigators, or different methods of data collection. One form of triangulation called an “audit” (Creswell, 1994), where another researcher provides a trail of the key decisions made during the research process and validates that they were good decisions, was used in this study as a means to establish validity.

Accuracy. Creswell (1994) discussed controlling accuracy in qualitative studies by employing “member checks” whereby subjects give the researcher feedback as to whether specific quotes, categories, and conclusions are accurate. This study used member checks as its primary method of checking for accuracy by taking the categories or themes back to the interviewees and asking whether the conclusions are accurate.

Transferability. One important consideration for the issue of verification in qualitative research is that of transferability. Specifically, Polkinghorne (1989) asks, “Is the structural description situation specific, or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations” (p. 57)? Steiner Kvale (1994) stated that the demand for generalization has “loomed heavily” in the social sciences (p. 164). He observed that the quest for general laws of human behavior have had meager results, but “if the researcher is able to specify the supporting evidence and make arguments explicit, the researcher can allow readers to judge the soundness of the generalization claim” (p. 166). Further, Kvale stated that the emphasis in postmodern culture is shifting from universal knowledge to contextualization. With regard to qualitative research, Eisner (1991) believed that it is up

to the individual practitioner, or user of ideas, who should determine whether the findings of a particular study apply to their own situation. Consequently, McCaw (1999) recognized generalization as a tool to be “shaped in context” or meaning in qualitative studies. Therefore, generalizations from this study’s findings should be made with the idea that no generalization can accurately represent that of another, and it is up to the reader to decide if the findings of this situation are appropriate to their own situation.

Data Reporting

After the data is collected, checked for accuracy, and analyzed, it will be reported in the form of a narrative. This Data Reporting section consists of two parts, “The Role of the Researcher” and “Narrative.” Researcher bias is addressed in the first section.

The Role of the Researcher. According to Creswell (1994), qualitative research is interpretative, and the biases, values, and judgment of the researcher are stated explicitly in the research report. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) noted that since the data must bear the weight of any interpretation, the researcher must constantly confront his or her own opinions on the matter being studied. Researchers may guard against their own biases by recording detailed field notes that reflect their own subjectivity (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). This study used an interview form (see Appendix C), so as to record explicit as well as implicit data to create detailed field notes. Reflective notes were available for each interview (see Appendix C). Jotting down notes prior to conducting the interview and during the data analysis phase was a strategy employed for this study. Following Polkinghorne’s (1989) suggestion, it was important for locating the presuppositions and bias this researcher holds as well as for clarifying the parameters and dimensions of the

experience before beginning subject interviews. Researcher bias is addressed in the following paragraph.

This researcher's perceptions of teacher-advisors has been shaped by eight years of experience as a middle school teacher-advisor and the past three years in the supporting role as an assistant principal observing middle school teacher-advisors. During the past eleven years, this researcher's colleagues had mixed feelings about the use of the time scheduled for advisory activities. A few colleagues utilized advisory time as an opportunity to get to know their advisees via planned advisory activities; whereas, other colleagues used the time to prepare for instruction while their advisees did homework or played games. Several colleagues expressed the opinion that the time spent on advisory activities could be better spent if the time were added back to the academic day. The researcher acknowledges these biases and avoided making any disparaging comments during the interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Narrative. Findings from a qualitative study are often reported in narrative form (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). Creswell (1998) stated, "Most important, authors need to present the theory in any grounded theory narrative" (p. 178). Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested developing a clear analytic story to be provided in the selective coding process. In qualitative analysis, there are no specific guidelines in writing the narrative; however, the outcome typically consists of a descriptive narrative, a synthesis of knowledge about the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 1994, p. 160).

A narrative format utilizing rich, thick descriptions of middle school teacher-advisors' perceptions about implementing their middle school's advisory program was used to present the findings of this study.

Summary of Methodology

This study followed Strauss and Corbin's suggested qualitative grounded theory research design and was consistent with the inductive model of thinking. It was expected that a pattern would emerge during the data collection and analysis stage. This grounded theory process was based on middle school teacher-advisors' perceptions about implementing their middle school's advisory program. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted at two separate middle schools using an interview protocol as outlined by Creswell (1994). During the interview, data were collected by using a tape-recorder and transcribed by the researcher. Field notes were used to supplement the recorded interview. Member checks were used to verify the data collection.

The data were examined during the open coding process in order to identify major concepts along with their properties and dimensions. During the axial coding process, the categories were linked to one another at the level of properties and dimensions. Finally, the data were subjected to selective coding where the categories were integrated and to form a larger theoretical theme.

The methodology described in this chapter outlined the framework for this study's data collection. Findings from the data analyzed for this study are reported in Chapter Four Findings From the Qualitative Inquiry, which describes the process of analytic induction and explains the emerging theory.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings From the Qualitative Inquiry

This study was guided by one central research question: What are the characteristics that distinguish effective middle school teacher-advisors? Data pertaining to this question and the analyses of that data were reported in this section. Fourteen subjects were purposefully selected for this study and interviewed in a six-day period of time. All subjects are employed as middle school teachers who also serve as teacher-advisors in two middle schools that have an advisory program within one K-12 school district. There were nine female and five male subjects who were interviewed by the same researcher in a confidential setting at the school in which they are employed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a standard protocol (Appendix C) suggested by Creswell (1998) that included 21 questions that sought data pertaining to the aforementioned research question. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

For the purpose of this study, descriptive data were reported in a narrative form, supported with direct quotations extracted from the interview transcriptions. Fictitious names are connected to the correct source and are consistently used for each of the 14 subjects whose identities have been purposely concealed. The confidentiality of this information did not detract from the collection or analysis of any data.

Data collected from this study were analyzed to determine relationships, processes, and the analysis yielded seven important categories. One category, Commitment, emerged as the core category. This category encompassed the remaining

six subcategories and had a direct relationship with each subcategory. The six subcategories were: (a) Effectiveness, (b) Relationships, (c) Caring, (d) Communication, (e) Involvement, and (f) Ownership. The narrative of this study articulated the relationships between all categories and their properties. This narrative evolved as a result of the depth of data provided by each subject.

Subjects for this study provided data through detailed description of their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. General information pertaining to the subjects can be found in Table 1. Table 1 presents demographic information for each subject, the middle school campus where the interview took place (campus 1 or 2), longevity as a middle school teacher-advisor, and advisory program grade level.

Table 1

Subject Information

Subject	Middle School	Male/Female	Years Teacher-Advisor	Grade Level
# 1	1	M	13	7
# 2	1	M	2	8
# 3	1	F	11	8
# 4	1	F	12	8
# 5	1	F	18	8
# 6	1	F	8	8
# 7	1	F	2	7
# 8	2	M	10	8
# 9	2	F	11	7
#10	2	M	34	7
#11	2	F	4	8
#12	2	F	11	8
#13	2	F	8	7
#14	2	M	10	8

The analysis of data for this study followed the format suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and utilized the process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. These processes involved taking the data apart, analyzing relationships, and re-

conceptualizing the data that form the basis for the narrative report (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The open coding process was the first step used to examine the data from each subject.

Open Coding

Open coding involves identifying concepts and their properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Initially, data collected from this study were broken down into discrete incidents that were examined for relationships. Utilizing this process, six categories were identified: (a) Effectiveness, (b) Relationships, (c) Caring, (d) Communication, (e) Involvement, and (f) Ownership. After the categories were identified, they were examined for their properties and dimensional range. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) properties are the characteristics of a category that define and give meaning to the category (p. 101). The dimensions are the range along which the general properties of a category vary (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, once a category was identified, the properties of the category were specified, and the dimensional range described how the concepts varied along those properties. The first of these categories to be identified was effectiveness.

Effectiveness

Table 2 presents the category of effectiveness and the dimensional range of the properties related to effectiveness.

Table 2

Properties and Dimensional Range of Effectiveness

Category	Properties	Dimensional Range
Effectiveness	perceived themselves as effective	effective → really effective
	importance of advisory	very → imperative
	comfort level with kids	pretty → very
	feelings about being effective	effective → most effective
	feelings about being successful	good → very successful
	felt effective or adequate	students → felt trusted listened

Properties and the dimensional range of each property of the category Perceptions of Effectiveness are supported in descriptive narratives. These descriptive narratives are comprised of the data collected from each subject involved in this study and are listed in Table 2. After the data were reported in narrative, the data were related to the literature review. This stage of the open coding process began with “Perceived Themselves as Effective” and referred to Table 2.

Perceived Themselves as Effective. Each of the subjects spoke positively about the reasons they perceived themselves as an effective teacher-advisor, and they supported their answers with reasons why they believe they are effective. One subject, Aaron, said, “I feel like the students trust me, and if they trust me, they’ll come to me for advice.”

Most subjects believed that they were effective because they care about their advisory students and develop positive relationships with them. Another subject, Penny, said, “I describe myself as being effective because I care about the kids, get to know them, and develop that relationship.” Getting to know the kids and developing a good rapport with them is important, “So,” as one subject said, “they feel connected with someone they can talk to.”

Importance of Advisory Program. The advisory program was viewed as an important component of middle school by all of the subjects. They believed advisory time was an opportunity for teachers and students to develop relationships. One subject, Marlene, responded, “It’s imperative. The kids need a place to land every day in the same place, the same seat, same person, and somebody who cares about them first thing in the morning.” Another subject, Emmett, stated, “I can cater to their emotional needs and try to get them integrated into all aspects of middle school.”

Feelings About Being Effective. Subjects provided a variety of responses concerning how they felt about a time they believed they were effective. One subject, Kathy, said, “To be effective is to let the kids know that you care about them and to be there and to be listening.” Several subjects related feelings of being effective when kids are able to change as a result of the teacher’s intervention. Aaron stated, “When I finally went one-on-one with the students, that’s when they finally kicked it in academically. They wanted to please me. They were working harder which gave me the opportunity to start providing more positive strokes, and then it feels like it’s worth it.”

Feelings about Being Successful. Subjects described how good they felt about being able to facilitate a change with their advisees. One subject, Penny, told of a service

project she started with her advisees. She said, "I felt like I had a hand in helping the kids have empathy for others. Not only did we help them with caring for others, we gave them a little bit of hope." Another subject, Deanna said,

When I approached my team about having everyone's missing work list posted in all of the homebases, all of a sudden this missing work started pouring in because all of the homebase teachers were aware of who was missing what, and you know, it was successful trying to get kids moving in the right direction.

Finally, another subject, Kathy, summed it up by saying, "Success is thinking kids have walked away with a skill or an insight that maybe they didn't have."

Feelings of Effective or Adequate. All subjects reported feeling effective or adequate when it came to reaching out to kids. They also felt effective or adequate when kids listened to them and followed through with positive behavior changes. One subject, Deanna, related, "I think I'm pretty good at listening to what a kid doesn't get and being able to phrase it in a way they do get it." Another subject, Linda, said, "I have felt successful when I have seen a student change and make permanent changes in habits or behaviors or when advice that was given to a student, they actually follow it to the best of their ability."

Effective Teacher-Advisors and the Literature Review. All subjects in this study perceived themselves as effective. Refer to Table 2 of this study for the discussion regarding the subjects' perception of effectiveness. The literature on effective teacher-advisors supports the notion that effective teacher-advisors: (a) care about their advisees, (b) are able to relate to the individuality of various advisees, (c) are available to their advisees, (d) have a positive attitude toward advisement, and (e) have a unique style of

advisement (Bushnell & George, 1993). All of these characteristics reported by Bushnell and George (1993) were supported by subjects' responses in this study. Refer to Table 3 for the discussion regarding teacher-advisors' perceptions of how well they related to their advisees and how available they were to them. Refer to Table 4 for the discussion of teacher-advisors' insights regarding caring and availability to their advisees. Teacher-advisors' unique style of advisement is discussed in Table 6 of this study.

Developing Positive Relationships

Table 3 presents the category of relationships and the dimensional range of the properties related to developing positive relationships.

Table 3

Properties and Dimensional Range of Developing Positive Relationships

Category	Properties	Dimensional Range
developing positive relationships	available to students	during advisory → anytime at school/home
	students willing to ask for advice	not real willing → very willing
	reaction when advisees ask for advice	nervous → really very good
	relate to advisees	relate well → very well

For the purpose of this study the category "developing positive relationships" consisted of four properties. The properties were: (a) available to advisees, (b) willingness of advisees to ask for advice, (c) reaction when advisees asking for advice and (d) how well advisors relate to advisees. Properties and the dimensional range of each property of the category "developing positive relationships" listed in Table 3 are supported in descriptive

narratives followed by a brief summary of the literature related to the category “developing positive relationships.” The first property discussed in Table 3 is “available to advisees.”

Available to Advisees. Most subjects reported they are available to their advisees before and after school. One subject, Marlene, said,

Certainly during homebase, before and after school, and at lunch. We are out in the hall, and they can see us when they go to their lockers. I have had students contact me by e-mail, voicemail, and I have had some draw pictures or write note to me. One of my special needs kids draws pictures.

Other subjects also mentioned being available between classes and prep or team time.

Willingness of Advisees to Ask for Advice. According to one subject the students in his advisory talk to him but don't usually discuss specific problems. In the first school, School No. 1, teacher-advisors were involved in a looping process where they have the same advisees for two year in a row. For the teacher-advisors involved in the second year with the same advisees, two subjects said that the second year advisees were very willing to ask for advice. One subject said,

This year more than last year because I had that two-year relationship with them. They are very willing. Some things are private matters, but that goes to show how comfortable kids are not just with me, and also with the group of kids I have in my classroom.

Some subjects said that it depends on the kid, but most subjects said the kids were pretty willing to seek them out if there's a problem.

Reaction When Advisees Ask for Advice. Three subjects revealed that they felt nervous when students ask for advice because they wondered whether or not they gave the right advice. One of the subjects, Penny, said, “When they’ve asked for advice, I don’t want to give them wrong advice, and sometimes you want them to come to some conclusion themselves.” Most subjects said they felt trusted, valued, and respected. All subjects described a positive reaction to being trusted. One subject, James, said, “It makes me feel that they are comfortable enough to ask me.”

Relate to Advisees. When the subjects were asked how well they relate to their advisees, everyone acknowledged they relate to their advisees. One subject, James, responded,

I think how I relate to them as a group is fine. I don’t know if I relate to all of them individually. It kind of depends on the kid. I try to talk to them all individually, and I have a couple that don’t seem interested in talking.

Another subject, Aaron, said, “I relate pretty well with the students, and that comes from them always wanting my attention. They always want to talk or tell me things.” Yet another subject stated, “I think I relate very well, and from the notes I get from parents, and they tell me their kids have an easy time coming to me if they have a problem.”

Generally, the subjects revealed that they related well to their advisees, and they believed they had good relationships with their advisees because they were able to communicate and share personal experiences with them.

Developing Positive Relationships and the Literature Review. The perception of developing relationships reported by the subjects in this study was congruent with many middle school experts (Alexander, et. al, 1968; Anfara & Brown, 2000; Carnegie Council

on Adolescent Development, 1989; Clark & Clark, 1994; Romano & Georgiady, 1994; Smith, 1926; Wiles & Bondi, 1993) who posit that at the core of middle school philosophy is the belief that every student should be known well by at least one adult. Involvement with a caring and supportive adult and interaction with a small number of peers in advisory was designed to provide the basis for building relationships (Galassi, Gullede, and Cox, 1998). Being involved with and developing positive relationships with their advisees was important to all of the subjects in this study and contributed to their desire to build positive relationships with their advisees.

Caring

Table 4 represents the category of caring and the dimensional range of the properties related to caring.

Table 4

Properties and Dimensional Range of Caring

Category	Properties	Dimensional Range
caring	importance of demonstrating caring	important → most important
	ways to demonstrate caring	talking → sharing personal experiences

For the purpose of this study, the category “caring” consisted of two properties. The properties were (a) importance of demonstrating care and (b) ways to demonstrate caring. Each property is described and includes the dimensional range as reported by the subjects. Following the two narratives is a brief summary of the literature relative to the category caring. The first property to be discussed in Table 4 is “importance of demonstrating care.”

Importance of Demonstrating Care. All subjects responded that they thought it was important to demonstrate they care about their advisees. One subject, Penny, said,

It's very important because, like the old saying, "Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." If you have more of an opportunity to develop that sort of relationship then they know that you care so, therefore, they work harder for you.

Another subject, Emmett, said, "It's very important to show you care. They just know I'm there, and they'll come find me if they need something." Yet, another subject, Marlene, noted, "That's the most important thing. They are my family. If they don't know you care, nothing else matters. Nothing that you try to teach them matters."

Ways to Demonstrate Caring. Each subject responded with a variety of ways they demonstrate caring. One subject, Aaron, noted, "The best way to show caring is to advocate for them in any situation. That's my kid that I'm going to stand up for."

Another subject, Marlene, said, "I think of them constantly. We sing Happy Birthday and give cards. I made comments about their dress and lots of compliments. On National Teen Day I sent postcards home to every student with a positive attribute." Another subject, Linda, said, "I try to find out interests that they have. I try to make it to at least one of their ball games. That gives us a lot of common ground and allows us to open the door to more intense conversations about leadership and a lot of social kinds of moral standard type things we all want the kids in our community to demonstrate."

Caring and the Literature Review. The perception of caring reported by the subjects in this study were in agreement with Bushnell and George (1993) who reported that effective middle school teacher-advisors care about the students in their advisory

group and demonstrate that care in a variety of ways. Caring advisors let their students know they enjoy being with them (Bushnell & George, 1993). In addition, Bushnell and George reported that caring advisors are trustworthy and respect student confidentiality, and they respect all students and their opinions. Further, involvement with a caring and supportive adult and interaction with a small number of peers in advisory period was designed to provide the basis for building relationships (Galassi, Gullledge, & Cox, 1998).

Communication

Table 5 presents the category of communication and the dimensional range of the properties related to communication.

Table 5

Properties and Dimensional Range of Communication

Category	Properties	Dimensional Range
Communication	hold individual conferences	good → fantastic
	responding to advisees who ask for advice	listening → sharing personal experiences

For the purpose of this study the category communication consisted of two properties.

The properties were (a) visit or hold individual conferences and (b) responding to students who ask for advice. Each property is described and includes the dimensional range as reported by the subjects. Following the two narratives is a brief summary of the literature relative to communication. The first property to be discussed is “visit or hold individual conferences with” and refers to table 5.

Visit or Hold Individual Conferences With. All subjects reported that they visited with or held individual conferences with their advisees. One subject, Barbara, said,

I think it's effective to talk with them whether it's a discipline problem or an academic problem, and I think it's real meaningful for them if you sit down and take some time to discuss with them what's going on, whatever the issue is.

Another subject, Aaron, said, "It felt fantastic when it was over because I felt like the air had been cleared between us. I felt like I walked out of there respecting them, and they felt respected." Another subject, Jeanne, said, "You really learn a lot about the students talking with them one-on-one." In addition, another subject, Susanne, noted, "I get to know them better when I talk to them individually."

Responding to Advisees who Ask for Advice. In describing her response to her advisees when they asked her for advice, one subject, Kathy, said, "Okay, well mainly listening. Your main role is as a listener. Once in awhile they will share, and it makes me feel like they trust and respect and care." Another subject, Aaron, responded,

Well, there was a situation where a kid was in a program and came to me in tears because they didn't want to be in the program any longer because people were teasing them and making fun of them, and I shared an experience that I'd had with my son and let her know how he worked through it.

Communication and the Literature Review. The perception of communication reported by the subjects in this study were in agreement with Espe (1993) who reported that teachers who served as advisors believed their students confided in them and sought their advice. Bushnell and George (1993) reported that effective advisors are able to relate to the individuality of their advisees. Understanding these emotional, psychological issues is critical in restructuring middle schools to be more developmentally responsive to their students (Clark & Clark, 1994). Findings from Espe

(1993) and Totten and Nielson (1994) indicated that advisory programs might improve teacher-student relationships because the majority of students perceived by their teacher-advisors as someone they could get to know on a more personal level and someone they could approach about topics of interest to them.

Involvement

Table 6 presents the category of interaction and the dimensional range of the properties related to involvement.

Table 6

Properties and Dimensional Range of Involvement

Category	Properties	Dimensional Range
involvement	types of activities in advisory	loosely → highly structured
	feelings about advisory activity outcomes	not very well → well
	feedback about activities	do not enjoy → enjoy

For the purpose of this study, the category “involvement” consisted of three properties. The properties were: (a) types of activities in advisory, (b) feelings about advisory activity outcomes, and (c) feedback about activities. Each property is described and includes the dimensional range as reported by the subjects. Following the three narratives is a brief synopsis of the literature relating to the data pertaining to the category involvement. The first property to be discussed is “types of advisory activities” and refers to Table 6.

Types of Advisory Activities. All subjects reported the types of activities that take place in their advisory. Most subjects reported that they work on helping their students get acquainted and organized. One subject, Barbara, reported, “We do

organization work, reminders of important assignments and tests.” Another subject, Emmett, said, “At the beginning of the school year we go over and over procedures.” Another subject, Janet, stated, “We have getting to know the student type of activities, some getting to know the school.” Subjects at School No. 1 and 2 both reported their advisees have opportunities to be involved in clubs and activities one day a week. One subject, Susanne, said, “Right now on Tuesdays there’s a lot of club activities going on that students can participate in such as Academic Bowl and Youth Alive.” Most all respondents from both schools reported that they have advisees participate in test preparation. One subject, Susanne, said, “We work on test-taking strategies every Wednesday.” Another subject, Janet, said, “We are getting ready for the Iowas and are involved in test-prep.” Other activities included math timings, character education, engaged or silent reading, community service, career planning, planning for high school, and help with homework. One subject, Barbara, said, “We do reading activities, competition between homebases for community based organizations, which is the Food Bank, and a chance for students to go to their core teachers and get extra help or clarification.”

Feelings About Advisory Program Activities. Some subjects reported that they feel good when students participate in activities like discussions. One subject, Aaron, said,

We were talking about how to treat others during test-taking. That was something important to them, having a quiet room for test-taking, so they listened, they nodded their heads. It was like they wanted everyone else to know this because they knew it.

Another subject, Jeanne, replied, "Activities that work well are the ones where students are up and moving or they are working with other people, especially of their own choosing. I guess that makes me feel like it's an effective activity." Another subject, Penny, stated, "We had a collection for the Mercy Home. It made me feel good because it felt like the kids took on a more caring nature. That actually was a big success." "Well, it's been going very well," said another subject, Jerry. "I can't think of a time when it didn't go well. The only time it wouldn't go well is when the kids don't have something profitable to do," Jerry continued.

Feedback About Activities. All subjects reported that their advisees tell them when they enjoy or do not enjoy activities. One subject, Linda, said, "My students tell me. They're very vocal. They'll say, 'That was awesome!' or 'That really stunk.'" Several subjects reported that body language is a strong indicator. One subject, Penny, said, "Well if they enjoy it, you can just see it in their body language. If they don't like it, they sit there and ask, 'Why do we have to do this?' but if they enjoy it you can tell by the way their actions are." Most of the subjects indicated they don't hear from parents or administrators for the most part. One subject, Jeanne, said, "I've had parents say they like our career unit." Another subject, Emmett, related, "Our administration thinks advisory is so important they created a coordinator position for it."

Advisory Activities and the Literature Review. The subjects in this study are involved in activities that were supported in the literature. For example, Galassi, Gullledge, and Cox (1998) posit that activities that build school spirit, involve community service, interpret policies, and explain procedures of the school, improve study skills, and explore current events are examples of advisory activities that are vital in middle school

curriculum. In their discussion of characteristics of effective advisory programs, Wiles and Bondi (1993) concluded that characteristics of effective advisory programs included establishing goals so the group's attention is focused, values based, and goal-oriented. This concludes the section on open coding in which the concepts along with their properties and dimensions were identified. The next step in the coding process is axial coding which involves linking the categories at the level of properties and dimensions (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Axial Coding

The process of axial coding is defined as, "The act of relating categories to subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 124). The goal of axial coding is to systematically develop and relate categories to form more precise and complete explanations about phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Phenomena are central ideas or concepts that are the building blocks of theory that explain what is going on. Subcategories are concepts that pertain to a category and serve to clarify the category by answering questions such as who, when, where, why, and how and with what consequences analysts are able to relate structure with process. Combining structure with process helps analysts to address the complexity of both how and why certain events occur in order to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of events (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this study six categories were identified using the previously mentioned process of open coding. Using the process of axial coding, the data were de-contextualized into segments, and those segments were analyzed. Following their analysis, the segments were re-contextualized so as to understand the logic that lies behind analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The re-contextualization of this data identified

properties for each category. The properties were then listed with their dimensional range.

After analyzing the re-contextualized data, phenomena were revealed that were related to a causal condition and the properties of that phenomenon. As a result of the axial coding process, these relationships and properties emerged from the data and were referred to as: “Causal Condition,” “Phenomenon,” “Context,” and “Consequence.” These terms were derived from Strauss and Corbin (1998) and are explained below.

Causal Condition. Causal conditions are the events or happenings that create the situation, issues, and problems pertaining to a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The causal condition for all categories in this study is the commitment of middle school teacher-advisors. It is the commitment of middle school teacher-advisors that led to the development of each phenomenon.

Phenomenon. A phenomenon is a repeated pattern of happenings, events, actions, or interactions that represent what people say or do alone or together, in response to the problem or situation they find themselves in (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The phenomenon for this study is each category that emerged during the open coding process. Six specific phenomena emerged: (a) effectiveness, (b) relationships, (c) caring, (d) communication, (e) involvement, and (f) ownership.

Intervening Conditions. Intervening conditions are a conceptual way of grouping answers to the questions why, where, how come, and when. These conditions form the basis or set of circumstances in which the phenomena are grounded (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Action/Interaction. Actions/interactions are routine responses made by individuals or groups to issues or problems that arise under those conditions and answer the questions how and by whom (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Consequence. Consequences are what happens as a result of actions/interactions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The consequences outlined in this study follow the action/interaction statements.

Table 7 displays the components of the axial coding process and the analytic flow between each component.

Axial Coding Process

causal condition → phenomenon → context → intervening condition → action/interaction → consequence

The axial coding process started with identifying a causal condition and phenomena presented in Table 8. Table 8 identifies the causal condition and phenomena that were identified in the axial coding process.

Table 8

Causal Condition and Phenomena

Causal Condition	Phenomena
commitment of effective middle school teacher-advisors	effectiveness relationships caring communication involvement advisory activities

What emerged from synthesizing contexts and features of the contexts are the phenomena listed in Table 8. In this study the components of each context are identified as:

Intervening Condition, Action/Interaction, and Consequences. In order to interpret the

analysis that has taken place so far in the axial coding process, each phenomenon and the context of that phenomenon is presented in a “Table.” The first phenomenon to be identified in this stage of the axial coding process is “Perception of Effectiveness.”

Effectiveness

The phenomenon of perception of effectiveness has emerged from the synthesis of four contexts. Table 9 lists the phenomenon of perception of effectiveness as well as the four contexts from which the effectiveness phenomenon emerged.

Table 9

The Phenomenon of Effectiveness in Context

Phenomenon	Context
effectiveness	<p>subjects viewed themselves as effective because they develop positive relationships with their advisees.</p> <p>Subjects listen and talk to their advisees in an effort to understand them.</p> <p>Subjects are comfortable with their advisees and share personal experiences.</p> <p>Subjects are trusted by their advisees who want to work to please their advisor.</p>

Listed below are the four contexts for the phenomenon perception of effectiveness and the features of each context. The phenomenon and its features have evolved from the axial coding process.

Effectiveness Context #1: **Subjects in this study viewed themselves as effective because they develop positive relationships with their advisees.**

Intervening Condition

- Subjects viewed getting to know their advisees and developing a good relationship as important to them.

Action/Interaction

- Subjects get to know advisees by talking to them, listening to them, and building common bonds with them.
- Subjects develop relationships with advisees by sharing personal experiences.

Consequence

- Subjects perceived themselves as relating well to their advisees.
- Subjects viewed themselves as effective.

Effectiveness Context #2: **Subjects listen and talk in an effort to understand their advisees.**

Intervening Condition

- Subjects are available to talk or listen to their advisees
- Advisees really listen to what advisors have to say and make changes as a result.

Action/Interaction

- Subjects and advisees spend time together.
- Subjects have successful and meaningful discussions with advisees.
- Subjects make connections to their advisees.
- Advisees ask subjects for advice.

Consequence

- Subjects from this study feel valued and trusted.
- Subjects perceive they are successful when they help advisees solve problems.

Effectiveness Context #3:**Subjects are comfortable spending time with their advisees.****Intervening Condition**

- Subjects visit with advisees in a group or individually and get to know their advisees.
- Subjects ask questions and advisees share their concerns.
- Subjects build strong relationships.

Action/Interaction

- Subjects feel closer to their advisees after one-on-one conferences.
- Subjects have an impact on advisees when they are able to facilitate change for their advisees.

Consequence

- Subjects felt good when helping advisees work out problems.
- Subjects felt successful when advisees gain insight.

Effectiveness Context #4:**Advisors perceive advisees trust them.****Intervening Condition**

- Subjects establish a positive relationship with their advisees when they ask for advice.

Action/Interaction

- Communication between subjects and advisees establishes trust.
- Relationships based on mutual trust that are established between subjects and their advisees can facilitate change.

Consequence

- Subjects felt effective when communicating with advisees.
- Subjects felt trusted and valued when advisees asked for advice.

Phenomenon of Relationships

Relationships emerged from the synthesis of four contexts that were synthesized from the data collected for this study. Table 10 lists the phenomenon of developing relationships as well as the four contexts from which the relationships emerged.

Table 10

The Phenomenon of Relationships in Context

Phenomenon	Context
relationships	Subjects are available to their advisees. Subjects perceive advisees as willing to seek advice. Subjects feel successful when advisees seek advice. Subjects relate well to their advisees.

The four contexts for the phenomenon relationships and the components of those contexts that resulted from the axial coding process are listed below.

Relationships Context #1:

Subjects in this study are available to their advisees.

Intervening Condition

- Subjects viewed themselves as available to their advisees before, during, and after school.

Action/Interaction

- Advisees ask subjects for advice about matters in their personal lives.

Consequence

- Subjects relate well to their advisees.
- Subjects feel valued and trusted when their advisees ask for advice.
- Subjects make it a priority to establish positive relationships and develop a good rapport with their advisees.

Relationships Context #2: Subjects perceive their advisees as willing to ask for advice.

Intervening Condition

- Advisees seek advice from subjects about conflict at home, with peers, or with another teacher.

Action/Interaction

- Subjects show concern for advisees who are experiencing difficulties.
- Subjects refer advisees to school counselors if necessary.

Consequence

- Subjects feel trusted and valued when advisees ask for advice.
- Subjects believe their opinions are respected when advisees ask for advice.

Relationship Context #3: Subjects feel effective and successful when they respond to their advisees' requests for advice.

Intervening Condition

- Advisees seek advice about conflicts at home and school.

Action/Interaction

- Subjects are able to respond to advisees who ask for advice.
- Subjects refer their advisees to school counselor when necessary.
- Subjects make suggestions to advisees and share personal experiences.

Consequence

- Subjects feel successful when they help their advisees' problem solve.
- Subjects feel like they make a difference in the lives of their advisees.

Relationship Context #4: Subjects relate well to their advisees.**Intervening Condition**

- Advisees want to talk to subjects.
- Subjects share personal experiences with their advisees.

Action/Interaction

- Advisees ask questions about how to resolve problems they have.
- Subjects communicate openly with their advisees.

Consequence

- Subjects feel connected to their advisees
- Subjects believe they are effective when they have an impact or make a difference in the lives of their advisees.

Phenomenon of Caring

Caring emerged from two contexts that were synthesized from the data collected for this study. Table 11 lists the phenomenon caring and those contexts listed below.

Table 11

The Phenomenon of Caring in Context

Phenomenon	Context
caring	Subjects believe it is important to demonstrate caring.
	Subjects demonstrate caring by talking, listening, understanding, and sharing personal experiences.

The two contexts for the phenomenon caring and the components of those contexts which resulted from the axial coding process are listed below.

Phenomenon of Communication

Communication emerged from two contexts that were synthesized from the data collected for this study. Table 12 lists the phenomenon communication and those contexts below.

Table 12

The Phenomenon of Communication in Context

Phenomenon	Context
communication	Subjects visit or hold individual conferences with their advisees.
	Subjects respond to their advisees when they ask for help.

The two contexts for the phenomenon communication and the components of those contexts that resulted from the axial coding process are listed below.

**Communication Context #1: The subjects visit or hold conferences
with their advisees.**

Intervening Condition

- Open communication takes place between subjects and their advisees.

Action/Interaction

- Subjects hold one-on-one conferences with their advisees.
- When advisees ask for advice, subjects respond.

Consequence

- Subjects understand their advisees and are successful developing positive relationships with them.
- Subjects believe they are effective and have strong relationships with their advisees when they hold individual conferences with them.
- Subjects believe they have the highest impact on their advisees when they take time to talk and share personal experiences with them.

**Communication Context #2: The subjects respond to their advisees
when they ask for help.**

Intervening Condition

- Students seek their teacher-advisor's advice.

Action/Interaction

- Students have opportunities to contact their teacher-advisors before, during, and after school.
- Students ask for advice about peers, parents, and other teachers.

Consequence

- Teachers feel trusted, valued, and respected when students ask for advice.
- Teachers empathize with their students.
- Teachers feel gratified when they are able to help.

Phenomenon of Involvement

Involvement emerged from two contexts that were synthesized from the data collected for this study. Table 13 lists the phenomenon involvement and those contexts listed below.

Table 13

The Phenomenon of Involvement in Context

Phenomenon	Context
involvement	Subjects view advisory as important. Subjects are involved in a variety of activities with their advisees.

The two contexts for the phenomenon involvement and the components of those contexts that resulted from the axial coding process are listed below.

Involvement Context #1: Subjects view advisory as important.

Intervening Condition

- Subjects implement advisory program activities that support program goals.

Action/Interaction

- Subjects are involved in planning activities that help students get acquainted, organized, and prepared for tests.
- Subjects report that their advisees tell them when they enjoy or do not enjoy program activities.

Consequences

- Subjects believe advisory program is successful when their advisees are actively participating in discussions and activities.

Involvement Context #2: The subjects are involved in a variety of activities with their advisees.

Intervening Condition

- Subjects implement academic, social, and community service activities to enrich their students' middle school experience.

Action/Interaction

- Students enjoy hands-on activities and working with a partner.
- Teachers and students enjoy team building activities and the discussions that result.

Consequences

- Subjects felt successful when students came away with a skill or insight.
- Subjects believed they were effective when students developed empathy for others

This completes the axial coding process. This process identified the causal condition “characteristics of effective teacher-advisors.” The causal condition led to the development of each phenomenon. Five categories originally identified in the open coding process emerged as a phenomenon during the axial coding process. Each category emerged as a phenomenon because it is the central idea to which the set of

categories is related. The data that were de-contextualized during the open coding process was re-contextualized during the axial coding process by subjecting the data to a detailed analysis of each phenomenon. The five phenomenon identified early during the axial coding process were analyzed by identifying the “context,” “intervening condition” of that context, the “action/interaction,” and the “consequence” of the action/interaction alluded to by Strauss and Corbin (1998). At the conclusion of the axial coding process the data segments were examined at a new, more specific level in an effort to reveal what was not originally evident. As a result of the microanalysis of the data segments, interrelationships between the six phenomena were identified. This concludes the section on axial coding. During the axial coding process categories were linked with the subcategories. The final stage of the coding process is selective coding in which the major categories are integrated in order to refine the theory. The section that follows describes this process.

Selective Coding

Selective coding involves integrating the major categories to form a larger theoretical scheme from which theory is derived (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To gain a more holistic view of the data, McCaw (1999) suggested that the researcher pull away from the micro analysis to a more macro analysis so that data can be interpreted within the construct which evolved through the open and axial coding process. This pulling away from the data to a more holistic view provides the analysis essential for the narrative report.

The narrative report for this study developed as a result of the open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The selective coding process gave a holistic view of the

five phenomena and their properties. These interrelationships are presented through a story line made up from the findings of the analyses that took place during the axial coding process and focuses on the five phenomena. This story line description provides the basis for the formulation of grounded theory.

The story line contains the context of each phenomenon. Within the context are the concepts related to the phenomenon. These concepts are identified in **bold type**. The narrative that follows reveals the interrelationships of the phenomena and is entitled “The Characteristics of Effective Teacher-Advisors.”

The Characteristics of Effective Teacher-Advisors

Middle school teacher-advisors are involved in their school’s advisory program and operate on numerous perceptions that they have. How they perceive themselves in their role as teacher-advisors influences their commitment. Teacher-advisors in two middle schools with advisory programs were named by their colleagues as effective teacher-advisors. Teacher-advisors who **perceive themselves as effective, view the advisory program as an important component of middle school**. Teacher-advisors believe **advisory time is an opportunity to develop positive relationships with their advisees**.

Teacher-advisors reported they **feel effective when they are able to facilitate change in their advisees**. When it comes to reaching out to kids, all subjects believe they are effective, especially when their **advisees listened to them and followed through with positive behavior changes**.

Developing positive relationships with their advisees was important to all teacher-advisors. **Being available to their advisees** was directly related to their ability to

develop positive relationships. Once advisees have developed a comfort level with subjects, they were willing to ask for advice if they had a problem. Teacher-advisors feel trusted, valued, and respected when students feel comfortable enough to ask for advice.

When teacher-advisors spent time with their advisees and developed positive relationships with them, teacher-advisors believed they related well to their advisees. As a result, the ability to develop positive relationships is important to teacher-advisors and their advisees because they are able to share personal experiences and resolve problems.

Caring was important to teacher-advisors and their advisees. Knowing how much someone cares is essential to developing a positive relationship and forming a bond wherein advisees are willing to work to please their teacher-advisor. Involvement with a supportive and caring adult was essential for a positive relationship to develop. Teacher-advisors supported the notion that caring was most important because they perceived caring and demonstrating care most important because it helps to establish common bonds.

One way effective teacher-advisors commonly establish the basis for forming positive relationships with their advisees is to establish ways to effectively communicate with their advisees. One way teacher-advisors are able to communicate with their advisees is through one-on-one conferences with individual advisees. Communication involved teacher-advisors listening to their advisees' concerns, as well as talking to advisees when there was an academic, behavioral, or social concern. Therefore, being able to effectively communicate with advisees formed the

basis for **establishing mutual trust and respect** and was a way for advisors to get to **know their advisees better**.

Being able to **respond to advisees individually when they need adult advice** is also important in the process of communication. **Listening to their advisees** and being able to **effectively and successfully respond to their advisees** led teacher-advisors to **feel good about having a positive impact on their advisees**.

Teacher-advisors are **involved with their advisees in many ways**. Advisory programs are a way to offer students an opportunity to **interact with a caring adult and smaller peer group**. Ways to **interact and become involved with advisees** ranged from **organizational, getting acquainted, and procedural activities** to **being involved in clubs and activities that are of interest** to middle school students. Both schools were also involved in academic activities like test-preparation and math timings as well as character education and social skills.

Teacher-advisors can tell whether or not their students enjoy or do not enjoy **advisory program activities** because their advisees tell them. **Students are perceived as feeling comfortable with their teacher-advisors, and they tell them how much they like an activity** and often want to repeat the activity when possible. At other times, some students have **vocalized their dislike for test-preparation activities**, but teacher-advisors report that the students have also remarked about understanding the need to improve test-taking skills.

During the selective coding process, a core category emerged as the theme that encompassed all of the phenomena. The core category that emerged was entitled, “**Perspectives of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors**” because it was related to the

five phenomena identified during the axial coding process. As a result of the core category that emerged, the phenomena are now referred to as sub-categories. The terminology changes to reflect the relationship between the core category and sub-categories and form the basis of the narrative report.

Core Category

The core category identified in this study entitled, “Perspectives of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors” was identified as a result of its relationship to the five sub-categories: (a) effectiveness, (b) relationships, (c) caring, (d) communication, and (e) involvement. These five subcategories are related to the core category as well as to each other.

Sub-categories

The interrelationships between the sub-categories are briefly discussed under the heading of each subcategory.

Perception of Effectiveness. Subjects in this study perceived themselves as effective teacher-advisors. The middle school teacher supported the belief that they are effective by frequently mentioning their ability to form positive relationships with their advisees. There is also a relationship between a teacher-advisor’s effectiveness and their involvement as a teacher-advisor. Therefore, there appears to be a connection between the subcategory “Perception of Effectiveness” and “Developing Positive Relationships.”

Developing Positive Relationships. Developing positive relationships is directly connected to the subcategory “Caring.” Teacher-advisors perceived that caring and demonstrating that care to their advisees was important for establishing common bonds.

Caring. A direct relationship existed between caring and all other subcategories. If a teacher-advisor communicates they care about their advisees, they reported being able to communicate on a level deep enough to trust and share personal experiences with their advisees. Caring was also directly related to involvement. Teacher-advisors reported they cared enough to become involved in every level of the advisory activities. Finally, caring was the essential factor in positive relationships the teacher-advisors were able to develop with their advisees, and this led to the teacher-advisors perceiving themselves as effective and successful in being able to establish a positive rapport with their advisees.

Communication. When teacher-advisors discussed establishing a positive relationship to their advisees, communication was essential. All subjects reported holding individual and group conferences with their advisees that led to a mutual understanding.

Involvement. All subjects reported a level of involvement that included a variety of activities, clubs, and math and reading skill building. All of these activities provided opportunities for advisees to interact with a caring adult and smaller peer group.

Summary

The data collected from semi-structured interviews for this study were subjected to the qualitative procedures of open, axial, and selective coding. The findings reported in this chapter resulted from these analyses. During the open coding process the data derived from interviews were examined and several themes emerged. In the axial coding process, these themes were de-contextualized into data segments. The data segments that emerged were re-contextualized and related to their sub-categories along the lines of their

properties and dimensions in accordance with the relationships that emerged during the micro analysis procedures in axial coding. At the conclusion of the axial coding process, five phenomena and the components of the five phenomena were identified from the data.

During the final stage of analysis the selective coding process was applied to the re-contextualized data. The selective coding process utilizes a macro analysis of the data. The results of the macro analysis were presented in a narrative format which allowed a “core category” to emerge from the phenomena that were identified during the axial coding. At this stage of analysis, the phenomena are referred to as “sub-categories.” At the conclusion of the narrative report, the “sub-categories” are interrelated through statements which can be used to explain the phenomena or theory grounded in data. At the conclusion of the narrative report, grounded theory was articulated. At the end of the selective coding process, the narrative report is titled: “Perspectives of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors.”

The findings from this study are summarized in Chapter Five. The summary begins with “Holistic Analysis” of the findings which answer the central question of this study: What are the characteristics that distinguish effective teacher-advisors? The chapter concludes with postulations and implications for practitioners and further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Interpretive Summary, Postulations, and Implications

Introduction

By the very nature of its design, qualitative research is interpretive because it relies on participants in the field to describe their reaction to a phenomenon. As a result, the researcher is able to interact with the participant during data collection in order to develop an understanding or theory about what's happening. Chapter Five summarizes the findings from Chapter Four of this qualitative study. This summary includes a holistic perspective of the core category "Characteristics of Effective Teacher-Advisors" as well as the five sub-categories of (a) Effectiveness, (b) Relationships, (c) Caring, (d) Communication, and (e) Involvement. The five phenomena that were identified from the open coding process of data analysis for this study will be referred to as "sub-categories" because they are directly related to the core category.

Once the phenomena were identified and categorized (open coding), the sub-categories were linked at the level of properties and dimensions (axial coding). Then the major categories were integrated and refined (selective coding) resulting in an emerging theory grounded in data. This holistic analysis described in the first part of this chapter describes the analytic process by which the theory grounded in data was derived. At the conclusion of this section is an explanation of the interrelationships of the categories as well as how they are connected to the literature. It is followed by an in depth look at the exploration of the central question and sub-questions that provide the framework for this study. From the findings reported in this study's Chapter Four, the holistic perspective of

the qualitative data reveals three postulations. The explanation for the postulations is contained in the Postulations section. Concluding this chapter are the implications for practitioners and future research. The following summary describes the qualitative paradigm involving the processes of open, axial, and selective coding.

Summary

Holistic Analysis

A grounded theory concerning “Perceptions of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors” was produced as a result of the synthesis of the analysis applied to the original qualitative data. This grounded theory is a culmination of the qualitative processes of open, axial, and selective coding suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998). The grounded theory for this study is based upon five categories that emerged during the axial coding process. A sixth category emerged during the selective coding process that encompassed the original five categories. The sixth encompassing category is referred to as the “core category.” For the purpose of this study, the core category is “Perceptions of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors.” The core category is significant because it is integrated with the following five subcategories: (a) Effectiveness, (b) Relationships, (c) Caring, (d) Communication, and (e) Involvement. The core category and sub-categories together form the basis of the grounded theory that was presented in Chapter Four.

The first stage of data analysis involved a microanalysis in which the open and axial coding processes were used. Initially during the open coding phase, concepts were identified along with their properties and dimensions. Microanalysis continued during the axial coding process in which the categories that were identified in open coding were related to their sub-categories at the level of properties and dimensions. Then during the

selective coding process, data analysis transitioned away from microanalysis toward a macro-analysis. As a result of these analytic processes, a grounded theory began to emerge. Using thick, rich description, the grounded theory was reported in a story line that presented a new perspective of the phenomenon. Through the holistic approach generated from the various analytic processes utilized in this study, a new perspective about the perceptions of effective middle school teacher-advisors revealed that middle school teacher-advisors, who are considered by their colleagues to be effective, view their school's advisory program as important and strive to build positive relationships with their advisees in a variety of ways.

Exploration of Central and Sub-questions

Analysis of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews revealed categorical relationships among the core category "Perceptions of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors" and the five sub-categories of (a) Effectiveness, (b) Relationships, (c) Caring, (d) Communication, and (e) Involvement. Analysis of these categorical relationships as well as the components of those relationships provided a unique and progressive perspective on the central question that forms the basis of this qualitative research design. The central question was: From the perspective of middle school teacher-advisors, what characteristics distinguish an effective middle school teacher-advisor?

Each sub-category was then linked to a sub-question. In the section that follows, the sub-questions are referred to from a holistic perspective because they evolved from the qualitative paradigm involving the processes of open, axial, and selective coding. These processes were described in the previous section and addressed in Chapter Four.

This approach builds an understanding of how effective middle school teacher-advisors perceive themselves and their responsibilities to their advisees. The first sub-question addressed the perception of middle school teacher-advisors and the characteristics that distinguish effective teacher-advisors.

What characteristics distinguish an effective middle school teacher-advisor?

Subjects for this study were selected because they were named in a staff survey by their colleagues as effective in accordance with Bushnell and George's (1993) characteristics of effective middle school teacher-advisors. An unexpected finding from this research was that all of the teacher-advisors perceived themselves as effective. Regardless of their longevity as a teacher-advisor, grade level, or gender, all subjects supported their perception about being effective because they get to know their advisees and develop a positive relationship with them. In addition, they supported this belief because they are comfortable with their advisees, listen to them, and have empathy for them. They also believed their advisees trusted them enough to ask for advice.

What thoughts and feelings do teacher-advisors have that form the basis of their perceived level of effectiveness?

Subjects reported their involvement with their advisees during advisory time included organized activities that include procedural as well as academic activities. For example, in the beginning of the year, subjects reportedly involved their advisees in activities to acquaint them to the procedures of the school and organizational activities to help them get organized for academic success. Specifically, math timings, test preparation, and reading were academic activities. Other activities included character education, goal setting, planning for high school, community service, and career

planning. Some activities simply involved getting help with homework, and providing less structured time for having discussions that were of concern to their advisees.

Subjects perceived themselves as effective and successful when they established a good rapport with their advisees. Subjects perceived themselves as effective and successful as a result of their direct involvement with their advisees and because they believed their advisees trusted them enough to share personal experiences and ask for their advice.

When do teacher-advisors first become aware they are effective teacher-advisors?

All subjects in this study viewed advisory as an important time to spend developing positive relationships and a good rapport with their advisees. Subjects' first impressions of their school's advisory program varied. Several subjects reported that they were not sure what advisory time was all about, and their role as advisor was not clear. As subjects developed a keener understanding of their advisory program, they saw the program ranging from important to imperative for a variety of reasons.

Subjects perceived advisory program activities as essential for meeting their advisees' needs and for having time to build positive relationships. When activities went well, advisees participated in discussions or activities and often gave their advisors positive feedback and sometimes wanted to repeat the activity. Teacher-advisors in this study reported feeling successful when their advisees responded or listened to them, especially when the advisors were able to have an impact on and facilitate a change for their advisees. When students needed help solving a problem or came away with a skill or insight as a result of a discussion or an activity, subjects reported feeling effective and successful. They especially felt effective when they saw their advisees make permanent changes in behavior or when their advisees followed their advice. When planned

activities did not go well, subjects sometimes blamed themselves for not being prepared or organized. Sometimes planned activities reportedly didn't go well because some of the advisees were pulled out of advisory time for unexpected reasons like participating in an extra band practice.

It is important to acknowledge that any examination of the previous sub-questions include a synthesis of the components of each category and their interrelationships. The Central Question, **“From the perspective of middle school teacher-advisors, what are the characteristics that distinguish effective middle school teacher-advisors?”** will be answered insufficiently unless the core category and its five sub-categories are investigated from a holistic perspective. This holistic approach allows for the interrelationships of the categories to evolve in order to clarify the perspectives of effective middle school teacher-advisors.

Holistic Analysis Related to the Literature. Even though the literature contains substantial information and recommendations regarding middle school teacher-advisors and advisory programs, this study is unique in its examination of effective middle school teacher-advisors from the perspectives of teacher-advisors who were named by their colleagues as meeting the criteria for effective outlined by Bushnell and George (1993). A qualitative analysis of the data revealed a theoretical model of effective teacher-advisor characteristics. This model was reflective of the personal constructs of the middle school teacher-advisors regarding their perceptions of what constitutes an effective advisor. These perspectives provide the framework for understanding the perceptions of effective middle school teacher-advisors. The findings of this study were congruent with Bushnell and George's (1993) findings. The middle school teacher-advisors in this study cared

about their students in their advisory group, they were available to their advisees, and they had a positive attitude toward advisement. Although this study did not address the individual teacher-advisor's unique style of advisement, what did emerge during data collection was the wide variety and the emphasis of advisory program activities each individual teacher-advisor perceived as important. The teacher-advisors in this study reported that they make every effort to provide opportunities for their advisees to interact with them so that they will be known well by at least one adult. The positive impact of the advisor-advisee relationships reported in this study support the notion that a student should be well-known by at least one adult in a smaller advisory group as noted in the literature (Alexander, et. al., 1968; Anfara & Brown, 2000; Briggs, 1920; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Clark & Clark, 1994; Romano & Georgiady, 1994; Smith, 1926; Wiles & Bondi, 1993).

Postulations

This study produced three major postulations. They have been labeled: (a) Perceptions about Effectiveness, (b) Characteristics of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors, and (c) Re-Conceptualization of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors.

Teacher-Advisors' Perceptions of Effectiveness

All subjects interviewed for this study believed they were effective. This is important to note because it has emerged as a primary link to all subjects. Ideally, the best teacher-advisors are those who are willing to extend themselves to students as an advocate (Cole, 1992). However, no mention is made about teacher-advisors and their perceptions about being effective. All subjects in this study perceived themselves first and foremost as effective.

Individual teacher-advisors in this study perceived themselves as effective for several reasons. They believed that developing positive relationships with their advisees and establishing a good rapport with them was essential. How they established that relationship varied from teacher-advisor to teacher-advisor. Some teacher-advisors in this study believed their advisees trusted them and sought their advisors' opinions and/or advice about issues of concern to them. Some subjects reported that their advisees felt comfortable with contacting them at school or at home. Some subjects articulated their understanding of adolescents and empathizing with them as a factor in being able to help them. Being able to listen, understand, and communicate with their advisees were factors lending themselves to advisors feeling effective. Good advisors are aware of their strengths and become aware of areas that need improvement (Bushnell & George, 1993). Therefore, it was important to discover how teacher-advisors perceived themselves. The teacher-advisors' perceptions of themselves being effective may be the important link to actually practicing the teacher-advisor behaviors they believed made them effective.

Characteristics of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors

Subjects in this study articulated what they believe are effective teacher-advisor practices. Communicating with advisees was an important component of getting to know their advisees well enough to share the subjects' own personal experiences and an important feature in establishing positive relationships with them. One-on-one conferences and offering advice and support when necessary was another way subjects expressed they could make connections and develop relationships with their advisees. Caring was also a frequently mentioned aspect of feeling effective. Subjects believed letting their advisees know they care was also a way to establish a feeling of mutual trust

and respect. The most often repeated theme throughout the data collection that was articulated by the subjects was being able to take advantage of the opportunities advisory time presents to make connections with their advisees and to establish and develop positive relationships with them.

Teacher advisors in this study believed that their interactions with the students in their advisory were positive. They reported that their advisees had many opportunities to become actively involved in a wide range of activities including organizational, administrative, community-building, academic, and relationship-building. Activities that build school spirit, involve community service, interpret policies, explain school procedure, improve study skills, and explore current events are examples that are vital to middle school curriculum (Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998). All subjects reported being involved with their advisees in advisory program activities that are congruent with effective practices presented in the literature. Being involved with advisees was critical in the positive outcomes expressed by the subjects in this study.

Re-conceptualization of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors

Findings from this study support the notion that there are characteristics unique to effective middle school teacher-advisors. Bushnell and George (1993) sought to identify those characteristics that are unique to effective middle school teacher-advisors. In fact, caring did flesh out as a characteristic of effective middle school teacher-advisors in the Bushnell and George (1993) study as well as this study. Across the board all subjects perceived caring as important because caring provides the basis for building relationships. However, in their effort to identify characteristics of effective teacher-advisors, some of the characteristics Bushnell and George (1993) identified actually

turned out to be properties of the characteristics that emerged in this study. For example, Bushnell and George (1993) posited that one characteristic of effective advisors is that they are able to relate to the individuality of various advisees. For purposes of this study, relating to their advisees surfaced as a property of “developing positive relationships” with advisees. Another example Bushnell and George (1993) identified as a characteristic of effective middle school teacher-advisors is that they relate well to their advisees. Relating well to their advisees actually turned out to be an important property of “developing positive relationships” in this study. In addition, Bushnell and George (1993) posited that being available to advisees is a characteristic of effective middle school teacher-advisors. In this study being available to advisees was an essential property of “developing positive relationships,” also. In order to develop positive relationships, advisors must be available to their advisees.

Having a positive attitude toward advisement, posited by Bushnell and George (1993), as a characteristic of effective advisors turned out to be an important property of “perception of effectiveness” in this study. Teacher-advisors who perceived themselves as effective rated having time for advisory from important to imperative.

A final summation of the data presented in this qualitative study produced the following definition of effective middle school teacher-advisors: *Effective middle school teacher-advisors consist of individuals who perceive themselves as effective, develop positive relationships, care, communicate, and are involved with each of their advisees.*

Implications

Numerous implications have been generated as a result of this study. These implications are divided into two sections (a) “Implications for Practitioners,” and (b)

“Implications for Future Studies.” The first section describes implications for those wishing to utilize the findings from this study in their positions as middle school teacher-advisors.

Implications for Practitioners. Stories emanating from the perceptions of effective middle school teacher-advisors can give consumers of this study an opportunity to examine their personal perceptions in regard to effective middle school teacher-advisors. Subjects in this study did strive to examine their inner thoughts and feelings regarding their perceptions about themselves in relation to their advisees and the advisory program in their school. They wanted to have a personal stake in the academic as well social well being of their advisees.

When principals of middle schools strive to achieve what is best for the students in their building, they will want to take heed of the characteristics that constitute effective teacher-advisors. The best teacher-advisors are those who perceive themselves as effective, develop positive relationships with their advisees, care about their advisees, communicate with their advisees, and are involved with each of their advisees. Notably, two of the teachers in this study won national awards for excellence in teaching math and science. Perhaps the characteristics of effective teacher-advisors can be equated to effective teachers. In any event, administrators will want to make sure that their teacher-advisors' values, beliefs, and practices are closely aligned with the characteristics of effective teacher-advisors because they seek the best of all possible outcomes for their students. In this new millennium when educators are pushing for higher test scores and a show of growth in the annual yearly progress reports they are required to file with the federal government for the No Child Left Behind Act, one must consider ways to achieve

these monumental tasks. The very testimony of the teacher-advisors in this study attest to their belief that in order for students to work at their optimal level of achievement we must, as their teacher-advisors, be willing to develop the positive, trusting relationships with them in order to pave the way for those higher test scores and growth to occur. Findings from this study support the findings of Bushnell and George (1993) who stated, “These characteristics (of effective teacher-advisors) are extremely important in developing and maintaining effective teacher-advisor-advisee relationships. This (developing positive relationships) can be achieved by any caring middle school educator who is willing to keep trying to make advisement successful for his/her advisees” (p. 16).

Implications for Future Studies. Researchers interested understanding and improving middle school advisory practices through a greater awareness of effective teacher-advisor practices should focus on finding ways to promote the development of effective, positive, caring, involved, relationships between their teacher-advisors and their advisees. Specific areas that are in need of additional research are: (a) issues of developing positive relationships from middle school students’ perspective, (b) a causal-comparative analysis between positive teacher-advisor-advisee relationships and achievement test scores, and (c) a causal-comparative analysis between positive teacher-advisor-advisee relationships and academic growth. Now is the time for educators to recognize the value in developing the positive relationships that are a direct result of having teacher-advisors who perceive themselves as effective, develop positive relationships with their advisees, care about their advisees, communicate with their advisees, and are involved with each of their advisees. It is imperative that we, as

educators, must look for ways to find teachers who are the embodiment of these effective characteristics and who strive to nurture the relationships that make a difference.

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Appendix A: Essential Characteristics of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors

Characteristics of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors

1. Cares about the students in their advisory group and demonstrates that care in a variety of ways.
2. Relates to the individuality of various advisees.
3. Is available to their advisees.
4. Has a positive attitude toward advisement.
5. Has their own unique style of advisement

Staff Survey

Based on the above characteristics, list the top ten people you believe are the best examples of effective teacher-advisors. You may include yourself on this list.

Appendix B: Letters

(date)

(Name)
(Address)

Dear (Name):

I am writing this letter to request your assistance in regard to a middle school teacher-advisor study I am conducting for my Doctoral Dissertation in Educational Leadership at The University of Montana. This study will contribute important information to the field of middle school education by facilitating a better understanding of middle school teacher-advisors so as to improve middle school advisory program practices.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to participate, you will receive a follow-up notification from me in the form of official participant consent forms and a brief survey with the possibility of an interview during the week of (date). You will receive two copies of the participant consent form; one copy for my records and the other copy for you. The interview will last about forty-five minutes to one hour. I will be conducting the interviews at your school to minimize any inconvenience this study may cause. The interview questions will focus on middle school teacher-advisor practices and will not seek specific information regarding your school. In addition, information from this study identifying the subjects, the middle school, and the school district will be held confidential at all times. There are two governing bodies to ensure this confidentiality; my Doctoral Dissertation Committee and the Institutional Review Board at The University of Montana.

If you agree to participate in this study, please check the space provided below and return this form to the school office by (due date). A special manila envelope will be placed in the school office for collection of the forms so they can be forwarded to me in a timely manner.

I look forward to the possibility of working with you in the near future. If you have any questions, please call me (406) 273-0622 evenings or contact me by e-mail: jpetritz@msn.com.

Sincerely,

Janice E. Petritz
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Leadership
The University of Montana

_____ Yes, I agree to participate in your middle school teacher-advisor study.

November 17, 2003

Dear (Name):

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study regarding middle school teacher-advisors. Attached please find two copies of the official Participant Consent Form one copy of the Staff Survey. Please read through the Participant Consent Form and fill out and sign one copy for me and keep the other copy for your records. In addition, please complete the Staff Survey. Return both the signed copy of the Participant Consent Form and the completed Staff Survey to the school office. A special manila envelope has been placed in the office to return the completed forms to me by Friday, November 21, 2003.

If you are selected for an interview, I will contact you during the week of December 1, 2003, to set up a time at Paris Gibson Middle School that is convenient for you. I look forward to working with you. If you have questions, please call me (406) 273-0622 evenings or contact me by e-mail: jpetritz@msn.com.

Sincerely,

Janice E. Petritz
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Leadership
The University of Montana

December 1, 2003

Ms. Sheila Hoffland
Institutional Review Board
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

Re: Proposal #175-03

Dear Sheila:

I have begun the research process outlined in my above-named proposal. The first step in this process was to seek permission from the teaching staff in a Montana middle school to participate in my study. Of the fifty-five eligible staff, sixteen agreed to participate. Participant consent forms and staff surveys were sent to those sixteen. Of the surveys returned to me, only seven of the teacher-advisors that were identified as effective had initially given their permission to participate.

An unforeseen problem has arisen, namely, some teachers were identified as exemplary advisors but did not give their permission to participate. Quite possibly, some of these teachers may have chosen not to participate because they did not want to list 10 teacher-advisors, but would in fact choose to participate in the interviews. I am requesting to contact those teachers by letter asking them to respond if they now wish to participate in only the interview. The interview would be an informal, face-to-face interview at their place of employment. I will only contact the teachers who have been identified by their peers. The proposed contact will follow the existing IRB guidelines. I am requesting to contact these identified teachers again and invite them to participate in my research. This invitation would be offered by mail and follow the initial IRB requirement for participants to respond to me if they choose to participate.

I appreciate your consideration of my request. I have attached the letter that I would be sending to these identified teachers. I look forward to your Institutional Review Board's reply as soon as possible so that I may continue with my study. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by phone or e-mail.

Sincerely,

Janice Petritz
5610 Nightingale Lane
Lolo, MT 59847
Phone 273-0622
E-mail: jpetritz@msn.com

Enclosure

February 9, 2004

(Name)
(Address)

Dear (Name):

I am writing this letter as a follow-up to my initial request seeking your assistance in the middle school teacher-advisor study I am conducting for my Doctoral Dissertation in Educational Leadership at The University of Montana. In a recent survey I sent to the staff members who consented to participate in my study, you were identified as a teacher-advisor who exhibits the characteristics of an effective middle school teacher-advisor.

As a result of this survey outcome, I am requesting an opportunity to interview you at Paris Gibson Middle School so as to minimize any inconvenience this interview may cause. The interview will last about forty-five minutes. Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. The interview questions will focus on middle school teacher-advisor practices and will not seek specific information regarding your school. In addition, information from this study identifying the subjects, the middle school, and the school district will be held confidential at all times. There are two governing bodies to ensure this confidentiality: my Doctoral Dissertation Chair and the Institutional Review Board at The University of Montana.

If you consent to be interviewed, please checkmark the space below and return this entire form to the main office by Wednesday, February 11, 2004. A pre-addressed, postage paid manila envelope has been placed in the main office for collection of these letters so they can be forwarded to me in a timely manner.

I look forward to the possibility of an interview. If you have any questions, please call me (406) 273-0622 evenings or contact me by e-mail jpetritz@msn.com.

Sincerely,

Janice E. Petritz
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Leadership
The University of Montana

Yes, I agree to be interviewed for your middle school teacher-advisor study.

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview Form: Characteristics of Effective Middle School Teacher-Advisors

Date: _____, 2003 Time _____ (am/pm) Male _____ Female _____

Subject Code: _____ Interview 1 FU# _____

Grade Level _____ Longevity as Middle School T-A _____

Setting: _____

Opening Statements:

Thank you for agreeing to take time from your busy schedule to participate in this research study. There are a few things I would like to clarify for you before we start.

- I will be asking you some general questions and writing notes as we proceed.
- All information from this interview will be confidential. In other words, you will not be identified by name, school where you are employed in this study, or in any report from this study.
- You will only be identified as "S" in the notes. A confidential subject code will be used to identify you for any follow-up questions.
- No direct quotes from you will be used in the study without your prior permission. When quoted, your identity, location, and place of employment will remain confidential.
- Your name and place of employment will only be known by this researcher and William P. McCaw, Ed.D., Department of Educational Leadership, The University of Montana. Dr. McCaw is my Doctoral Dissertation Committee Chairman and oversees all aspects of this research study.

- The confidentiality of your name and place of employment is also under supervision and required by the Institutional Review Board at The University of Montana.
- Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

Please rest assured there are no correct or incorrect answers to the questions I will be asking. What is important are your thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to your position as a middle school teacher-advisor. The purpose of this interview is not to make judgments on your responses but to collect your thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER-ADVISOR QUESTIONS

1. In general, describe yourself as an effective or ineffective teacher-advisor?
Why?
2. How important do you think it is for your middle school to have an advisory program? Why?
3. Describe your first impression of your school's advisory program.
4. Describe the types of activities that take place in your advisory group during the school year.
5. Think of a time when a planned advisory activity went well. Not very well. Describe how each of these situations made you feel.
6. How comfortable are you when you spend time with the students in your advisory group.
7. How important is it to demonstrate you care about the students in your advisory group? Describe how you demonstrate ways you show you care about students in your advisory group.
8. How well do you think you relate to the students in your advisory group? What experiences do you base these feelings on? Explain

9. Think of a time when you have visited or held individual conferences with students in your advisory group. Describe how it made you feel when you visited or conferred with individual students.
10. Think of a time when you believed you were an effective teacher-advisor. Describe how you felt during the advisory situation you believed you were an effective teacher-advisor.
11. Describe what you believe are effective teacher-advisor practices.
12. Describe what you believe are ineffective teacher-advisor practices.
13. What opportunities do your advisees have to contact you.
14. Think of a time when your advisees asked you for advice about situations that arise in their personal lives. As a teacher-advisor, describe how that made you feel when your advisees have asked you for your advice.
15. Think of a time when you were able to respond to your advisory students when they asked for advice in their personal lives. Describe the situation and your response.
16. Describe what types of activities the students in your advisory group seem to enjoy the most. Explain how you can tell when your advisees enjoy or do not enjoy a particular activity.
17. What feedback, positive and/or negative, have you received from students in your advisory group regarding advisory program activities? Parents? Administrators? Please elaborate on the feedback, both positive and negative, that you have received and how you responded.
18. How willing are the students in your advisory group to ask you for advice if they have a problem?
19. Think of a time when you felt successful as a teacher-advisor. Describe what happened and how it made you feel.
20. Explain how you can tell when your advisees enjoy or do not enjoy a particular activity.
21. Think of a time when you felt effective or adequate as a teacher-advisor. Describe what happened and how you felt effective or adequate.
22. What could you do to improve your school's advisory program?